



Quarterly Report

April – June 2013

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1 Introduction

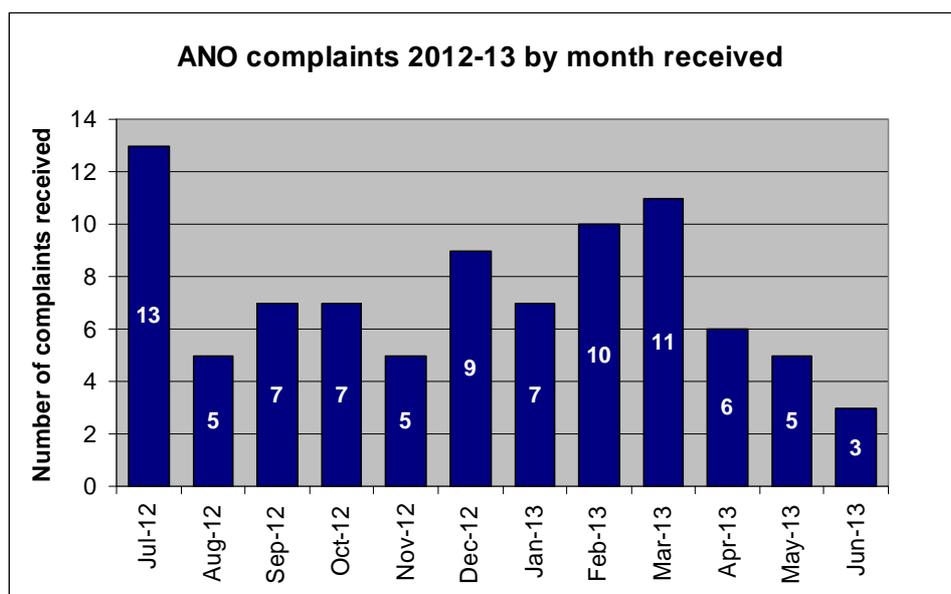
- 1.1 This report includes complaint statistics and a summary of ANO activities during the April to June 2013 quarter. We have also separately produced our Annual Report, which provides an overview of the year and some more detailed discussion of ANO achievements in the last 12 months.
- 1.2 This report 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 Overview

- 2.1 During the quarter we commenced detailed analysis of the selected sample of Airservices' complaint cases as part of our *Case Studies in Complaint Management* Review. Already we have identified a number of important findings that will lead to some constructive recommendations for further improvement of Airservices' complaint handling service. Our report on this review will be published following its submission to the Board of Airservices Australia (Airservices).
- 2.2 Complaints to our office have fallen unexpectedly this past quarter and the locations of complainants has also been somewhat out of the usual. In particular, we have had three complainants reporting issues with Airservices' handling of their concerns about increased helicopter operations over Melbourne. See the Case Study on this issue included in the following section.
- 2.3 Additionally, we have selected a supplier – Bruel & Kjaer EMS Pty Ltd – for our new complaints management system and commenced preparing for a transition in next few months. The new system will provide enhanced capability for identifying and assessing issues and trends in our complaint data.

3 Complaint handling

- 3.1 In the quarter, the ANO received just 14 new individual complaints (half the number received in the previous quarter). We are not sure why there has been this drop-off in complaints. We would like to think that it is, at least in part, a reflection of the improving management of aircraft noise issues by Airservices, in response to our early recommendations now being implemented.
- 3.2 This quarter's complaints bring the total number of complaints received in the financial year to 88, and to an overall total of 297 since we commenced operations in September 2010. Of the total, 275 are closed. More detailed complaint statistics to the end of June 2013 are included at **Attachment 1**.



3.3 Last quarter we provided two tables outlining the noise improvement opportunities stemming from complaints received by the ANO that were either under investigation or finalised during the quarter. The tables below have been updated to show the progress made in the past three months.

Table 1: Potential noise improvement opportunities under investigation

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
Nov 2010	Perth – Can the flight path over Roleystone be relocated to an area that does not affect so many residences	Airservices has further developed the proposal, following community support shown at the Community Aviation Consultation group meeting in Feb 2013. A consultation strategy has been developed with community meetings planned for Aug 2013, ahead of a 12 month trial of an alternative flight path, following which Airservices will make a decision about permanent implementation.
Feb 2011	Canberra – Can parachute operations use the high noise corridor when possible to minimise overflying residential areas?	Airservices agreed to implement this change, and amended procedures accordingly. A subsequent ANO review identified that many aircraft were not complying with the new arrangements. Airservices advised that further internal documentation amendments are required to enact the change fully and that these will be completed in Aug 2013.
May 2012	Perth – What is the plan to address the numerous issues and requests associated with Chidlow?	The ANO has sought detail from Airservices on the specific proposals to be considered and the timeline.
Dec 2012	Coffs Harbour - Can parachute aircraft climb over areas that do not affect residential areas as much as the current climb locations do?	The ANO has requested Airservices to consider better alternative areas for parachute climb, and if none possible, to explain why they must climb where they do. Airservices has delayed consideration of this until Aug 2013 when the radar service is available again.
Jun 2013	Melbourne – Can changes be made to reduce the impacts of helicopters hovering at low levels during noise sensitive times?	Following several complaints to the ANO about this issue, Airservices has undertaken to investigate if any changes can be made. (See the Case Study below)

CASE STUDY

C Harrassed by hovering helos

In April and June 2013 the ANO received three complaints from residents from neighbouring suburbs East Melbourne and Richmond about the impact of helicopters hovering for extended periods, particularly at noise sensitive times such as early mornings and evenings.

Investigations revealed that residents were affected by helicopter operators based at Essendon Airport that were hovering over residential areas to report on road traffic conditions in the area and on sporting events at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). Further analysis identified that, since 2007, 549 residents complained to Airservices about helicopter noise across all of Melbourne and 12% of these (68 residents) live within a 3 kilometre radius of the MCG.

Airservices and the ANO contacted one of the operators to let them know about the community concern and to gain a better understanding of why they operate in particular areas and why they do not take advantage of hovering over less residential areas (such as nearby industrial areas or rail yards). The operator advised that pilots are aware of the noise they make and efforts are made to limit the time in each area and to maintain heights above the minimums whenever possible. While we were impressed with the operator's responsiveness, unfortunately the options to improve the noise outcome (without creating a worse situation for other residential areas) seem to be limited.

For the sporting event operators, there are a number of reasons why they operate at their current locations:

- The first is because of the advertising signage at the MCG. The signage faces to the north where the main stadium area is. The helicopter is therefore restricted to operate from a certain area so that the signage appears the right way up for TV viewers. While I have my own view on how important this may or may not be, I do accept that it is very important to the commercial networks and the sponsors. Changing the direction of the signage is apparently problematic due to the on-ground camera locations and the positioning of the commentary boxes.
- The second is due to the location of the sun and the glare when there are games being played around sunset. This is not so much of an issue for day matches in summer, for example the cricket, where the sun is less of a problem.

Airservices has agreed to investigate these matters further with the MCG authorities as well as the helicopter operators with the aim of providing at least some relief to residents in the East Melbourne area. The issue has been included in Airservices' strategic noise improvement plan which will help in tracking and recording of progress.

- 3.4 Unfortunately, of the three noise improvement opportunities finalised this quarter, none were found to be viable at the current time (see Table 2 below). While this is disappointing for those affected by the noise, it is nonetheless a positive step that the changes have been given serious consideration, that Airservices has a reasoned basis for its conclusions that a change is not possible at this time, and that the complainant has been given a comprehensive explanation of why this is so.

Table 2: Noise improvement opportunities finalised during the quarter

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
Feb 2011	Brisbane – Change to reciprocal runway operations (RRO) to start earlier than 10pm, when possible, meaning arriving and departing air traffic will be over the water rather than over residential areas as much as possible	The change was adopted in 2012. However, the ANO continued to pursue formal changes to the public pilot documentation to reflect the adopted practice. The revised procedures were published in a supplement issued at the end of July 2013.
Oct 2011	Perth – Can low trajectory aircraft fly steeper departure over the suburbs, particularly at night?	Airservices worked with South African Airways to trial a steeper climb on departure for one of their heavier long-haul departures. The trial took place in May 2012. Following analysis presented to the ANO in Jun 2013 Airservices determined that the trial did not identify a clear improvement in the overall noise outcome that would warrant a permanent change.
Mar 2012	Perth – Can departures to the south that head west and north continue directly to the ocean before turning north?	Airservices further developed the proposal, following community support shown at the Community Aviation Consultation group meeting in Feb 2013. In Jun 2013 Airservices advised that the change had been assessed as not feasible due to safety and capacity reasons.
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 a multiple tracks to enable noise sharing. Airservices identified that such an arrangement has not been trialled yet 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. This type of trial is unlikely to commence elsewhere before 2015.

3.5 Timeliness in finalising investigations is an issue that we are working with Airservices to improve. We are pleased to see an increasing willingness by Airservices to make information about the changes being considered available publicly and we strongly encourage this.

4 Consultation

4.1 During the quarter, the ANO office was represented at a number of airport consultative meetings and other industry forums. This is an integral part of our role in monitoring Airservices' consultation and information provision, but also a way in which we gather information about emerging aircraft noise issues.

4.2 We also recently provided feedback to Airservices on its *Communications and Consultation Protocol*, which is currently being updated.

5 Information Provision

- 5.1 Airservices has been making progress in this area, with continuing effective use of its website and suite of fact sheets to improve the information available about aircraft noise issues. However, the ANO continues to press Airservices for timely and detailed public information about the current program of noise improvement initiatives under investigation.
- 5.2 **Attachment 2** lists the three ongoing recommendations from our *Assessment of Aircraft Noise Information (Sydney)* review. All other recommendations have now been actioned. Our 'one year on' assessment of Airservices' response to the Sydney Review is available on our website.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 Airservices is making progress in its management of aircraft noise issues. Staff and management changes in the Noise Complaints & Information Service are helping to drive the cultural reform needed in complaint management and are already showing positive signs. The Roleystone proposal reaching the stage of trialling an alternative flight path is also exciting progress on what has been a very long-standing issue.
- 6.2 There is, of course, always room for improvement and the ANO will continue to pursue with vigour any opportunities for improving noise outcomes that emerge from complaints and our other interactions with communities, stakeholders, and Airservices.



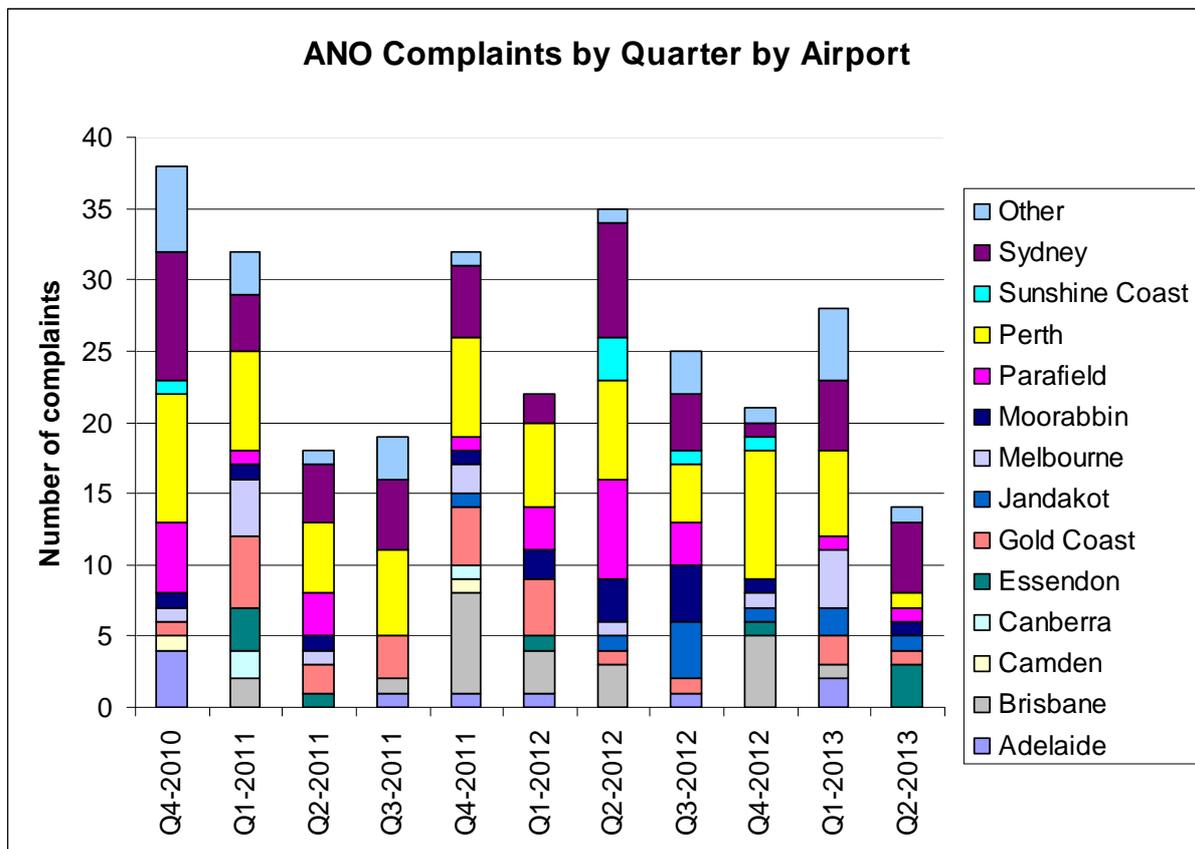
Ron Brent
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
8 August 2013

Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

The following table summarises the complaint statistics for the quarter.

	Apr 2013	May 2013	Jun 2013	Total for quarter	Total from 1 Sep 10 to 30 Jun 13
Complaints received:	6	5	3	14	297
Complaints closed:	10	9	2	21	275
Complaints closed - not reviewed:					63
Complainant did not provide further information					14
Outside charter scope					17
Referred to Airservices to respond directly					32
Complaints closed - reviewed:					212
No change possible - explanation provided					178
Change adopted by Airservices Australia					6
Change adopted by Airport operator					22
Change adopted by Aircraft operator					6
Average time taken to close complaints: (including weekends and public holidays)					59 days

The following graph shows complaints received about airports by quarter.



Attachment 2 ANO assessment of action on Review Recommendations

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

Since the last report to the Board, there has been no change, with the three remaining *Assessment of Aircraft Noise Issues: Sydney* recommendations still ongoing.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
<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 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.