



Quarterly Report

October – December 2014

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1 Introduction

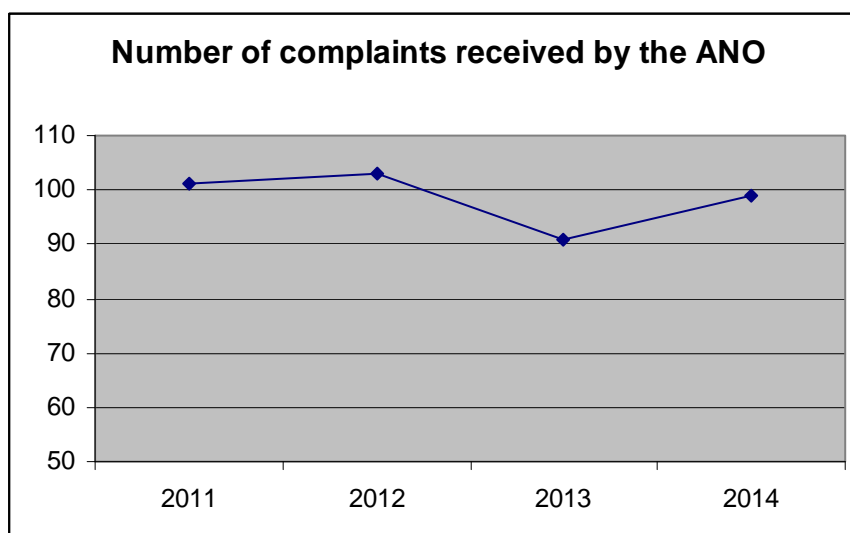
- 1.1 This report includes complaint statistics and a summary of ANO activities during the October to December 2014 quarter. It is structured around the three key functions of the ANO, these being review and monitoring of Airservices Australia's:
- complaint handling
 - consultation and
 - provision of information about aircraft noise.

2 Overview

- 2.1 Again I am pleased to report continued progress by Airservices during the quarter in closing a number of outstanding recommendations. This includes the last outstanding recommendation from the *Assessment of Aircraft Noise Information (Sydney)* and a further nine sub-parts from our Case Studies Review.
- 2.2 We have also finalised the agreements that give effect to the ANO office now providing an independent complaints and review mechanism for Defence aircraft noise management. We are looking forward to assisting both Defence and Airservices in delivering improved management of aircraft noise, with lessons learned from one agency potentially transferable to the other. The public will now have access to a single noise contact point should they not be able to resolve their aircraft noise concerns with the relevant agency. This will foster a consistent, whole-of-government approach to managing aircraft noise issues in Australia.

3 Complaint handling

- 3.1 In the quarter the ANO received 19 new individual complaints, which is the lowest number received in any quarter of 2014. However, the total number of complaints in 2014 was 99, which is slightly higher than the 2013 total of 91, but comparable with the previous years of 103 in 2012 and 101 in 2011.



3.2 At the end of the quarter seven complaints were open. Twenty-six complaints were closed in the period with one leading to a change that may improve noise outcomes. See the case study on the right.

3.3 We were also able to finalise a long-standing complaint this quarter. The complaint was part of a complex set of issues raised by various individuals in the one small community. Airservices had committed to undertake some key items of work. Unfortunately some of this work was either not completed or not finalised causing the issues to remain outstanding for much longer than necessary. We have provided feedback to Airservices on the opportunities to improve future complaint management to avoid the unnecessary delays and complexities that occurred in this case.

Case Study: operator offers to do more once aware of community concerns

Airservices had investigated a complaint from a Port Campbell resident affected by the noise of sight-seeing helicopters in the Great Ocean Road area of Victoria. A number of actions had been pursued to improve the noise outcomes for residential areas. The ANO conducted an independent review and found an additional operator that had not previously been advised of community concerns about the noise impacts of their helicopter flights.

The operator discussed its operations around the Port Campbell area with the ANO and considered whether there were any reasonable alternatives that could reduce the noise impact further. Now that they had knowledge of the concerns, the operator offered to try to take a wider path to further avoid Port Campbell, where possible. While this is a small change only, we strongly encourage all aviation stakeholders to engage with complaints and to pursue practical noise improvements wherever possible, regardless of how minor they seem. A small change can make a real difference to someone affected on the ground.

3.4 The long standing complaint mentioned above, along with a number of others over the past couple of years, has prompted my office to do some more work on how Airservices (or any complaint management organisation) can respond effectively to a sharp increase in complaints about a single issue from a large number of residents. The core principle of giving due consideration to issues with merit, whether raised by one or a hundred complainants, must be upheld, yet there seems to be a need for differing management strategies to be applied when dealing with a group as compared to an individual. We intend to give this matter further consideration and will be reporting in more detail on the issues and opportunities in future quarterly reports.

3.5 More detailed complaint statistics to the end of 2014 are included at **Attachment 1**.

Seeking noise improvement opportunities

3.6 A core focus of our investigations into complaints is to look for the potential to improve noise outcomes. During this quarter, a potential noise opportunity was identified stemming directly from a complaint to the ANO, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Noise improvement opportunities identified during the quarter

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
October 2014	Opportunity to reduce aircraft noise at Seville Grove and nearby suburbs by moving the general aviation flight path south-west.	The ANO presented the option to the Jandakot CACG meeting, generating a productive discussion by aircraft operators, Jandakot Airport management and air traffic control (ATC). All representatives were keen to explore opportunities for noise improvement. However, concerns about how close the proposed new route would be to the inbound track as well as concerns about making changes in an already recognised danger 'hot spot' meant that the proposal was not viable on safety grounds.

3.7 There was one noise improvement opportunity stemming from complaints received by the ANO that was finalised during the Oct-Dec 2014 quarter, as set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Noise improvement opportunities finalised during the quarter

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
August 2014	Opportunity to reduce aircraft noise at Camden airport by modifying practice engine failure procedures.	The ANO asked Airservices to look into whether best practice procedures employed at other general aviation airports could be applied at Camden. Specifically, this relates to 'practice engine failures' and whether they can be avoided over residential areas. Airservices consulted with relevant stakeholders and the airport is now in the process of updating their 'fly friendly' arrangements.

3.8 Table 3 outlines those matters that the ANO is monitoring in response to complaints. These are matters that are long-term or ongoing work being managed by Airservices. The ANO complaints have been closed on the basis that Airservices is managing the matter but we are monitoring Airservices' handling of the issues until they are completed.

Table 3: Noise improvement opportunities – ANO monitoring Airservices' management

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
Nov 2010	Can the flight path over Roleystone be relocated to an area that does not affect so many residences?	In Aug 2013, Airservices commenced a 12 month trial of an alternative flight path, following which Airservices will make a decision about permanent implementation. We are now awaiting the finalisation of this matter.
Apr 2012	Brisbane – Can some northbound and westbound departures from runway 19 depart on additional tracks to reduce the concentration of noise over current areas?	Airservices examined the option of a noise sharing approach, where a single departure track is replaced with multiple tracks to enhance noise sharing. Airservices identified that such an arrangement has not previously been trialled in Australia, however Airservices intends to consider this approach in the future. Trials of this approach are not likely to be held in Brisbane initially due to the operational constraints of the airport. Airservices has advised that it is currently looking at noise sharing proposals (departures) as part of the current noise improvement review in Perth.

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
May 2012	Perth – What is the plan to address the numerous issues and requests associated with Chidlow?	Airservices has investigated several opportunities, including one that has led to a trial of a changed departure procedure. The trial ended in March 2014 and following analysis of the results Airservices has proposed to adopt the changed departure procedure permanently. Airservices is currently pursuing the appropriate change process, including environmental assessment and consultation.
May 2014	Gold Coast: flights over NSW residences during daylight saving hours	The ANO has asked Airservices to look into whether 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 has added this opportunity to their Strategic Noise Improvement Plan and has committed to consider the matter in 2015.

Seeking improvements in aircraft noise complaint handling

- 3.6 As mentioned last quarter, the ANO office, in conjunction with Airservices and facilitated by the generous provision of a venue by Perth Airport, conducted two seminars in Perth on effective complaint handling and in particular better managing aircraft noise complaints. Participants from a diverse range of aviation stakeholders attended and the feedback has been very positive. We anticipate further such programs will be offered in 2015.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 The ANO office attended a number of airport consultative meetings and other industry forums during the quarter, in line with our role of monitoring Airservices' consultation and information provision.
- 4.2 We continue to monitor Airservices' management of consultation activities surrounding air traffic management changes, such as the introduction of new procedures or trials for possible new procedures. We do this by attending community consultation meetings, reviewing Airservices' consultation materials available on their website, and investigating specific concerns raised by residents through complaints. Where appropriate we have provided feedback to Airservices.

5 Information Provision

- 5.1 We identified a number of recommendations for further improvement of public information, along with improved complaint handling, in our *Case Studies in Complaint Management* report, published in January 2014. During the period nine sub-parts of the outstanding recommendations were completed, leaving just one recommendation sub-part to be completed. This final recommendation sub-part relates to ensuring Airservices' complaint records are managed in compliance with the *National Archives Act 1983* as well as relevant Australian Standards and Australian Government recommended practices. Airservices has a plan to address this, although I note that it is reliant on a number of related projects for completion.

- 5.2 Additionally, the final recommendation from our *Assessment of Aircraft Noise Information (Sydney)* report, published in March 2012 has now been completed. Attachment 2 lists the status of all ongoing recommendations and those closed in the October to December 2014 quarter.
- 5.3 The review of Australian Standard 2021 (AS 2021), which deals with aircraft noise intrusion for the purposes of building siting and construction, was finalised during the quarter and will be published following approval by Standards Australia. Attention has now been turned to developing an information handbook on aircraft noise information for public dissemination. If approved, the document will be published as a Standards Australia Handbook and provide support for airports and Government agencies when producing and promulgating information on aircraft noise patterns and the intensity of noise near airports. The Handbook is intended to improve the availability of information about aircraft noise in a form that will allow individuals to make personal judgements on the impact of that noise.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 Reflecting on the 2014 year, we are satisfied that overall Airservices has continued to embed better complaint management practices and improve its management of aircraft noise issues. While we still receive complaints, these are increasingly about the aircraft noise issues themselves rather than complaints about Airservices' handling of the issues. We have noted that the Noise Complaints and Information Service continues to improve its complaint responses, implementing useful changes to their procedures and practices, and fostering a growing culture of actively seeking noise improvement opportunities.
- 6.2 2015 looks set to be another busy and exciting time for the office as we take on our role providing an independent Aircraft Noise Ombudsman service to Defence. We look forward to Airservices' continued progress based on the introduction of their next generation complaint management system as another step forward in improving complaint reporting to the public and other stakeholders.



Ron Brent
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
19 January 2015

Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

The following table summarises the complaint statistics both for the quarter and also since the establishment of the ANO.

	Oct 2014	Nov 2014	Dec 2014	Total for quarter	Total from 1 Sep 10 to 30 Dec 14
Complaints received:	10	5	4	19	445
Complaints closed:	6	14	6	26	439
Total complaints closed - not reviewed:					121
Complainant did not provide further information					18
Outside charter scope					20
Referred to Airservices to respond directly					83
Total complaints closed - reviewed:					318
No change possible - explanation provided					272
Change adopted by Airservices Australia					11
Change adopted by Airport operator					24
Change adopted by Aircraft operator					11

Attachment 2 ANO assessment of action on Review Recommendations

Recommendations are classified as 'ongoing' where there remains work to be undertaken by Airservices Australia.

Assessment of Aircraft Noise Issues: Sydney (March 2012)

Since the last quarterly report to the Board, Airservices has completed and published a document to help the public better understand why a particular runway mode was in use across a 'typical' and 'non-typical' day. On this basis, we have now closed the last recommendation from the *Assessment of Aircraft Noise Issues: Sydney* report.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
<p>Sydney Issues Recommendation 7:</p> <p>Airservices should explore the provision of a more timely (as well as historical) method for complainants to understand why a particular Runway Mode was in use, or why a preferred Runway Mode (noise sharing) was not able to be used at that time.</p>	Closed.

Case Studies in Complaint Management (January 2014)

Airservices has continued to undertake reforms in response to all recommendations made in the *Case Studies in Complaint Management* report. A total of nine recommendation sub-parts have been closed in the past few months:

- Recommendation 1 part a, b and c
- Recommendation 2 part e
- Recommendation 3 parts a and b
- Recommendation 4 part d
- Recommendation 6 parts a and b

Just one sub-part of recommendation 4 now remains to be closed. We are aware that Airservices has a plan of action to address this final part.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
<p>Case Studies Recommendation 1:</p> <p>Airservices should:</p> <p>a. amend its contact acknowledgement and reference numbering system. Complainants should not be notified of a new reference number for each and every contact made. Complainants advised that responses will not be made on a particular issue, should not be responded to on that issue. Airservices should clarify what the reference number provided to complainants actually means</p> <p>b. acknowledge the lack of timeliness, apologise and provide a brief explanation for the delay where service delivery standards are not met</p> <p>c. be mindful of balancing the resource burden with the value to the complainant when considering the provision of ongoing information, particularly if similar information has already been provided. Procedures or guidelines should be established to assist staff with making these decisions.</p>	Closed.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
<p>Case Studies Recommendation 2:</p> <p>Airservices should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. as far as practicable, assign complaints to an airport, rather than a generic category b. provide reports to airports that provide sufficient detail to help identify meaningful issues and avenues for potential improvements c. be clear to complainants about what is, and is not, provided to airports about their complaint d. ensure that information provided to complainants is accurate and does not potentially misrepresent the situation, or contradict other information published by Airservices on their website e. consider opportunities to take the lead in consulting various stakeholders as part of the process to identify noise improvement outcomes, rather than refer complainants to those stakeholders with the expectation that the complainant will manage that consultation process. 	<p>Closed.</p>
<p>Case Studies Recommendation 3:</p> <p>Airservices should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. develop and implement processes to ensure all appropriate information about complainants is passed to other authorities when undertaking a transfer of a complaint b. clarify when a response will be provided. Information linked to the complaint form should explain that a response will be provided where specifically requested, where a question has been asked or where a response can provide useful and relevant information. The exception to this rule should be when a complainant has explicitly requested no response or when a complainant has been advised previously that the particular issue has been dealt with to finality. 	<p>Closed.</p>
<p>Case Studies Recommendation 4:</p> <p>Airservices should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. store all correspondence relating to a complaint in a single repository, accessible to all complaint handlers and, to the extent practicable, accessible through the relevant NCMS database record b. ensure complaint records are managed in compliance with the National Archives Act 1983 as well as relevant Australian Standards and Australian Government recommended practices. c. standardise the salutations, introductory text and sign-off styles used for correspondence with complaints d. carefully consider the expectations created by encouraging further contact and only do so when appropriate e. use other means to contact clients whenever details have been provided and the primary means of contact fails. 	<p>Part 4a, 4c, 4d and 4e completed.</p> <p>The ANO is aware that action is underway by Airservices to address the remaining part 4b of this recommendation.</p>

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
<p>Case Studies Recommendation 6:</p> <p>Airservices should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. establish clear protocols for when residents are to be referred directly to an external authority b. review its Guide and Protocols documents and current practices to ensure that documented procedures for managing unreasonable complainant behaviour are followed in practice, including consistent and timely application of management plans for persistent complainants, and ensuring that it is cases of unreasonable behaviour that are subject to 'formal restriction' not complainants c. check compliance with its Guide and Protocols in an internal audit/review process for complaint management. 	<p>Closed.</p>