



Quarterly Report

October - December 2012

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report includes complaint statistics and commentary on the operations of the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) during the October to December 2012 quarter.
- 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 Overview

- 2.1 Over the past two years our focus has been on the presentation and follow-up of our first three reports. These have dealt with complaint handling and aircraft noise information. Airservices has shown a strong commitment to reform in these areas although the process of changing long standing practices, procedures and culture can be difficult and requires patience.
- 2.2 We have also sought to press for processes to deliver changes in the management of air traffic that can improve noise outcomes without diminishing safety. Such changes can require significant process reform. Again we are pleased to see the commitment shown by Airservices to deliver reform.
- 2.3 Unfortunately the amount of change within Airservices is not always apparent to the public. Given the necessary caution that Airservices must exercise in changing air traffic management, to ensure no unacceptable increase in safety risk, process change will take time. We are now beginning to see some positive results from the work of the past two years and the public should see increasing responsiveness to opportunities for improving noise outcomes, as well as clearer explanations of why changes are so often not possible.
- 2.4 Over the coming year we will concentrate on consolidating the improvements in complaint handling, and on pursuing further refinement and development in the presentation of information about aircraft noise. We will also have the opportunity to assess the implementation of Airservices' new consultation protocols as they are tested on potential changes to air traffic management.

3 Complaint handling

- 3.1 In the quarter, the ANO received 21 new individual complaints. This brings the total number of complaints received by the end of December 2012 to 255. Of these, 230 are closed. The final breakdown of the complaint statistics, updated with figures to the end of December 2012 is included at **Attachment 1**.

Review of Complaints Handling - Airservices Australia (February 2011)

- 3.2 **Attachment 2** summarises the ANO assessment of the ongoing recommendations in this review (and the Perth and Sydney reviews discussed under 'Information Provision' below).

- 3.3 During the quarter, four of the remaining nine recommendations were addressed by Airservices. This was achieved through the publication of a number of fact sheets, introduction of a Strategic Noise Improvement Plan (SNIP) and further roll-out of new airport noise reports. This leaves five ongoing recommendations, four of which are actioned and being monitored, while the final item to be actioned is implementation of the new complaints database (Recommendation 16).

Case studies in complaint management

- 3.4 Terms of Reference for a new formal review were tabled at the last Board meeting and published on the ANO website in December. The review is aimed at identifying any lessons learnt, or opportunities for improvement, through an analysis of a select sample of complaints made to Airservices Australia that have not resulted in the complainant contacting the ANO. This review will be conducted in the first half of 2013.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 During the quarter, the Ombudsman (or his representative) attended three airport consultative meetings as well as a number of other industry forums and conventions. The ANO uses these meetings as an opportunity to communicate the role and activities of the ANO as well as to meet (in part) 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”*. It is intended that ANO attendance at such meetings will continue throughout 2013.
- 4.2 The ANO has also reviewed and provided appropriate feedback to Airservices on the draft consultation strategy for the implementation of smart tracking (also referred to as Required Navigation Performance or “RNP”).

5 Information Provision

- 5.1 The ANO has published two formal reports on information presentation, focussed on issues arising from Perth and Sydney, but with most 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.

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

- 5.2 During the quarter, three of the Perth recommendations were actioned sufficiently to be removed from the ANO monitoring program. This was achieved by Airservices establishing a website review process, increasing its focus on identifying potential noise improvements and implementing processes to refer complainants to other agencies where appropriate.

5.3 This leaves three of the seven recommendations still ongoing, although only one of these (Recommendation 7) has not been implemented to a point where it is considered to be 'actioned'. The ANO is monitoring implementation of new processes for the remaining two actioned but not yet closed recommendations.

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

5.4 Four of the nine recommendations made in this review have been actioned and work is underway on addressing the remaining five. During the quarter, Airservices finalised two Sydney Long Term Operating Plan (LTOP) fact sheets that addressed Sydney Issues Recommendation 5.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Airservices has continued to action the review recommendations during the quarter. The table below reflects the status of these recommendations. Given the substantial progress that Airservices has made (and is continuing to make) on implementing the recommendations, the ANO is satisfied that the earlier slow progress has been redressed. Accordingly future quarterly reporting will focus less on the follow-up of reports and more on our new initiatives.

Recommendation status:	Complaint Handling	Perth	Sydney	Total
actioned	13	4	4	21
actioned with ongoing monitoring by ANO	4	2	0	6
action is underway	1	1	5	7
ANO is awaiting formal advice on action	0	0	0	0
Totals	18	7	9	34

6.2 Reports on ANO initiatives investigating the option of full runway length departures (in the context of Perth Airport) and reviewing opportunities for small noise improvements at Parafield Airport were released at the end of the quarter, as foreshadowed in the last quarterly report.

6.3 We are looking forward to a productive 2013 with emphasis on helping Airservices bed down their new processes for identifying and implementing noise improvement opportunities.



Ron Brent
 Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
 24 January 2013

Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

The following table summarises the complaint statistics for the quarter.

	Oct 2012	Nov 2012	Dec 2012	Total for period	Total from 1-Sep-10 to 30-Sep-12
Complaints received:	7	5	9	21	255
Complaints closed:	10	5	1	16	230
Complaints not reviewed:					55
Complainant did not provide further information					14
Outside charter scope					13
Referred to Airservices to respond directly					28
Complaints reviewed:					175
No change possible - explanation provided					147
Change adopted by Airservices Australia					4
Change adopted by Airport operator					19
Change adopted by Aircraft operator					5
Average time taken to close complaints: (including weekends and public holidays)					58 days

Analysis of Complaints

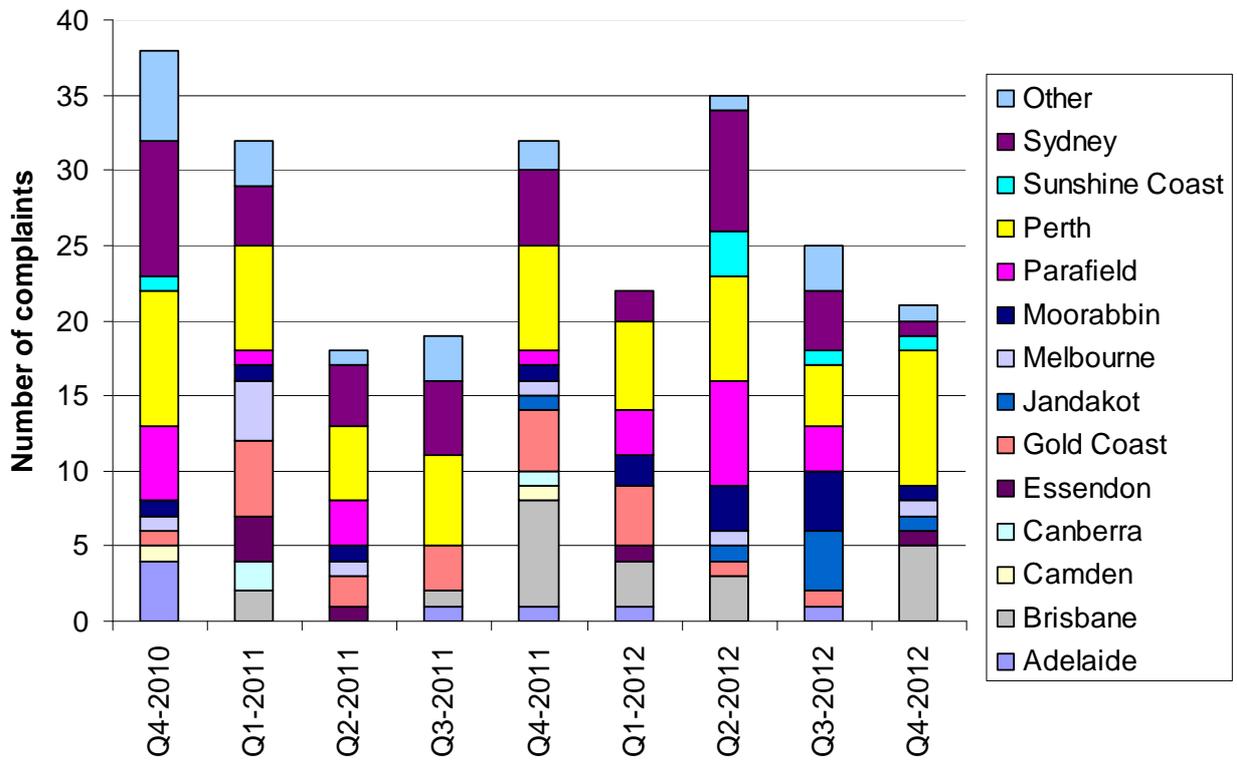
The following comments are a simple analysis of our complaint data. Given the relatively small size of the sample, the analysis should be taken with considerable caution. We hope to improve our analytical capacity by implementing a computer based complaint management system to replace the manual and paper based system used to date.

Two noticeable features of the first graph below are the consistent high level of Perth complaints (the yellow bands), and a recent decline in Gold Coast complaints. Some possible explanations are:

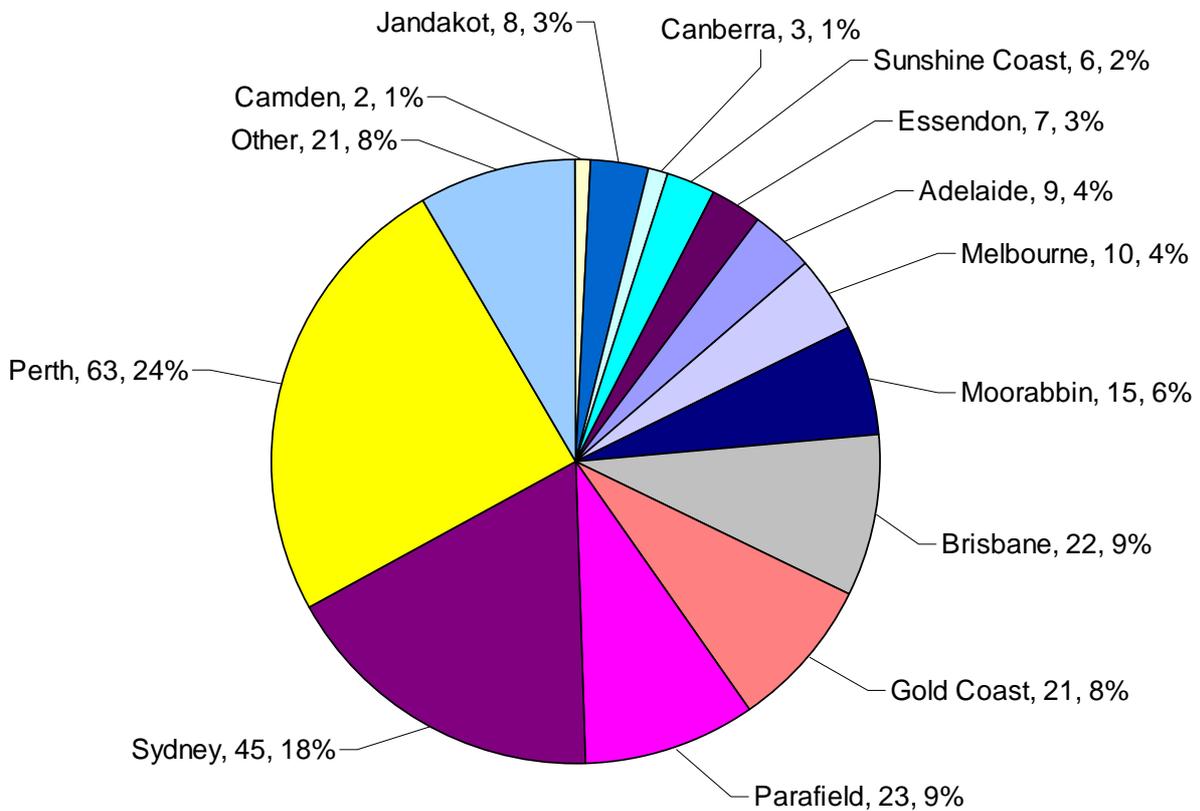
Perth: Our focus has been on the need to respond to Perth complaints through serious consideration of possible aircraft noise improvements. Airservices has recently put on the public agenda its investigation of some noise improvement options. This may test whether this shift in Airservices' response reduces dissatisfaction with Airservices' complaint handling.

Gold Coast Complaints: Airservices has recently pursued efforts to improve the noise outcome around the Gold Coast Airport (through its review of the Noise Abatement Procedures). Although the changes are relatively small, they appear to have reduced complaint numbers and also reduced dissatisfaction with Airservices' handling of complaints.

ANO Complaints by Quarter by Airport



ANO Complaints (1/09/2010 - 31/12/2012) by Airport of concern



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:

- published a number of fact sheets, introduced a Strategic Noise Improvement Plan (SNIP) and further rolled out new airport noise reports. These have contributed to addressing Complaints Handling Recommendations 3, 7, 13, and 14.
- established a website review process, increased its focus on identifying potential noise improvements and implemented processes to refer complainants to other agencies where appropriate. This has addressed Perth Review Recommendations 2, 3, and 5.
- finalised two Sydney LTOP fact sheets that address Sydney Issues Recommendation 5.

As the ANO is no longer monitoring implementation for the recommendations detailed above, they have been excluded from the following table.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
Complaints Handling Review	
<p>Complaints Handling Recommendation 1: 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 The ANO will monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p>Complaints Handling Recommendation 15: 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 The ANO will monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<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:</p> <p>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>Actioned by Airservices</p> <p>The ANO will now monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p>Perth Review Recommendation 4:</p> <p>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</p> <p>The ANO will now monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p>Perth Review Recommendation 7:</p> <p>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>
Sydney Review	
<p>Sydney Issues Recommendation 2:</p> <p>Airservices should improve the clarity of maps produced in reports used to convey aircraft noise information.</p>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>
<p>Sydney Issues Recommendation 3:</p> <p>Airservices should provide more textual and qualitative assessment of aircraft noise in reporting.</p>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>
<p>Sydney Issues Recommendation 4:</p> <p>Airservices should provide more information, clearly presented, on daily or seasonal variations, where significant.</p>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>
<p>Sydney Issues Recommendation 6:</p> <p>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>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>
<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>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>