



Quarterly Report
January – March 2015

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report includes complaint statistics and a summary of ANO activities during the January to March 2014 quarter. It is structured around the three key functions of the ANO, these being 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 On 19 January 2015, the Memorandum of Understanding between Airservices, Defence and the ANO was signed, enabling the ANO to also provide an independent noise complaint and review mechanism to Defence, alongside our oversight role for Airservices. The ANO Charter was amended and has been published to reflect the extended role, which was announced by a joint ministerial media statement on 27 January.
- 2.2 The quarter has been a busy one with ANO staff visiting a number of key Defence locations and starting our first review of a Defence matter – to review compliance with the noise related Conditions of Approval for Australian Super Hornet flying operations at RAAF Base Amberley, QLD. This will include an independent review of compliance for implementation of the requirements of approved plans, for the period from 23 March 2010 to 31 December 2014, and where appropriate will identify opportunities for continued improvement in aircraft noise management.
- 2.3 We have also been closely following noise improvement initiatives that Airservices is pursuing in Perth and the Gold Coast, made a presentation to the International Sustainable Aviation Forum and undertook significant work with Standards Australia developing a Handbook that provides guidance on the preparation of information on aircraft noise for dissemination to the public.

3 Complaint handling

- 3.1 In the quarter the ANO received **26** new individual complaints, which is in line with the long term average quarterly number of complaints. We have received no individual complaints about Defence aircraft noise issues to date.
- 3.2 At the end of the quarter **eleven** complaints were open. Twenty-one complaints were closed in the period with one leading to a change that may improve noise outcomes. See the case study below.
- 3.3 More detailed complaint statistics to the end of March 2015 are included at **Attachment 1**.

Case Study: adopting best practice from other locations

In February 2012, following an ANO investigation into a complaint from a resident near Jandakot Airport, new procedures were introduced at that airport that meant simulated engine failure practice would be conducted over Airport land rather than residential areas. This delivered a noticeable noise improvement for residents.

Following the success of this noise improvement, Airservices included an item on their Strategic Noise Improvement Plan (SNIP) to consider “can procedures for practicing engine failures near general aviation airports be changed (or standardised to align with the procedures currently in practice at Jandakot)?”

When the ANO received a complaint from a resident near Camden Airport, the ANO asked Airservices to look into whether similar procedures for ‘practice engine failures’, as employed at Jandakot Airport, could be applied at Camden to avoid doing this practice over residential areas. Airservices consulted with relevant stakeholders and the airport has now updated their ‘fly friendly’ arrangements accordingly.

The ANO encourages Airservices to pursue similar noise improvements opportunities at other general aviation airports, as appropriate, in line with their earlier SNIP commitments.

Seeking noise improvement opportunities

- 3.4 A core focus of our investigations into complaints is to look for the potential to improve noise outcomes. During this quarter we were able achieve the change in the case study above, which we identified last year. Unfortunately there were no further noise improvement opportunities identified through ANO investigations in the quarter. We are, however, closely following Airservices’ noise improvement initiatives in Perth and the Gold Coast, which are discussed in more detail in the ‘Consultation’ section of this report (page 4).
- 3.5 Regrettably another noise improvement opportunity that the office was pursuing, stemming from complaints received by the ANO in 2014, turned out not to be viable (Table 1 below).

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
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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.
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Table 1: Noise improvement opportunities finalised during the quarter

3.6 Table 2 (below) 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 2: 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. In Feb 2015 Airservices published its Post Implementation Review, concluding that there was a noticeable benefit from the trial and that the change should be implemented permanently. Airservices will action this immediately.
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 been trialled previously 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 respite departures, using an additional departure track for night departures, as part of the current noise improvement review in Perth.
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 adopted the changed departure procedure permanently, effective from March 2015.
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

- 3.7 The ANO has developed a training workshop on effective complaint handling (and in particular better managing aircraft noise complaints) that we have delivered to a number of civil aviation stakeholders over the past few years. These workshops are aimed at improving noise outcomes through better handling of noise complaints.
- 3.8 During the quarter, as part of ramping up in our new role with Defence, we have delivered the training at Amberley and Williamtown RAAF Bases. Several Pearce-based RAAF staff participated in the training provided last year at Perth Airport. We also provided a similar workshop for staff at Belmont City Council (WA), with both our office and the Council recognising that the skills are readily transferrable to all complaint handling scenarios.

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' and Defence's consultation and information provision. This included:

Airservices: International Sustainable Aviation Forum (Avalon), Perth Airport Community Forum, Gold Coast Community Aviation Consultation Group

Defence: Amberley Community Working Group, Salt Ash community meeting, Williamtown Advisory Group

- 4.2 Since the start of the calendar year, the ANO has received several complaints about Airservices' consultation for the noise improvement initiatives it is considering in Perth and at the Gold Coast. We are monitoring Airservices' consultation about these initiatives and reviewing their management of community feedback, with a view to providing constructive input as appropriate. In summary:

- Gold Coast trial flight path change for runway 14 departures: The trial commenced in January 2015. An unexpected outcome has occurred, with increased concentration of flight tracks over Farrant's Hill at a noticeably lower altitude than the pre-trial flight tracks. Airservices has been highly responsive to concerns raised, undertaking detailed analysis of flight tracks to understand the impacts being reported by Farrant's Hill residents.

The ANO notes that the Farrant's Hill area was not identified in the pre-trial assessment process as an area that would experience a noticeable change and as a result was not targeted in their pre-trial consultation activities. We have suggested that Airservices increase its engagement with residents and consider whether the unexpected impacts warrant amending/cancelling the trial.

We accept Airservices' approach is to continue the trial for a further three months while planned noise monitoring is undertaken. We commend Airservices for actively seeking community feedback in finalising the locations for noise monitoring during the trial, and for its responsiveness to this feedback and the Farrant's Hill issues in determining the final locations.

- Perth Noise Initiatives 2015: At the Perth Airport Community Forum on 5 March, Airservices announced a suite of noise improvement initiatives that it may implement in 2015, subject to community consultation and environmental assessment where necessary. Complainants who contacted the ANO were concerned about the proposed flight path change for southern departures at night (10pm-5am) which, although few in number, would overfly areas that were not previously affected by these departures.

Their key concern was that there had been no prior notice that such a change would be announced at the 5 March meeting and so residents who will potentially be affected did not have an opportunity to attend the meeting or its subsequent 'community expo', which provided "opportunity for members of the community to address specific questions to representatives from Perth Airports, Airservices Australia and the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman". At the time, there were no further community consultation meetings scheduled, although Airservices had identified that more would occur, with dates to be advised.

On 24 March Airservices published the dates for Community information drop-in sessions on three dates in May. The ANO accepts that the announcement of a potential new flight path has caused great concern for some residents and that they felt there should have been prior information to enable their participation at the community forum when the announcement was made. We are also aware that Airservices has given careful consideration to its consultation strategy and the information it has made available for the proposed initiatives and that it is committed to community consultation. We encourage Airservices to engage actively with the Perth community in line with their commitments to consult and we will continue to monitor closely their handling of these initiatives and any issues arising.

5 Information Provision

- 5.1 There is only one ongoing recommendation sub-part that remains open from any of the ANO reviews of Airservices. This final recommendation sub-part (from our *Case Studies in Complaint Management* report, published in January 2014) 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. **Attachment 2** summarises the status of ongoing recommendations.
- 5.2 The ANO has taken a lead role in working with Standards Australia to draft a Handbook to 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, and to see it presented in a form that will allow individuals to make personal judgements on the impact of that noise.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 Taking on the Defence role has been an exciting development in the ANO responsibilities and we look forward to a productive working relationship. While we have not yet received an individual complaint, we are working hard to finalise our Super Hornet review to provide a valuable contribution to Defence's management of aircraft noise issues.
- 6.2 In the civil space, we are delighted to see Airservices actively pursuing noise improvement opportunities. Even though these can be challenging in terms of the public engagement activities required, we consider it a key aspect of best practice aircraft noise management.



Ron Brent
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
26 March 2015

Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

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

AIRSERVICES	Jan 2015	Feb 2015	Mar 2015	Total for quarter	Total from 1 Sep 10 to 31 Mar 15
Complaints received:	5	11	10	26	471
Complaints closed:	8	6	7	21	460
Total complaints closed - not reviewed:					130
Complainant did not provide further information					18
Outside charter scope					20
Referred to Airservices to respond directly					92
Total complaints closed - reviewed:					330
No change possible - explanation provided					283
Change adopted by Airservices Australia					11
Change adopted by Airport operator					25
Change adopted by Aircraft operator					11

DEFENCE	Jan 2015	Feb 2015	Mar 2015	Total for quarter	Total from 19 Jan 15 to 31 Mar 15
Complaints received:	0	0	0	0	0
Complaints closed:	0	0	0	0	0
Total complaints closed - not reviewed:					0
Complainant did not provide further information					0
Outside charter scope					0
Referred to Defence to respond directly					0
Total complaints closed - reviewed:					0
No change possible - explanation provided					0
Change adopted by Defence					0

Attachment 2 ANO assessment of action on Review Recommendations

Case Studies in Complaint Management (January 2014)

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, although it is contingent on a number of other projects.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
<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>