



Quarterly Report
July - September 2016

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1 Introduction

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

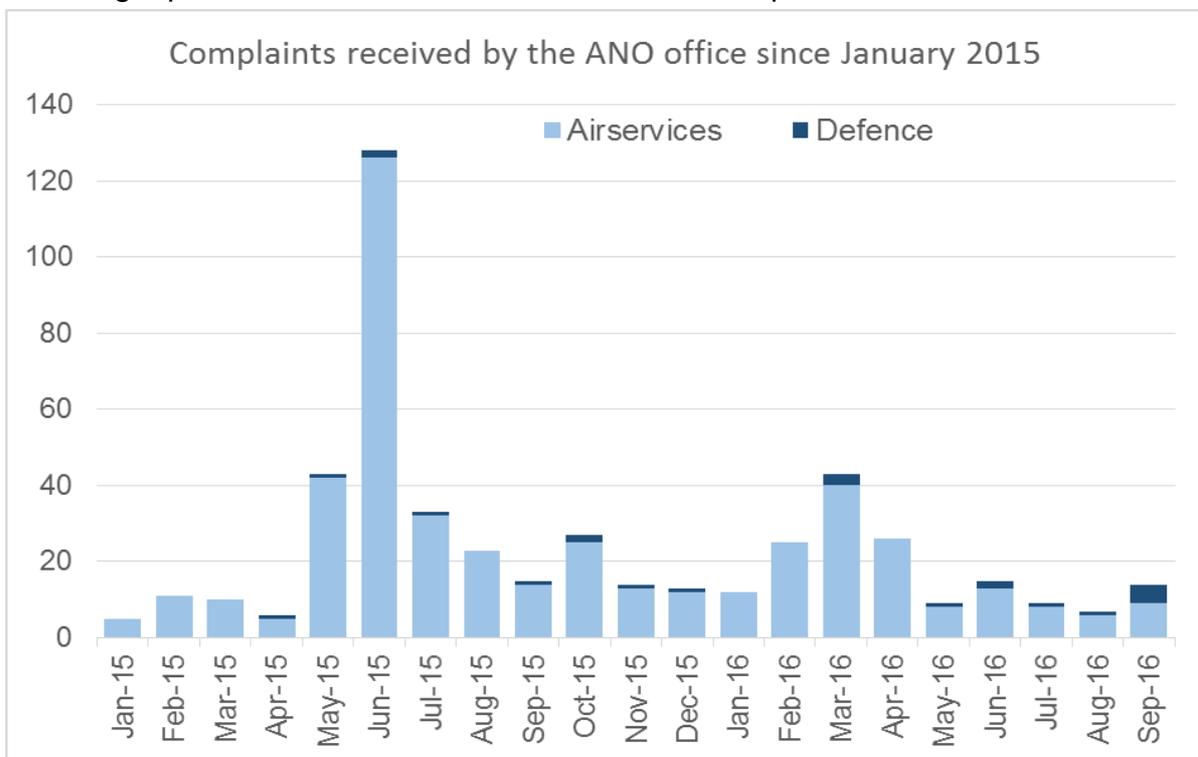
2 Overview

- 2.1 During the quarter the ANO experienced a further reduction in complaint numbers, as the level of concern raised with the ANO from areas experiencing recent changes (mainly Perth and the Gold Coast) continued to reduce. The number of complaints received this quarter was back in line with what had been the long-term average before the 2015/16 changes commenced.
- 2.2 The ANO has been working on the *Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaint Handling System*, including making several site visits to RAAF Bases and interviewing staff involved in complaint management activities. The review is running behind schedule with the draft report now planned to be finalised by the early November, and report publication by the end of the calendar year.
- 2.3 Since our last report, Airservices and Defence have continued to address the outstanding recommendations from ANO reviews completed last year:
- Defence has completed actions leading to closure of a further two recommendations this quarter, leaving just three of the 12 recommendations outstanding from the *Review of Australian Super Hornet Flying Operations at RAAF Base Amberley (August 2015)*. This included publication of an updated *Noise Monitoring and Complaints Handling Strategy* and an updated *Noise Mitigation and Complaint Resolution Strategy*. Defence has also provided evidence that the recommendations of a 2011 *Vipac* report had been reviewed and the findings reported to the Commonwealth Environment Department.
 - Airservices has completed actions to address three recommendations during this quarter, leaving just three of 25 recommendations outstanding from the *Investigation into Complaints about the Perth Noise Improvement Proposals (November 2015)*. This included publication of an amended *Communication and Consultation Protocol*, publication of the Terms of Reference (TORs) for Post Implementation Reviews (PIRs) on the changes introduced last year and demonstrated improvements in community engagement.

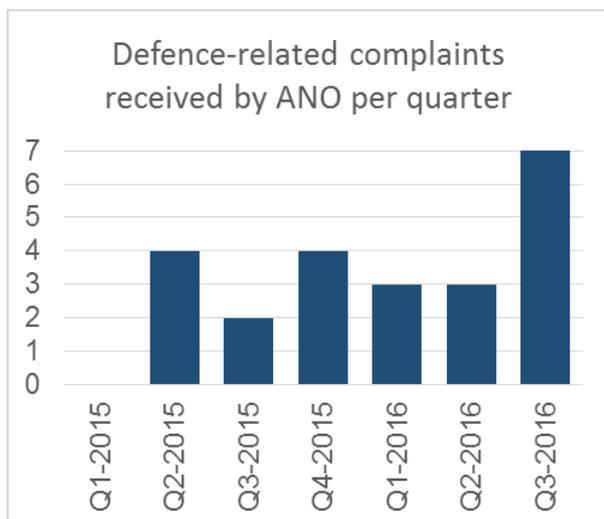
Attachment 2 provides a summary of progress against all recommendations.

3 Complaint handling

- 3.1 During the quarter the ANO received 30 new complaints, seven of which related to Defence aircraft noise management. At the end of the quarter 19 complaints were open, with 28 complaints having been closed, 18 of which were reviewed in detail.
- 3.2 The graph below shows complaints received by the ANO since the start of 2015. The significant spike in mid-2015 reflects community concerns about change initiatives pursued by Airservices in Perth. In early 2016, the decision not to permanently implement the so-called 'Golf course' flight path at the Gold Coast, which had been trialled for the preceding 12 months, generated some concern. Further, a short-term validation study involving a temporary change to a flight path in Perth resulted in an increased complaint load for the ANO.



3.3 In the most recent quarter, Defence has had seven complaints raised with the ANO, which is almost double the number received in any previous quarter. This is largely due to four complaints from Darwin, which related to either the Pitch Black 2016 exercise or followed the community consultations about the updated Aircraft Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF).



3.4 Additional complaint statistics are included at **Attachment 1**.

Seeking noise improvement opportunities

- 3.5 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 previously identified change opportunities where there are any.
- 3.6 One of the complaints reviewed by the ANO during the quarter was closed with a change being adopted by the airport operator. In this case, the complaint was about helicopters based at the Sunshine Coast Airport conducting night training at Hervey Bay. The airport operator, Fraser Coast Regional Council, sought advice from the ANO about possible management strategies and has subsequently undertaken to work with operators to establish a Fly Neighbourly Agreement. This is a voluntary set of rules or a 'code of conduct' agreed between aircraft operators and airports to reduce disturbance caused by aircraft. Such agreements exist at many locations and provide community members with assurance that operators are making an effort to keep aircraft noise to a minimum and, despite not being enforceable by law, they are generally adhered to by aircraft operators.
- 3.7 Table 1 (below) reports on the one noise improvement opportunity that was identified in Q2-2016 that the ANO continues to pursue with Airservices.

Table 1: Noise improvement opportunities

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
Mar 2016	Sydney: adjustment to flight paths over water during curfew hours	The ANO has asked Airservices to consider if a better noise outcome can be achieved for coastal residents south of Sydney Airport affected by flights departing during the curfew. Airservices has investigated the feasibility of a change and concluded that the existing flight path provides the best combination of safety and noise outcomes. The ANO is seeking a better understanding of the details of the considerations made before finalising.

Seeking improvements in aircraft noise complaint handling

- 3.8 The ANO has been working on the Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaint Handling System, including making several site visits to RAAF Bases and interviewing staff involved in complaint management activities. The review is running behind schedule with the draft report now planned to be finalised by the early November, and report publication by the end of the calendar year

4 Consultation

- 4.1 The ANO office attended a number of airport consultative meetings and other industry engagements during the quarter. This helps with the ANO's role of monitoring Airservices' and Defence's consultation and information provision as well as fostering industry-wide understanding and awareness of aircraft noise management issues. Meetings attended included:

Townsville Community Aviation Consultation Group (CACG), Government Aviation Compliant Handlers Forum, Sydney Airport Community Forum (SACF), a meeting with Sydney Airport Management, Parafield Airport Consultative Committee, Adelaide Airport Consultative Committee, South Australian Attorney General's Department, RAAF Base Edinburgh, Defence Airport Noise Consultation in Darwin, New Zealand Airport Association Annual Conference and a meeting with the Western Sydney Airport Unit of the Department of Infrastructure.

- 4.2 The ANO has been pleased to see the proactive approach Defence took with consultations about its bi-annual Pitch Black exercise in Darwin and Tindal, Exercise Wallaby in Townsville and region, and with its updating of the Darwin Australian Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF).
- 4.3 As part of its business re-structuring processes, Airservices has adopted a different approach to its engagement with community aviation consultation groups (and equivalent). Rather than a centralised group of community relations staff travelling to each Airport, a locally-based Airservices representative is now the main point of contact for community engagement, supported by the centralised community relations team. The ANO has been attending some of these community group meetings to monitor the transition to these new arrangements. We will continue to provide our feedback on the new consultative arrangements to the relevant staff in Airservices.

5 Information Provision

- 5.1 The ANO noted some concern about the information provided to Gold Coast communities about a series of flight path changes implemented on 18 August 2016. As part of Airservices' national Aircraft Navigation Modernisation Program, the changes were aimed at maximising the benefits of satellite-based navigation systems while aligning with a Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) mandate that all aircraft operating under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) are required to navigate primarily using satellite-based means within Australian airspace. Additionally, the changed approach paths meet CASA and International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) requirements for increased runway alignment.
- 5.2 Airservices undertook a community consultation and public information strategy well in advance of the changes. However, the noise impacts resulting from a change to one of the northern approach paths had not been accurately presented in the information initially published by Airservices. As a result, the newly affected communities had not been informed in advance of the change.

- 5.3 The ANO is aware that Airservices' has responded to feedback received from the community and the ANO, including:
- i. updating its website information
 - ii. amending the material being provided to individuals contacting its Noise Complaints and Information Service (NCIS) about the changes and through additional media engagement about the issues arising
 - iii. introducing a procedure to minimise use of the northern approach that generated the community concern.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 This quarter has seen the level of complaints received by the ANO office return to what was the long-term average prior to the second quarter of 2015. While the Defence load was at a peak, the levels are still so low as to not be of particular concern.
- 6.2 Again, the progress made this quarter by Airservices and Defence on the recommendations arising from our reports of last year has been pleasing. We also look forward to finalising our second Defence review soon.
- 6.3 Finally, I note that the position of Aircraft Noise Ombudsman has been advertised reflecting the upcoming completion of my second term in the role. It has been a challenging and fulfilling journey. I am thrilled with the progress Airservices, and latterly Defence, have made in enhancing the management of aircraft noise issues in Australia. I wish my successor and the office all the best as they respond to the challenges ahead.



Ron Brent
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
20 October 2016

Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

The following tables summarise the complaint statistics both for the quarter.

AIRSERVICES	Jul 2016	Aug 2016	Sep 2016	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	8	6	9	23
Complaints closed:	14	6	3	23
Total complaints closed - not reviewed:				
Complainant did not provide further information	0	0	0	0
Outside charter scope	0	0	0	0
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	4	1	2	7
Total complaints closed - reviewed:				
No change possible - explanation provided	9	5	1	15
Change adopted by Airservices Australia	0	0	0	0
Change adopted by Airport operator	1	0	0	1
Change adopted by Aircraft operator	0	0	0	0

DEFENCE	Jul 2016	Aug 2016	Sep 2016	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	1	1	5	7
Complaints closed:	3	0	2	5
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	1	0	2	3
Total complaints closed - reviewed:				
No change possible - explanation provided	2	0	0	2
Change adopted by Defence	0	0	0	0

	Airservices	Defence	Total
Complaints carried forward on 1 Jul	15	2	17
Complaints received	23	7	30
Complaints closed	23	5	28
Complaints open at 1 Oct	15	4	19

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 it has addressed this recommendation. ANO is 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>Complete</u> – Defence has demonstrated that a review of action taken following the recommendations of the 2011 Vipac report has been conducted and that the findings were reported to the Commonwealth Environment Department.
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> – The ANO has reviewed Defence's systems and is seeking supporting data to confirm reporting requirements are adhered to.
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.	<u>Complete</u> – Defence has published version 1.1 of the Noise Monitoring and Complaints Handling Strategy and quarterly reports reflect the requirements of this version.
Recommendation 10 – Defence should expedite establishment of an online complaint lodgement capability.	<u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing with completion expected by end 2016.

Perth Noise Initiatives Review (November 2015)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
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.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices has corrected its public website information and released the Post Implementation Review (PIR) for the Preferred Runways change reflecting the corrected data. Links to the PIR were also sent directly to individuals who had contacted the Noise Complaints & Information Service.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<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>Complete</u> – Airservices has released the PIR for the Preferred Runways change reflecting an incremental overall noise improvement.</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 it is developing a ‘Procedure Manual for Undertaking Environmental Assessments’, due to be completed in quarter 4, 2016.</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>Complete</u> – Airservices has released the PIR for the Preferred Runways change, which outlined that the change was implemented on a permanent basis as an intended means of reflecting current operational requirements and practices. Additionally the PIR includes discussion of the community consultation undertaken.</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 it is developing a ‘Procedure Manual for Undertaking Environmental Assessments’, due to be completed in quarter 4, 2016.</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 it is developing a ‘Procedure Manual for Undertaking Environmental Assessments’, due to be completed in quarter 4, 2016.</p>