



Quarterly Report

April - June 2012

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report includes complaint statistics and a commentary on the April to June 2012 quarter of operations of the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO).
- 1.2 The report 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 Complaint handling

- 2.1 In the April to June quarter, the ANO received 35 new individual complaints. This brings the total number of complaints received by the end of June 2012 to 209. Of these, 178 are closed. The final breakdown of the complaint statistics, updated with figures to the end of June 2012 is included at **Attachment 1**.
- 2.2 It is noteworthy that there has been a small change to the counting of closed complaints reviewed by the ANO as recent advice from Parafield Airport management has confirmed that changes to the Fly Neighbourly Agreement have now been agreed. This has been reflected in recent Parafield complaints now being reported as "Change adopted by Airport operator". It is difficult to classify this change as it is a change by the Airport operator and also a change by the flying school operators. To avoid confusing the figures with double counting, it is being reported as a "Change adopted by Airport operator".

Review of Complaints Handling - Airservices Australia (February 2011)

- 2.3 In the last Quarterly Report, the status of one of the recommendations from this review was incorrectly reported. Recommendation 17 was actioned but the tables did not reflect this.
- 2.4 Airservices has continued to put significant effort into addressing the ongoing recommendations from this first review. **Attachment 2** summarises the ANO assessment of the ongoing recommendations in this review (and the Perth and Sydney reviews discussed under 'Information Provision' below). The ANO is pleased to see the commitment and effort that Airservices is putting into implementation of the recommendations.
- 2.5 Only one recommendation from the review of complaints handling is yet to be actioned, this being introduction of a new complaints database system, and design work is well underway.

3 Consultation

- 3.1 During the quarter, the Ombudsman (or his representative) attended seven Community Aviation Consultation Group meetings or other Airport Noise Committee meetings.
- 3.2 The ANO is using these meetings as an opportunity to communicate the role and activities of the ANO as well as to meet the mandate as stipulated in the

ANO Charter: “to monitor and report on the effectiveness of community consultation processes relating to aircraft noise undertaken by Airservices”. Where appropriate, the ANO office will provide feedback to Airservices, including suggestions for improvement, to assist Airservices in their consultation practices and processes. Where a specific issue is identified, a formal report containing recommendations may be presented to the Board and reported publicly, although to date no such reporting has been warranted.

3.3 Feedback to Airservices so far has covered issues such as:

- The need to find new ways to explain complex air traffic management matters to the public in simpler terms
- The need to provide a clear and open response on issues, even if the matters are long standing
- The opportunity that these meetings provide to distribute information that improves understanding of key issues
- The importance of focusing on issues and complainant numbers when reporting on complaints, rather than the number of contacts that complainants have made.

4 Information Provision

4.1 The ANO has published two formal reports on information presentation, focussed on issues arising from Perth and Sydney, but with many of the recommendations having relevance at many locations across the country. The summary at **Attachment 2** includes the ANO assessment of all ongoing recommendations raised in the three public reports to date.

4.2 It has been particularly pleasing to see the continued progress during this quarter on all review recommendations.

Review of Aircraft Noise Information Presentation and Complaint Resolution: Perth (December 2011)

4.3 Airservices has been progressing all of the recommendations made in this review. Four of the seven recommendations have now been actioned with action underway on the remaining three.

Assessment of Aircraft Noise Information (Sydney) - Airservices Australia (March 2012)


4.4 Three of the nine recommendations made in this review have now been actioned and work is underway on addressing the remaining six.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Airservices has clearly focussed substantial effort on actioning the review recommendations during the quarter. The ANO has been pleased to see this continued progress, as reflected in the table below.

Recommendation status:	Complaint Handling	Perth	Sydney	Total: 34
actioned	8	1	3	12
actioned with ongoing monitoring by ANO	9	3	0	12
action is underway	1	3	6	10
ANO is awaiting formal advice on action	0	0	0	0

5.2 The next phase of the ANO's work will see increased emphasis on supporting the effective implementation of the recommendations from the reviews, pursuing some key issues raised by complaints, and supporting effective use of consultation forums. Key issues and actions will continue to be reported through these quarterly reports.



Ron Brent
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
20 June 2012

Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

The following table summarises the complaint statistics for the quarter.

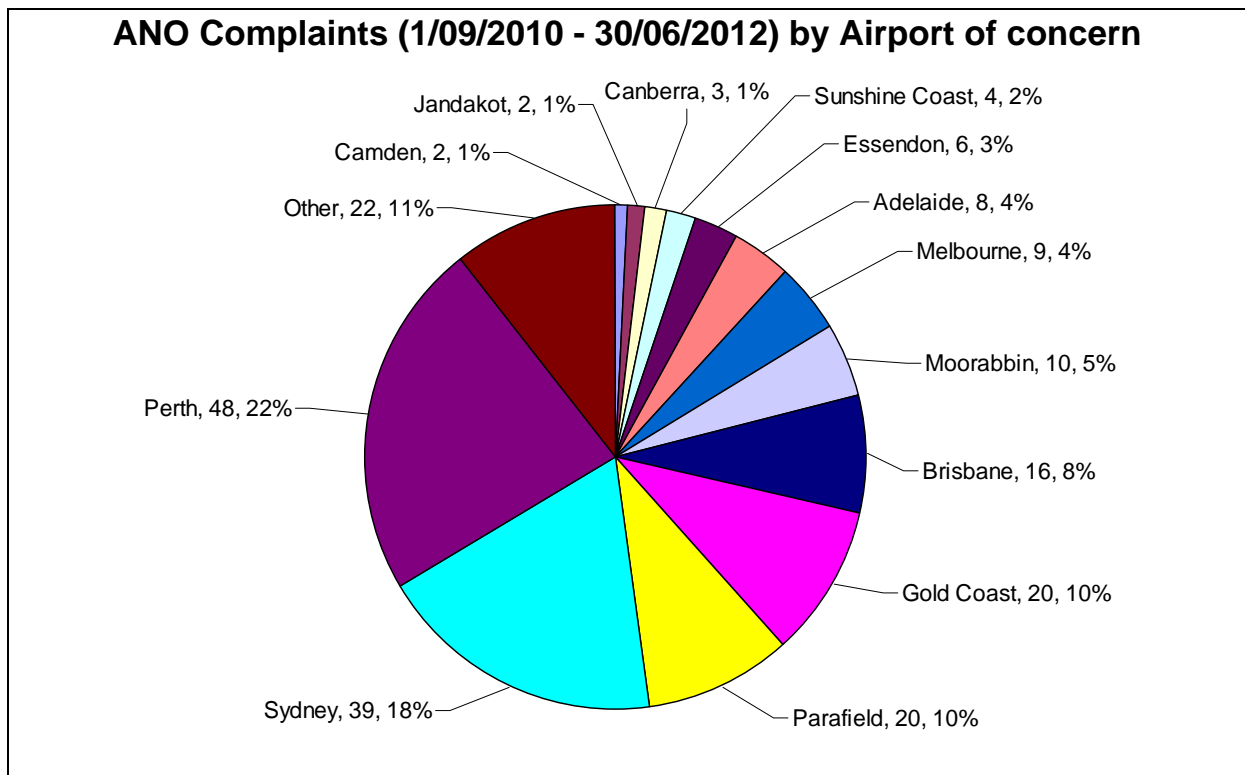
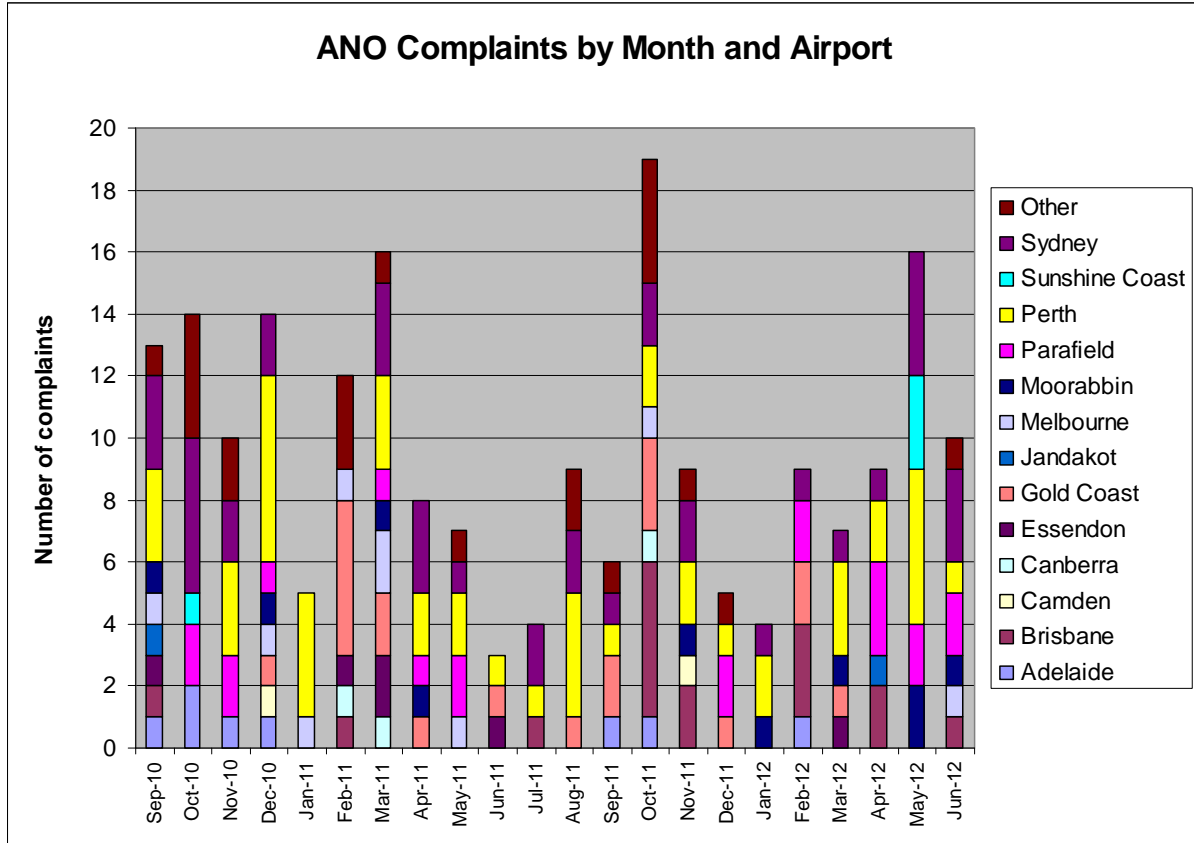
	Apr 2012	May 2012	Jun 2012	Total for period	Total from 1-Sep-10 to 30-Jun-12
Complaints received:	9	16	10	35	209
Complaints closed:	4	7	5	16	178
Complaints not reviewed:					47
Complainant did not provide further information					12
Outside charter scope					12
Referred to Airservices to respond directly					23
Complaints reviewed:					131
No change possible - explanation provided					120
Change adopted by Airservices Australia					3
Change adopted by Airport operator					6
Change adopted by Operator					2
Average time taken to close complaints: (including weekends and public holidays)					59 days

A majority of complaints reviewed by the ANO office are resolved through the provision of a detailed explanation, with no short-term changes possible to address the individual concerns. This could lead to a potential complainant thinking there is no point in complaining, if all that is likely is a better explanation of the noise issue, rather than any change. However, there are two points to note on this:

1. For many, a better explanation is all that is possible in the short term, and an honest, comprehensive and well-presented explanation can provide closure on the issue, even if the outcome is no change. This allows the individual to make decisions on how they wish to manage the noise issues they are experiencing.
2. It is also the case that the reason no short term change is feasible is because the complaints often point to broader systemic issues for which there is no quick process of review and resolution. Almost all complaints contribute insight into broader issues and many of these have been addressed to some degree in the reviews completed to date, or have been noted as issues for further consideration.

May 2012 was a month with a higher than average number of complaints to the ANO office, although the total of 16 complaints for the month emanated from only five locations. This bunching of complaints from certain locations is common, sometimes indicating a change in activity that has sparked new awareness of aircraft noise, but in May it is more likely to relate to an increased awareness of the role of the ANO office as an avenue for pursuing noise issues.

For example, the spike in complaints from the Sunshine Coast and Perth follows the Ombudsman's attendance at the Sunshine Coast Aviation Community meeting in late April, and the Perth Airport Community Aviation Consultation Group meeting in early May.



Attachment 2 ANO assessment of action on Review Recommendations

Recommendations are classified as 'ongoing' where there remains work to be undertaken by Airservices Australia and/or where monitoring the application of the new procedures by the ANO is required. The ANO considers it appropriate to monitor application of new processes or initiatives to ensure effective implementation before removing the items from the 'ongoing' list.

Since the last report to the Board, Airservices has actioned Perth recommendation 6 and Sydney recommendations 1, 8 and 9. These recommendations have therefore been excluded from the following table.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
Complaints Handling Review	
<p>Complaints Handling Recommendation 1:</p> <p>Airservices should amend its systems and procedures to support the NEU seeking a suitable remedy for those complaints where it may be possible to improve the noise outcome, and ensure follow-up on such opportunities. It is acknowledged that an improved noise outcome may only be feasible for a small minority of the total noise complaints received.</p>	<p>Actioned by Airservices</p> <p>The ANO will monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p>Complaints Handling Recommendation 3:</p> <p>Airservices should make a senior manager accountable for capturing, recording and tracking through to implementation, noise improvement opportunities arising from complaints.</p>	<p>Actioned by Airservices</p> <p>The ANO will monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p>Complaints Handling Recommendation 7:</p> <p>Airservices should update and enhance their suite of fact sheets to cover all major airports in Australia and the key aircraft noise issues of interest to the general public. Airservices should publish these on their website, as well as disseminate them to specific complainants as appropriate. In addition, the remainder of the Airservices noise information website should be reviewed and updated where appropriate.</p>	<p>Actioned by Airservices</p> <p>The ANO will monitor and support the development of fact sheets for major airports and will provide input to improve the content of fact sheets that have already been published.</p>
<p>Complaints Handling Recommendation 11:</p> <p>Airservices should establish a training package, and relevant supporting material, to assist managers and key decision makers in recognising the value of complaints and the manner in which they can contribute to system and service improvements.</p>	<p>Actioned by Airservices</p> <p>The ANO will monitor the roll out of training.</p>
<p>Complaints Handling Recommendation 13:</p> <p>Airservices should place greater focus on identifying, recording and reporting issues in addition to reporting the numbers of complaints and complainants. The key indicators that should inform an understanding of complaints should be the issues raised, and the number of persons who have complained about those issues, rather than the number of times individuals have contacted the NEU about a particular issue.</p>	<p>Actioned by Airservices</p> <p>The ANO will monitor the new initiatives as they are rolled out across all public reports.</p>
<p>Complaints Handling Recommendation 14:</p> <p>Airservices should develop clear messages on key issues that provide a realistic picture of what is, and what is not, likely to be achievable. Matters of government policy should be cleared in advance with the Minister.</p>	<p>Actioned by Airservices</p> <p>The ANO will monitor the continued development of fact sheets and clarity of information provided to the public.</p>
<p>Complaints Handling Recommendation 15:</p> <p>Airservices should implement processes to ensure that issues identified through complaints are followed up, through the process of consideration, decision and where appropriate, implementation.</p>	<p>Actioned by Airservices</p> <p>The ANO will monitor the application of the new processes.</p>

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
<p>Complaints Handling Recommendation 16: Airservices should give priority to the replacement of the NEU complaints database with a system capable of providing more sophisticated analysis of complaint data.</p>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>
<p>Complaints Handling Recommendation 17: Airservices should develop a formal, written and published instruction on recording relevant statistical details about issues, complaints, complainants and contacts.</p>	<p>Actioned by Airservices The ANO will now monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p>Complaints Handling Recommendation 18: Airservices should develop a standard clause relating to the minimisation of noise, for inclusion in operational Letters of Agreement with aircraft operators, where appropriate.</p>	<p>Actioned by Airservices The ANO will now monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
Perth Review	
<p>Perth Review Recommendation 1: In its ongoing development of public reports on aircraft noise, Airservices should review the reports with the aim of making the reports as easy as possible to understand. This should include using 'plain English' in place of technical terminology, considering the usefulness of averages in cases of a wide spread of data, incorporating some analysis of the data, and establishing a simple system for obtaining public feedback on reports.</p>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>
<p>Perth Review Recommendation 2: Airservices, in addition to implementing the recommendations from the ANO's Complaint Handling Review, should continue to improve information provided to the public and industry, through an increased focus on complaint issues and identifying opportunities for possible improvements in noise outcomes. Public and industry reporting on complaints should provide analysis in addition to the data.</p>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>
<p>Perth Review Recommendation 3: Airservices should undertake regular reviews of the information provided on its website and in printed material to ensure that the material is current, relevant to the audience, and responds to feedback from stakeholders.</p>	<p>Actioned by Airservices The ANO will now monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p>Perth Review Recommendation 4: Airservices should further develop its capacity to provide comprehensive information on all aspects of aircraft noise through NCIS as well as via fact sheets, and its website. This could include such matters as explaining flight paths and why planes fly where they do, explaining changes in air traffic over time (even where there has been no specific action to bring about that change), and explaining the processes for determining the location of aircraft noise monitors and the role of those monitors. It should also include a process for reporting publically on initiatives to improve noise outcomes, including cases where those initiatives result in a conclusion that improvements cannot be achieved.</p>	<p>Actioned by Airservices The ANO will now monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p>Perth Review Recommendation 5: Where complaints/enquiries relate to matters for Government, Airservices should advise complainants of this and, where possible, refer to available material which presents the Government's position. Where complainants wish to pursue their complaints with the Department, Airservices should assist in transferring the complainant directly to the Department.</p>	<p>Actioned by Airservices The ANO will now monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p>Perth Review Recommendation 7: Airservices should ensure that it has a clearly defined assessment process for considering possible changes to improve noise outcomes, which should include appropriate public reporting. Such reporting could encompass the WARRP Post Implementation Review.</p>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
Sydney Review	
<p>Sydney Issues Recommendation 2: Airservices should improve the clarity of maps produced in reports used to convey aircraft noise information.</p>	The ANO notes that action is underway.
<p>Sydney Issues Recommendation 3: Airservices should provide more textual and qualitative assessment of aircraft noise in reporting.</p>	The ANO notes that action is underway.
<p>Sydney Issues Recommendation 4: Airservices should provide more information, clearly presented, on daily or seasonal variations, where significant.</p>	The ANO notes that action is underway.
<p>Sydney Issues Recommendation 5: Airservices should provide at least one Sydney specific fact sheet explaining Airservices' roles in noise sharing, LTOP, runway selections and noise respite and when appropriate, refer enquirers to other existing noise information sources.</p>	The ANO notes that action is underway.
<p>Sydney Issues Recommendation 6: Airservices should produce a short report on LTOP performance, and the efforts currently being made to ensure the best possible noise sharing results are delivered.</p>	The ANO notes that action is underway.
<p>Sydney Issues Recommendation 7: 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>	The ANO notes that action is underway.