



Quarterly Report
January - March 2016

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1 Introduction

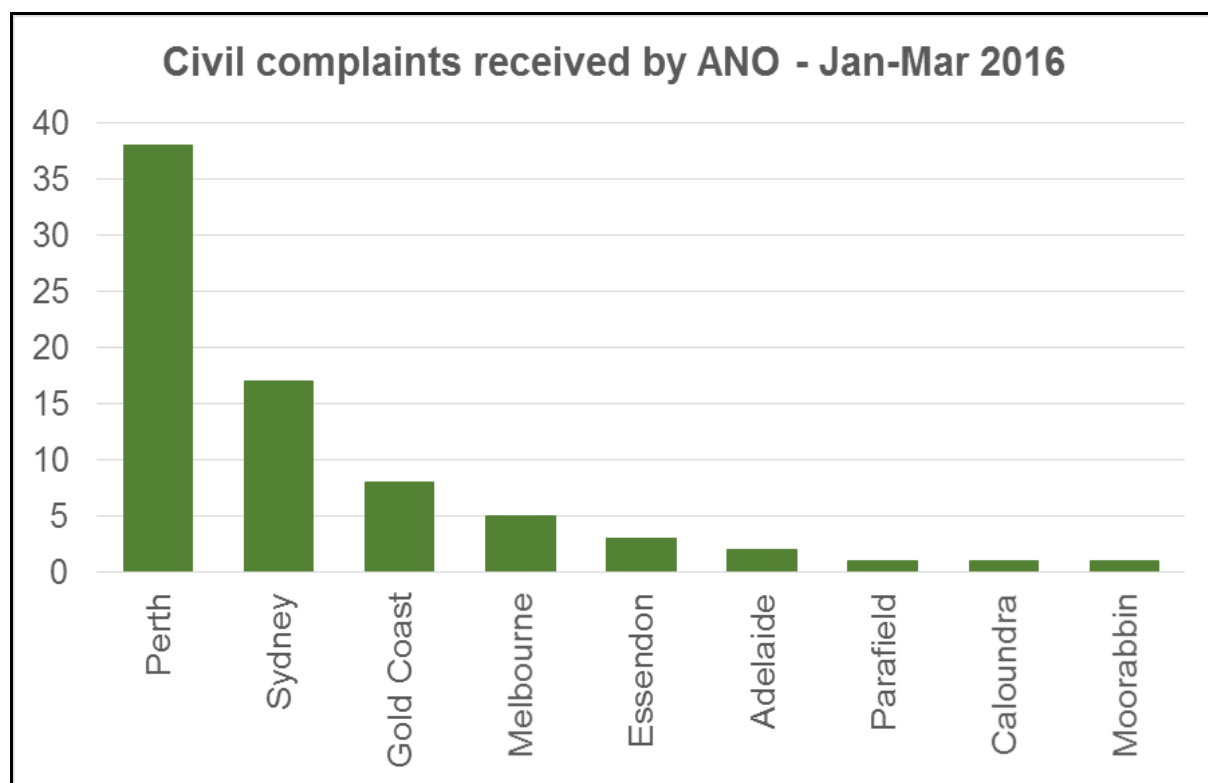
- 1.1 This report includes complaint statistics and a summary of ANO activities during the January to March 2016 quarter. It is structured around the three key functions of the ANO, these being review and monitoring of Airservices Australia's and the Department of Defence's:
- a. complaint handling
 - b. consultation and
 - c. provision of information about aircraft noise.

2 Overview

- 2.1 The ANO office has received an increase in contacts across this quarter, largely stemming from Perth residents concerned about Airservices' short term validation study. Additionally, complaints from areas affected by the new smart tracking approach (introduced in September 2015) to Perth have been lodged, specifically complaining about a lack of consultation. We have also had a higher than usual complaint load from Sydney, the Gold Coast and Melbourne/Essendon in the quarter, perhaps reflecting increased public awareness of aviation activity in these areas.
- 2.2 Following release of our *Investigation into Complaints about the Perth Noise Improvement Proposals (November 2015)*, Airservices has been working to address the 25 recommendations included in the report. We are pleased with progress, and can report closure of three recommendations in the period. **Attachment 2** provides a summary of progress against all recommendations.
- 2.3 Defence has also been making progress with its 11 outstanding recommendations from our *Review of Australian Super Hornet Flying Operations at RAAF Base Amberley (August 2015)*, although there were no recommendations completed in the quarter. Progress against all recommendations is summarised at **Attachment 2**.
- 2.4 The ANO office is pleased to have published a paper on the issue of persistent complaints and that this has since been the subject of an article in the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals (SOCAP) official publication, Consumer Directions.

3 Complaint handling

- 3.1 In the quarter the ANO received 80 new individual complaints, three of which were about Defence aircraft noise management. Half of the Airservices-related complaints stemmed from Perth residents, the majority of which were expressing concern about the short-term validation study.
- 3.2 Sydney accounted for a further seventeen complaints. While the majority related to concerns about noise from suburbs affected by the major flight paths to and from the airport, there were also three complaints about low flying media, sight-seeing and emergency services helicopter operations, and two from residents in the Blue Mountains concerned about increased noise in the area and the proposed Second Sydney Airport.
- 3.3 Airservices' announcement in January that it would not make permanent the southern departure flight path that had been trialled for the previous 12 months at the Gold Coast. This also generated some concern and is reflected in the ANO complaint statistics below.



- 3.4 At the end of the quarter 23 complaints were open. 72 complaints were closed in the period with 33 reviewed in detail by the ANO. One of these resulted in a change, and is described in the case study on the following page.
- 3.5 More detailed complaint statistics are included at **Attachment 1**.

Seeking noise improvement opportunities

- 3.6 A core focus of ANO investigations into complaints is to look for the potential to improve noise outcomes. Generally there are very few opportunities for change as Airservices and Defence have handled the complaints well and identified change opportunities where there are any. The case study below outlines a small change that resulted from one of our investigations, closed this quarter.

C Direct engagement with operators fosters neighbourly flying approach

A During this quarter, the ANO office closed a complaint that has potentially led to a small noise improvement change adopted by the helicopter operator. **S** Airservices had initially handled the case, which related to an increase in helicopter operations from a particular helipad near residential areas on the **E** Yarra River in Melbourne. Airservices provided a comprehensive response to the complainant about the relevant agencies and operators that controlled the helicopter operations. This included a suggestion that the ANO might be able to facilitate a discussion with the relevant stakeholders about the situation. **S**

T When the case was raised with the ANO office, we elected to engage directly with the relevant helicopter operator and Parks Victoria (as the authority for the helipad licence) to see if anything could be done to reduce the noise impact on nearby residences. The positive reaction from the operator to support a fly neighbourly agreement (FNA), developed in consultation with nearby residents and the relevant authorities, is expected to deliver some small noise improvements for nearby residents. **U** **D** **Y**

Further, we are aware that the City of Melbourne has considered the issue and will seek to develop FNAs with all main helicopter companies operating within the municipality.

- 3.7 The ANO does not expect that potential noise improvements will be pursued, unless the benefits clearly outweigh the costs. For example, during this quarter we requested Airservices consider a potential noise improvement in Perth suggested by a complainant for aircraft arriving to runway 06 (the shorter cross-runway). Although the change could potentially have reduced the number of residential areas overflown, reduced track miles and thus fuel and emissions, the ANO was ultimately satisfied with Airservices' decision not to pursue the opportunity. Airservices demonstrated that the flight path was infrequently used and so the potential benefit was relatively small. Compared to this, there would be significant time, cost and resources involved in designing a technically compliant approach procedure, conducting a detailed operational and technical feasibility assessment of the new route, assessing changes to noise impacts for newly affected residential areas and developing then implementing appropriate community consultation strategies. Timeframes involved to do this work, along with the likelihood that re-design will be required when the new parallel runway planning commences, mean that, on balance, it was not practical to further pursue this opportunity at this time.

3.8 That said, the ANO is confident that Airservices will seek to take the opportunity provided by the introduction of the new parallel runway at Perth, to design a new airspace management arrangement that, after safety assurance, balances operational efficiency and noise/environmental objectives.

3.9 Table 1 (below) outlines those matters that the ANO is monitoring in response to complaints or initiatives that are long-term or involve ongoing work by Airservices. The ANO complaints have been closed on the basis that Airservices is managing the matter, however the ANO is monitoring Airservices' handling of the issues until they are completed.

Table 1: Noise improvement opportunities – ANO monitoring Airservices' management

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
May 2014	Gold Coast: flights over NSW residences during daylight saving hours	The ANO asked Airservices to consider if a better noise outcome can be achieved for NSW residents affected by flights departing Gold Coast Airport prior to 11pm QLD time (that is, prior to the curfew commencing), when the two states are on different zones. Airservices added this opportunity to its Strategic Noise Improvement Plan and identified that the change "adds some complexity but is feasible". Airservices has given this opportunity further consideration and does not propose to proceed with a change. The ANO has independently reviewed the information and data provided and accepts that, on balance, at this time, Airservices' decision is reasonable. The analysis does not support further development of this proposal given the very low number of aircraft involved and the resources required to progress the change.

Seeking improvements in aircraft noise complaint handling

3.10 Two of the three complaints received about Defence activity this quarter relate to particular military training exercise near Canberra during the early hours of one morning in March. The cases have highlighted a number of issues with coordination of complaints across Airservices and Defence as well as with how Defence manages complaints that are not related directly to activities at an Air Force base. The ANO is pursuing these matters with both agencies.

4 Consultation

4.1 The ANO office attended a number of airport consultative meetings and other industry engagements during the quarter, in line with the ANO's role of monitoring Airservices' and Defence's consultation and information provision. These included:

Sydney Long-Term Operating Plan Implementation Monitoring Committee meeting, Sydney Airport Community Forum, Standards Australia management meeting, Jandakot Airport Community Aviation Consultation Group meeting, Perth Airport Municipalities Group meeting, Perth Airport Community Forum, Australian Airports Association Board Stakeholder dinner, Gold Coast Community Aviation Consultation Group meeting, Brisbane Community Aviation Consultation Group meeting, Government Aviation Complaints Handling Forum, Brisbane Airport Board dinner.

5 Information Provision

- 5.1 Both our *Investigation into Complaints about the Perth Noise Improvement Proposals* for Airservices and our *Review of Australian Super Hornet Flying Operations at RAAF Base Amberley (August 2015)* for Defence include recommendations about improving public information. **Attachment 2** summarises progress against the 12 recommendations of the reports.
- 5.2 Improving public information about aviation activities and aircraft noise specifically is essential to addressing the annoyance experienced by communities affected by aircraft noise. Only seldom can the amount of noise be reduced and then often only marginally or over the long term. However, even without addressing the noise as such, it can be possible to gain wider community understanding and acceptance of aviation operations by effectively managing complaints and providing public information about aircraft noise in an easily understood form. This is behind the emphasis the ANO office is placing on Airservices and Defence pursuing enhanced public information strategies. Better understanding can reduce the levels of annoyance felt by communities. Better information empowers residents affected by aircraft noise to make informed decisions about how they personally wish to manage the noise issues they are experiencing.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 Quarter 1 of 2016 has seen an increasing number of individual complaints received by the ANO office. Alongside this workload, we have presented at and attended various aviation meetings and forums.
- 6.2 The opportunities provided from attending various community and industry forums enable the ANO to pursue more than just our core role in monitoring and reviewing Airservices' and Defence's consultation and information provision. We have also been able to garner a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding aircraft noise management. This has led us to explore ideas around recognising that the actual noise level is not the only (or even the most important) factor in community annoyance about aircraft noise. This evolving thinking is of great interest in the industry, both here in Australia and internationally, and is an area we are hoping to explore further as time permits.
- 6.3 In the coming months, we are also looking forward to seeing continued progress by Airservices and Defence on the recommendations arising from our reports of last year.



Ron Brent
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
14 April 2016

Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

The following tables summarise the complaint statistics both for the quarter and also since the establishment of the ANO.

AIRSERVICES	Jan 2016	Feb 2016	Mar 2016	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	12	25	40	77
Complaints closed:	13	12	46	71

Total complaints closed - not reviewed:				
Complainant did not provide further information	0	0	1	1
Outside charter scope	0	0	1	1
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	7	7	22	36

Total complaints closed - reviewed:				
No change possible - explanation provided	5	5	22	32
Change adopted by Airservices Australia	0	0	0	0
Change adopted by Airport operator	0	0	0	0
Change adopted by Aircraft operator	1	0	0	1

DEFENCE	Jan 2016	Feb 2016	Mar 2016	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	0	0	3	3
Complaints closed:	0	0	1	1

Total complaints closed - not reviewed:				
Complainant did not provide further information	0	0	0	0
Outside charter scope	0	0	0	0
Referred to Defence to respond directly	0	0	1	1

Total complaints closed - reviewed:	0	0	0	0
No change possible - explanation provided	0	0	0	0
Change adopted by Defence	0	0	0	0

	Airservices	Defence	Total
Complaints carried forward on 1 Jan	15	0	15
Complaints received	77	3	80
Complaints closed	71	1	72
Complaints open at 1 April	21	2	23

Attachment 2 Outstanding ANO recommendations

The following table sets out the outstanding recommendations made by the ANO and the ANO's assessment of action against each. Recommendations that were previously reported as complete have been removed.

Super Hornet Review (August 2015)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
Recommendation 1 – Defence should adopt appropriate record management practices to ensure identified gaps in record-keeping are addressed.	<u>Ongoing</u> - Defence has advised that it has taken action to address this recommendation. ANO is reviewing action taken and seeking evidence to support Defence advice.
Recommendation 2 – Defence should work with the NFPMS supplier to improve the accuracy and reliability of the data captured by the NFPMS and presented in reports.	<u>Ongoing</u> - Defence has advised that it is working with the NFPMS supplier and reviewing other management strategies to deal with this.
Recommendation 3 – Defence should ensure that requirements in Standing Instructions and similar documents are aligned with the Super Hornet Conditions of Approval and associated plans and strategies.	<u>Ongoing</u> - Defence has advised that this is complete. ANO is reviewing action taken and seeking evidence to support Defence advice.
Recommendation 4 – Defence should as soon as possible a. conduct a review of the state of implementation against the recommendations of the Vipac report completed in 2011. b. report the findings of this review to the Commonwealth Environment Department in accordance with the Conditions of Approval.	<u>Ongoing</u> - Defence has advised that this is complete. ANO is reviewing action taken and seeking evidence to support Defence advice.
Recommendation 6 – Defence should review the reporting requirements in the Noise Management Plan and establish systems to ensure adherence to the requirements.	<u>Ongoing</u> - Defence has advised that this is complete. ANO is reviewing action taken and seeking evidence to support Defence advice.
Recommendation 7 – Defence should routinely review and update (as required) the Noise Management Plan in line with the documented requirements. Defence should document the review process and outcomes.	<u>Ongoing</u> - Defence has advised that this is complete. ANO is reviewing action taken and seeking evidence to support Defence advice.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 8 – Defence should ensure that future quarterly reports include information to support the requirements of the current version of Noise Monitoring and Complaints Handling Strategy.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Defence has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing with completion expected in Q3 2016.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9 – Defence should publish reports and meeting minutes in a reasonable timeframe.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Defence has advised that this is complete. ANO is reviewing action taken and seeking evidence to support Defence advice.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10 – Defence should expedite establishment of an online complaint lodgement capability.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Defence has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing with completion expected by end 2016.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11 – Defence should routinely review and update (as required) the Australian Super Hornet Noise Monitoring and Complaints Handling Strategy in line with the documented requirements. Defence should document the review process and outcomes.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Defence has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing with completion expected in Q2 2016.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12 – Defence should routinely review and update (as required) the Australian Super Hornet Noise Mitigation and Complaint Resolution Strategy in line with the documented requirements. Defence should document the review process and outcomes.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Defence has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing with completion expected in Q2 2016.</p>

Perth Noise Initiatives Review (November 2015)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 1: Airservices should explain the discrepancy in its public information when compared to their detailed Environmental Assessment and, if found to be in error, correct all public information and, as far as practicable, advise all individuals who had received incorrect data of the correction.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – The ANO notes that Airservices has corrected its public website information. The ANO is seeking additional information on advice provided to individuals.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Airservices should correct the public record at the next opportunity through the PACF to provide a comprehensive answer to the Guildford resident's issues, which includes an explanation of the potential for Airservices' preferred runways change to have contributed to the resident's experience of an increase in take-offs over the area.</p>	<p><u>Complete</u> - The ANO has reviewed the updated response by Airservices and confirmed this recommendation is complete.</p>

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 3: For all changes to air traffic management that will have an effect on aircraft noise impacts, Airservices should provide clear information to the public on both the justification for the change and the expected changes in aircraft noise in time for meaningful consultation and certainly prior to implementation of the change.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: Airservices should present potential aircraft noise impacts accurately and avoid under-statement.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: Airservices should review and amend the currently available information about the preferred runways change to clearly present the expected noise outcomes.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: Airservices should ensure that its post-implementation review of the preferred runways change addresses whether the change actually represents an overall noise improvement for Perth, considering the impacts across all areas that have been affected by the change. If the change does not deliver an overall noise improvement for Perth, Airservices should revert to previous arrangements or propose an alternative that is expected to deliver a noise improvement.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: Airservices should respond to all ANO requests with complete, accurate and timely information.</p>	<p><u>Complete</u> - Airservices has reallocated its relationship management with the ANO and made a commitment to improved responsiveness to ANO requests. The ANO has noted an improvement and considers this recommendation is complete.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: Airservices' post-implementation review of the preferred runways change should include a discussion of the impacts of the change in all areas affected, including for the suburbs affected by departures and arrivals to each end of each runway.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: Airservices should review the feedback from the ANO about its Environmental Assessments and incorporate better analysis of aircraft noise issues and impacts in its environmental assessment processes. This should include introduction of a robust process of critical review before finalisation of assessments.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10: Airservices' post-implementation review should present the impacts of changes in different areas at night-time, and specifically the impact in terms of nights of respite.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 11: Airservices should resolve its internal communication issues to ensure correct, adequate and timely information is provided to internal decision-makers, the ANO and the public about change proposals.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12: Airservices' post-implementation review should provide an explanation for why the change was implemented on a permanent basis despite the Environmental Assessment conclusion, and also assess the adequacy of community consultation undertaken.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 13: Airservices should review its decision-making processes related to the introduction of this change and report to the ANO and the Board on any changes it will introduce to ensure that future air traffic management changes are made with due consideration to relevant information.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 14: Airservices should target its community consultations to areas that are identified as potentially affected by the proposed change and ensure that communities receive all relevant information in a reasonable time to be able to provide feedback on changes prior to implementation.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 15: Airservices should include in its post-implementation review a detailed analysis of the actual impacts of the introduction of smart tracking and the associated change made to the visual approach route. It should consider impacts particularly at night-time, and re-visit the findings of the Environmental Assessment to determine if the change in fact did represent a potentially significant impact within the meaning of the EPBC Act.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 16: Airservices' material in support of a proposed change should explicitly present how the negatives are balanced by the benefits and on what basis the chosen approach is optimal compared to viable alternatives.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 17: In announcing proposed changes, Airservices should explicitly emphasise the degree of uncertainty and the known factors that will potentially influence the likelihood of the proposed change proceeding.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 18: Airservices should consider the social, economic and cultural context of the communities it is consulting and ensure consultation strategies enable accessibility, understanding and an opportunity for genuine engagement in the issues within those communities.</p>	<p><u>Complete</u> - The ANO has reviewed the recent material produced by Airservices on the short-term validation study and notes it meets the intent of this recommendation. The ANO expects that this learning will flow into all future community engagement activities and considers this recommendation is complete.</p>

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 19: Airservices should consult openly with communities, even when making only temporary changes, and provide as much information as it can prior to implementing any such change.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 20: Airservices should produce a proposal assessment for each change that provides a comprehensible outline of any change proposal, including the pros and cons, key considerations, the conclusion and the final decision Airservices has made. Relevant material that underpins the decisions should also be published for those seeking greater detail.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 21: Airservices should ensure its Environmental Assessments for changes in air traffic arrangements reflect a thorough and transparent analysis of all key issues relevant to aircraft noise impacts, and specifically reflecting the key issues and concerns of communities.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 22: Airservices should tailor its public announcements about aircraft noise management to address the specific concerns and expectations of affected communities, as identified in consultation forums and aircraft noise complaints.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 23: As far as practical, Airservices should make direct contact with community leaders prior to public announcements about issues that affect the community to help ensure that consistent information is passed on to residents.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 24: Airservices should not pursue the noise-respite trial as proposed in March 2015, even as a short term trial measure, and instead should put out clear information as to the inequitable consequences that would necessarily flow in terms of night-time respite.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 25: Airservices should set out the rationale behind the preferred runways and smart tracking changes implemented in Perth, including identifying the anticipated impacts in terms of aircraft movements and aircraft noise consequences, well ahead of the planned post-implementation review of these changes.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> - Airservices has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing.</p>