



Quarterly Report

October - December 2016

# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Overview .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3 Complaint handling .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4 Consultation .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5 Information Provision .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>6 Closing comments from the Ombudsman .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Attachment 2 Outstanding ANO recommendations.....</b>	<b>7</b>

## 1 Introduction

---

- 1.1 This report includes complaint statistics and a summary of ANO activities during the October to December 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:
- a. complaint handling
  - b. consultation and
  - c. provision of information about aircraft noise.

## 2 Overview

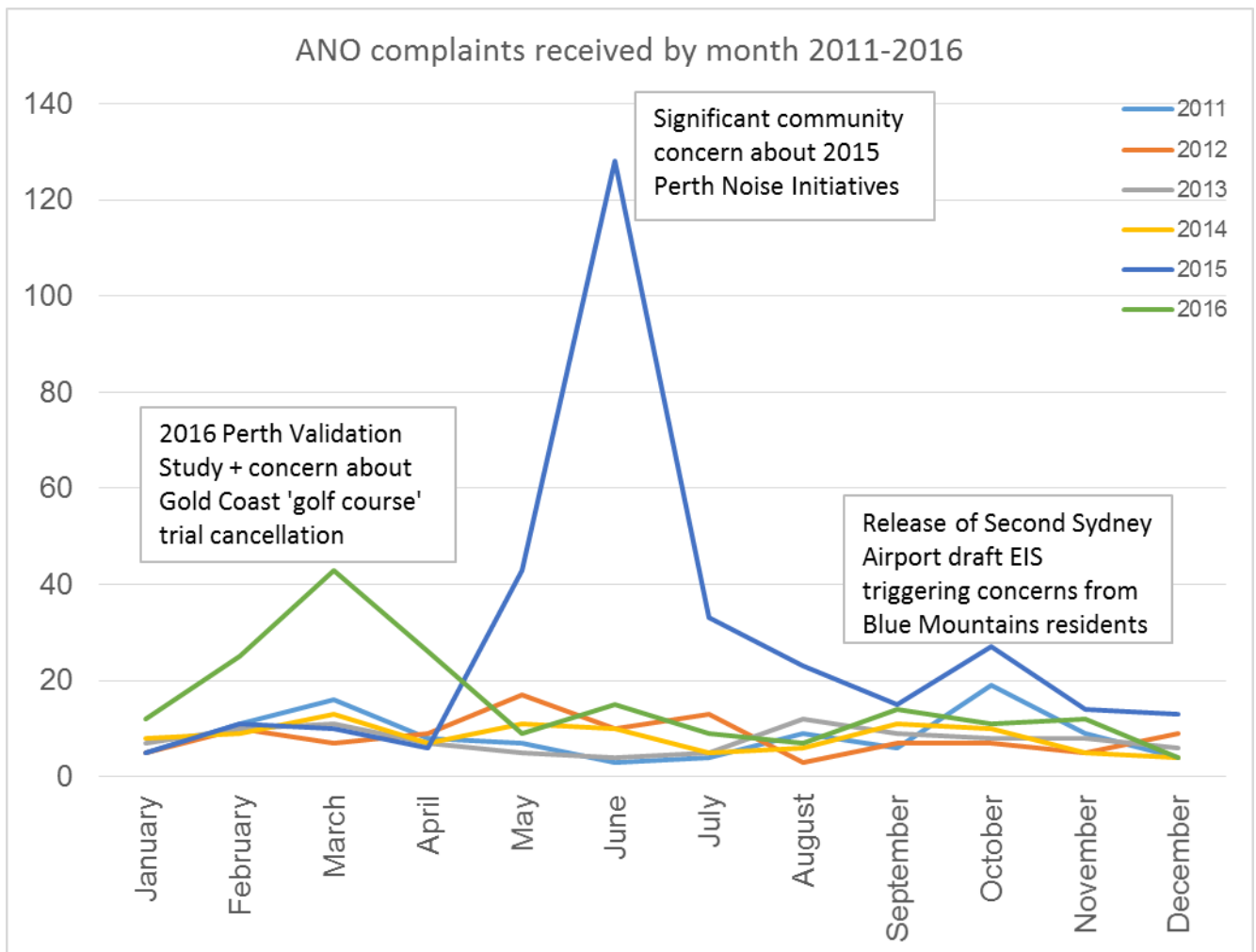
---

- 2.1 During the quarter the ANO experienced a further reduction in complaint numbers. Complaints are now tracking at the long-term average that existed before Airservices' 2015/16 change initiatives in Perth and Gold Coast.
- 2.2 The Airservices' Board, in consultation with Defence, finalised and published an updated ANO Charter in mid-December. The amendments included editorial improvements and clarification of the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman's review processes and operations. All versions of the Charter (past and present) are available on the ANO website.
- 2.3 The ANO was pleased to finalise the *Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaint Handling System*, which was submitted to Defence in November 2016 and published on the ANO website. The report makes seven recommendations aimed at improving Defence's aircraft noise complaints management. Defence has welcomed and supported the conduct of the review and has accepted all recommendations.
- 2.4 In addition to these seven new recommendations Defence has three outstanding recommendations from the ANO Super Hornet Review, completed in 2015. Defence continues to work on these recommendations and the ANO will await further material before they are considered closed. It is expected there will be more to report next quarter.
- 2.5 Airservices has updated its National Operating Standard for 'Environmental Management of Changes to Aircraft Operations'. The ANO has reviewed this document and considers the requirements of the three outstanding recommendations from the Perth Noise Initiatives Review are addressed in the new version.
- 2.6 **Attachment 2** provides a summary of progress against all recommendations.

### 3 Complaint handling

3.1 During the quarter the ANO received 27 new complaints, one of which related to Defence aircraft noise management. At the end of the quarter, six complaints were open. Forty complaints were closed in the quarter, with 28 having been reviewed in detail and 12 having been referred back to the agency for a direct response.

3.2 The graph below shows complaints received by the ANO for the past six years, highlighting the key issues that led to spikes in complaint numbers. The past two quarters average of 9.5 complaints per month is almost back to the long-term average of 8.2 complaints per month up to (and including) April 2015. Taking account of the average of one Defence complaint per month since the ANO role for Defence commenced in January 2015, this is “back to normal” for the number of ANO complaints received.



3.3 Complaint statistics for the Oct-Dec 2016 quarter are at **Attachment 1**.

### Seeking noise improvement opportunities

- 3.4 In addition to reviewing Airservices' or Defence's handling of an aircraft noise issue, ANO investigations into complaints also look for the potential to improve noise outcomes. Generally there are very few practical opportunities for change as Airservices and Defence have previously identified and implemented change opportunities where there are any. This reflects significant change from the early years when the ANO office had to press heavily to achieve any aircraft noise improvements.
- 3.5 Table 1 (below) reports on the one noise improvement opportunity 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	<p>The ANO 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.</p> <p>The ANO has reviewed Airservices' report, however it did not clearly present the considerations that substantiate the conclusion reached. For this reason, the ANO is yet to be convinced that a flight path adjustment as proposed does not provide a better noise outcome while maintaining safety assurance.</p> <p>The ANO continues to pursue this matter with Airservices.</p>

### Seeking improvements in aircraft noise complaint handling

- 3.6 The ANO was pleased to finalise the *Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaint Handling System*, which was submitted to Defence in November 2016 and published on the ANO website later that same month. The report makes seven recommendations aimed at improving Defence's aircraft noise complaints management. Defence has welcomed and supported the conduct of the review and has accepted all recommendations. Key areas for improvement include:
- a. increased use of complaint data to identify and pursue noise improvement opportunities, enhance public consultation and improve information provision
  - b. better public information about the complaints process
  - c. enhanced web based information on aircraft noise
  - d. streamlining complaint management processes for written responses to residents
  - e. increased sharing of data, experience and learnings across bases to maximise noise improvement opportunities and enhance complaint management across Defence.

## 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:

*Ben Morton MP, Community Aviation Consultation Group (CACG) Chairs annual conference, Sydney Airport Community Forum (SACF), Government Aviation Complaint Handlers Forum, Canberra Airport Consultative Committee, Gold Coast Airport Consultative Committee, Australian Airports Association annual conference, RAAF Base Amberley community consultations, Jandakot Airport Consultative Committee, members of Share Noise Action Group (Perth), Perth Airport management team, Perth Airport Municipalities Group, Perth Airport Community Forum.*

- 4.2 The ANO was pleased to give some presentations at international conferences about aircraft noise management, including at the Royal Aeronautical Society's *Greener by Design* conference and at the New Zealand Airports Association's annual conference. We also met with the head of the noise abatement office in the Royal Netherlands Airforce about aircraft noise management and the role of the ANO.

## 5 Information Provision

---

- 5.1 The ANO notes that Airservices has now rolled out its online reporting functionality for major airports. Each airport has its own web-page structured with tabs for each information aspect relevant to the airport. The information is well set out and easy to navigate. The online capability allows for more timely access to a range of recent and historical information, including aircraft activity, general information, noise monitoring and noise complaints. The ANO understands that Airservices will expand the online reporting functionality to other airports over time.
- 5.2 A number of the recommendations in the recent ANO review of Defence's Complaints Management System relate to enhanced information provision about the complaint process. The ANO has also provided feedback about opportunities to improve the structure and information presentation on the Defence aircraft noise website. Defence's intention to incorporate an online complaint lodgement system may provide a useful opportunity for a general review and upgrade of the website information and structure.

## 6 Closing comments from the Ombudsman

---

- 6.1 We were pleased by the Chief of Air Force's positive response to the recently finalised *Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaint Handling System*. At the same time there has been little tangible progress made in this quarter by Defence on the outstanding recommendations arising from our Super Hornet Review (August 2015). We expect there will be more to report next quarter.

- 6.2 Airservices has now updated its National Operating Standard for 'Environmental Management of Changes to Aircraft Operations'. The ANO has reviewed this document and considers the requirements of the remaining three recommendations from our Perth Noise Initiatives Review (November 2015) are addressed in the new version.
- 6.3 It was an unexpected honour for the ANO to be acknowledged at the Australian Airports Association's annual conference in late November with an award for 'outstanding contribution to the airport industry'.
- 6.4 On a personal note, I will be finishing my second (and final) term as Aircraft Noise Ombudsman in a matter of weeks. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Kate Burmester and Tim Abberton for their great work and support over the last six years. They are and will remain the 'engine room' of the office, providing not only the hard work but also vital insights and initiatives that have been critical to our success. I would also like to thank Jan, Mette, Fiona, Debbie and Kristy who (at various times) have provided the administrative support and much more, that has allowed Tim and Kate to focus on the important work of improving aircraft noise outcomes for citizens and for the aviation industry.
- 6.5 I consider that we have achieved much over the last six years. The office has been responsible for many small improvements in aircraft noise management that have benefitted many residents, even if only in a small way. The office has also driven a program to deliver significantly improved information to, and engagement with, the public on aircraft noise issues. This may or may not lead to reductions in the level of aircraft noise but it very often assists members of the public in managing the noise that they confront. These achievements would not have been possible without the cooperation, and indeed the active support of Airservices, Department of Defence, airports, Federal, State and local Government agencies, and the aviation sector more broadly.
- 6.6 Finally I want to acknowledge the many residents for whom we have not been able to reduce the aircraft noise that affects them. While the provision of information can assist residents to better understand the reasons for the noise being where it is, this does not make the noise go away. Many of these people for whom we have been unable to reduce the level of noise have nevertheless thanked this office for the efforts we have made to search for improvement opportunities and for our explanation where change was not possible.
- 6.7 I firmly believe that Australia now handles aircraft noise issues much better than it did six years ago and has made much progress in many aspects of aircraft noise management. However there is still room for further progress and I wish my successor, and my team, the very best in continuing to find better ways to manage aircraft noise, through complaint handling, information provision and community engagement



Ron Brent  
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman  
20 January 2017

## Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

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

<b>AIRSERVICES</b>	<b>Oct 2016</b>	<b>Nov 2016</b>	<b>Dec 2016</b>	<b>Total for quarter</b>
Complaints received:	11	11	4	<b>26</b>
Complaints closed:	13	18	5	<b>36</b>
<b>Total complaints closed - not reviewed:</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>
Complainant did not provide further information	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Outside charter scope	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	4	5	2	<b>11</b>
<b>Total complaints closed - reviewed:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>25</b>
No change possible - explanation provided	7	13	3	<b>23</b>
Change adopted by Airservices Australia	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
Change adopted by Airport operator	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Change adopted by Aircraft operator	1	0	0	<b>1</b>

<b>DEFENCE</b>	<b>Oct 2016</b>	<b>Nov 2016</b>	<b>Dec 2016</b>	<b>Total for quarter</b>
Complaints received:	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
Complaints closed:	4	0	0	<b>4</b>
<b>Total complaints closed - not reviewed:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Complainant did not provide further information	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Outside charter scope	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Referred to Defence to respond directly	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Total complaints closed - reviewed:</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
No change possible - explanation provided	3	0	0	<b>3</b>
Change adopted by Defence	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

	<b>Airservices</b>	<b>Defence</b>	<b>Total</b>
Complaints carried forward on 1 Oct	15	4	<b>19</b>
Complaints received	26	1	<b>27</b>
Complaints closed	36	4	<b>40</b>
Complaints open at 1 Jan	5	1	<b>6</b>



## Attachment 2 Outstanding ANO recommendations

The following tables set out the status of 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
<b>Recommendation 1</b> – 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.
<b>Recommendation 6</b> – Defence should review the reporting requirements in the Noise Management Plan and establish systems to ensure adherence to the requirements.	<u>Ongoing</u> – ANO has reviewed Defence's systems and is seeking supporting data to confirm reporting requirements are adhered to.
<b>Recommendation 10</b> – Defence should expedite establishment of an online complaint lodgement capability.	<u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing, originally due to be completed in quarter 4, 2016. ANO is awaiting Defence's advice about a revised timeframe for completion.

### Perth Noise Initiatives Review (November 2015)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<b>Recommendation 9:</b> 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.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices has updated its National Operating Standard for 'Environmental Management of Changes to Aircraft Operations'. The ANO has reviewed this document and considers the requirements of this recommendation are addressed in the new version.
<b>Recommendation 20:</b> 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.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices has updated its National Operating Standard for 'Environmental Management of Changes to Aircraft Operations'. The ANO has reviewed this document and considers the requirements of this recommendation are addressed in the new version.
<b>Recommendation 21:</b> 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.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices has updated its National Operating Standard for 'Environmental Management of Changes to Aircraft Operations'. The ANO has reviewed this document and considers the requirements of this recommendation are addressed in the new version.

## Defence Complaints System Review (November 2016)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b> – Defence should expand the focus of complaint investigation beyond compliance checking to also identify and pursue opportunities for noise improvements, improved community engagement and better public information.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that it will assign an accountable officer and resources accordingly.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b> – To help in managing complainant expectations, Defence should improve the public information about the complaints process to address the information requirements outlined in the Standard and as identified within the report.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that it will assign an accountable officer and resources accordingly.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b> – Defence should review the Defence Aircraft Noise web information and, taking account of comments in this report, make improvements to information provision, presentation and functionality.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that it will assign an accountable officer and resources accordingly.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b> – To support the timely release of written responses, Defence should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. document the procedures to be followed in the event of written complaints (whether received through post, email or an online form), ensuring such procedures incorporate a timely acknowledgement of the complaint</li> <li>b. streamline any necessary review and approval processes for written responses to complaints</li> <li>c. consider the provision of training and support material for staff that will be responding to complaints, in particular via email following the introduction of electronic complaint submission.</li> </ol>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that it will assign an accountable officer and resources accordingly.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5</b> – Defence should adhere to its existing requirements for complaint recording and tracking.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that it will assign an accountable officer and resources accordingly.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6</b> – Defence should update its localised recording systems and the OA39 form as appropriate to incorporate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Closing date</li> <li>b. A place to record consideration of noise improvement opportunities, community engagement improvements and public information improvements</li> <li>c. Undertakings or follow up action required (including who is accountable for delivery).</li> <li>d. A mechanism for tracking any undertakings or follow up actions through to completion.</li> </ol>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that it will assign an accountable officer and resources accordingly.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7</b> – Defence should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. ensure that complaints not readily ascribed to a base are managed as effectively as other complaints</li> <li>b. share data, experience and learnings across bases to maximise noise improvement opportunities and enhance complaint management across Defence.</li> </ol>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that it will assign an accountable officer and resources accordingly.</p>