



Quarterly Report

September – November 2011

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report includes complaint statistics and a commentary on the September to November 2011 quarter of operations of the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO). 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 the provision of information about aircraft noise.

2 Complaint handling

- 2.1 In the September to November 2011 quarter, the ANO received 29 new individual complaints (up to 22 November). This brings the total number of complaints received to 22 November 2011 to 144. Of these, 118 are closed.
- 2.2 A separate addendum will provide a more detailed summary, complete to the end of November, of the ANO's complaint statistics. This summary will be changed from that in previous reports to shift the emphasis from the residential location of the complainant to the airport of concern.

Implementation of Review of Complaints Handling - Airservices Australia February 2011

- 2.3 The ANO office has considered material provided by Airservices Australia and on this basis agrees that at least five of the 18 recommendations from the review have been implemented with a number of others close to completion.
- 2.4 **Attachment 1** summarises the ANO assessment of the recommendations. Airservices should be congratulated on its recent progress in implementing the recommendations.

3 Consultation

- 3.1 The ANO office notes that Airservices Australia's updated *Consultation and Communications Protocol* has been released. The document provides a sound basis for consultation, including the flexibility to utilise different levels of consultation depending on the circumstances.
- 3.2 Additionally, consultation processes are being considered as part of the ANO *Review of Aircraft Noise Information Presentation and Complaint Resolution: Perth*, which is close to finalisation.
- 3.3 During the quarter, the Ombudsman (or his representative) met with stakeholders of the Perth Review, including residents, and presented at the Australia Airports Association (AAA) and Airservices Australia joint Aircraft Noise Forum, and as a key-note speaker at the AAA Annual Convention.

4 Information Provision

- 4.1 The presentation and distribution of information about aircraft noise is the third function of the ANO charter and one that is intrinsically related to the effectiveness of both complaint handling and consultation processes.
- 4.2 Information Provision is a key focus in the *Review of Aircraft Noise Information Presentation and Complaint Resolution: Perth*. Once finalised, we will present the report to the Airservices Australia Board prior to publication.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The quarter has involved consultation and finalisation of the Perth review, alongside the day-to-day management of individual complaints. Progress on implementation of the Complaint Handling Review recommendations has been pleasing.



Ron Brent
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
23 November 2011

Attachment 1 ANO Report on Complaint Handling Review Recommendations

Recommendation	ANO assessment of action
<p>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>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Airservices should amend the objectives of the NEU, as stated in the NEU procedures, to include 'complaint resolution through the provision of more targeted information'. In addition, Airservices should develop and implement systems and tools to assist with this new objective.</p>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: Airservices should make a senior manager accountable for capturing, recording and tracking through to implementation, noise improvement opportunities arising from complaints.</p>	<p>The ANO is seeking details of the system used for the capture, recording and tracking of noise improvement opportunities.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: Airservices should review the resource requirement for the NEU when implementing the changes recommended in this review.</p>	<p>CLOSED</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: Airservices, in adopting the other recommendations included within this review, should amend the name of the NEU to Noise Complaints Unit (NCU) or similar to reflect the unit's role in resolving complaints.</p>	<p>CLOSED</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: Airservices should review and expand their written procedures and protocols for responding to unreasonable complainant behaviours.</p>	<p>CLOSED</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: 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>The ANO notes that an improved website for aircraft noise has been launched, with further review of web-material underway.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: Airservices should amend NEU procedures and other relevant instructions to ensure that ownership of all noise complaints remains with the NEU (or those responsible for the NEU). Where complainants are put in direct contact with ATCs, the ATCs should be advised of the requirement for all communication to be reported to and managed by the NEU. Where complaints are handled by higher levels of management or other parts of Airservices (such as the Government and International Relations branch for approaches via the Minister's Office or the Department of Infrastructure and Transport) the feedback loop must be closed so that the NEU can ensure consistency in their responses to complainants.</p>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: Airservices should amend NEU procedures, and other relevant organisational instructions, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) have all complaints logged and managed by the NEU, even where the NEU judges that the matter can best be handled by direct dealings between the complainant and staff from another part of Airservices, and b) allow the NEU to instigate an investigation of any complaint or consider systemic issues arising from any complaint, where this is appropriate. 	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>

Recommendation	ANO assessment of action
Recommendation 10: Airservices should engage actively with other agencies with cross-over accountabilities in aircraft noise issues, and also with airports and aircraft operators as required, to ensure an improved and integrated response is provided to complainants.	CLOSED
Recommendation 11: 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.	The ANO notes that action is underway.
Recommendation 12: Airservices should implement processes for the NEU that ensure investigations are conducted whenever there is a possibility of individual, systemic or emerging issues being identified that could feed into improved aircraft noise management.	The ANO notes that action is underway.
Recommendation 13: 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.	The ANO notes that action is underway.
Recommendation 14: 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.	The ANO notes that action is underway.
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.	The ANO notes that action is underway.
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.	The ANO notes that action is underway.
Recommendation 17: Airservices should develop a formal, written and published instruction on recording relevant statistical details about issues, complaints, complainants and contacts.	The ANO notes that action is underway.
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.	CLOSED

Addendum to ANO Quarterly Report September – November 2011

This addendum contains complaint statistics and analysis to the end of November 2011.

	Sep 2011	Oct 2011	Nov 2011	Qtr Total	Total from 1-Sep-10 to 30-Nov- 11
Complaints received:	6	19	9	34	148
Complaints closed:	3	9	17	29	132
Complaints not reviewed:					35
Complainant did not provide further information					10
Outside charter scope					9
Referred to Airservices to respond directly					16
Complaints reviewed:					96
No change possible - explanation provided					88
Change adopted by Airservices Australia					2
Change adopted by Airport operator					4
Change adopted by Operator					2
Average time taken to close complaints: (including weekends and public holidays)					61 days

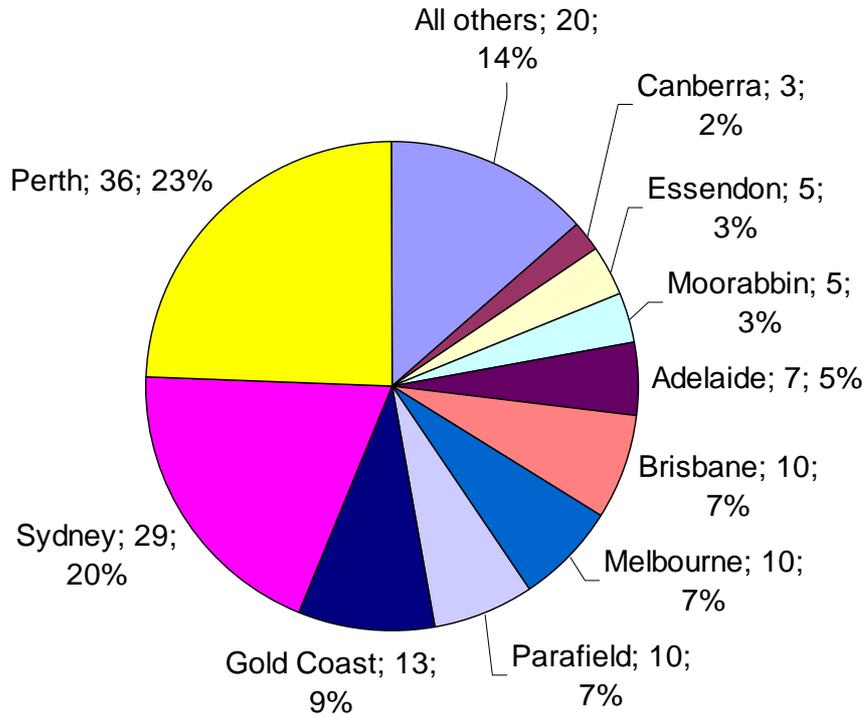
Of the 96 complaints reviewed, more than 90% were resolved with no change to the aircraft noise outcome possible. However, detailed investigations and explanations have been provided in each instance. While this does not change the noise as such, it can change the complainant's experience of noise, as they have a better understanding of the noise situation. Further, more than a third of the closed complaints contain issues that have been, or will be, addressed by the systemic issues reviews being undertaken by the ANO office.

Complaints that are not reviewed will in most cases still entail some amount of work by the ANO office. For example, this may include investigation into whether or not issues have been reviewed by Airservices, or establishing the correct place to refer out of jurisdiction complaints, or in doing initial investigations before seeking more information from the complainant. Almost half of those complaints not reviewed were referred to Airservices for a direct response to the complainant, as the issues raised had not been previously addressed to Airservices, or Airservices had not had reasonable opportunity to respond.

The graphs on the next page show a breakdown of complaints received by the ANO office identifying the airports of concern. Clearly, Perth and Sydney dominate as the key areas of concern, with 43% of all complaints received from these two locations. There is a notable spike in the number of complaints received in October 2011, with five associated with Brisbane Airport, well above the trend for that Airport. It is possible this relates to:

- Warmer weather leading to more people spending time outdoors or with doors and windows open.
- The change to daylight savings in states other than Queensland, which effectively brings forward by an hour the schedule for arrivals and departures at Queensland airports.

Total ANO Complaints (1/09/2010-30/11/2011) by Airport of concern



ANO Complaints by Month by Airport

