



Quarterly Report

July – September 2021

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1 Overview

The Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) carried forward 282 open complaints on 1 July 2021. During this quarter (July-September 2021), the ANO received 44 new complaints, closed 58 complaints, and therefore carries forward 268 complaints to October 2021. The bulk of open complaints relate to Brisbane Airport and, as the investigation was finalised on 12 October, these will be closed in the next quarter.

The ANO continued to monitor Airservices Australia's (Airservices') community engagement processes in line with clause 71 of the ANO Charter, including in relation to the Post Implementation Review (PIR) process for the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane flight paths. Regular monthly meetings have been ongoing between the ANO senior advisors and Airservices senior community engagement staff. In addition, a quarterly meeting between Airservices' Noise Complaints Information Service (NCIS) team and the ANO office commenced from October 2021, to facilitate more productive and timely communication and feedback, between the ANO and Airservices.

The ANO is conducting an investigation into Airservices' management of complaints about community engagement. While the NCIS has well developed systems for handling noise complaints about existing aircraft noise, it appears that Airservices has yet to develop robust systems for the management of complaints about community engagement. As Airservices increases its community engagement through Post Implementation Reviews and future major airport developments, this area of complaint is likely to grow.

In this quarter, the ANO completed and closed one Defence complaint, which had been carried over from the previous quarter (April-June 2021). As at 1 October 2021, there are no outstanding Defence recommendations. No complaints related to Defence were received between July and September 2021.

The ANO office introduced key performance indicators (KPIs) on 1 July 2021 for complaint response times and management. Reports against the KPIs are provided in Section 2.5 and Attachment 3.

A major upgrade of the ANO complaint management system was completed at the end of the previous quarter. As a result of this upgrade, the ANO is able to capture and report the nature of concerns expressed in complaints to the ANO. Details are reported in Section 2.2. As the data increases over time, it may prove informative for Airservices' community engagement and provision of noise information.

2 Complaint handling

2.1 Complaints managed in quarter

During the quarter, the ANO received 44 complaints - 36 relating to Airservices and a further 8 complaints that had no agency identified due to the complaints either being related to an airport operator, other government agency or insufficient information provided by complainants. The ANO office did not receive any new complaints relating to Defence during this quarter. Figure 1 and Figure 2 below show the number of complaints received by agency and that the number of complaints received has reduced significantly compared to the January-March 2021 quarter.

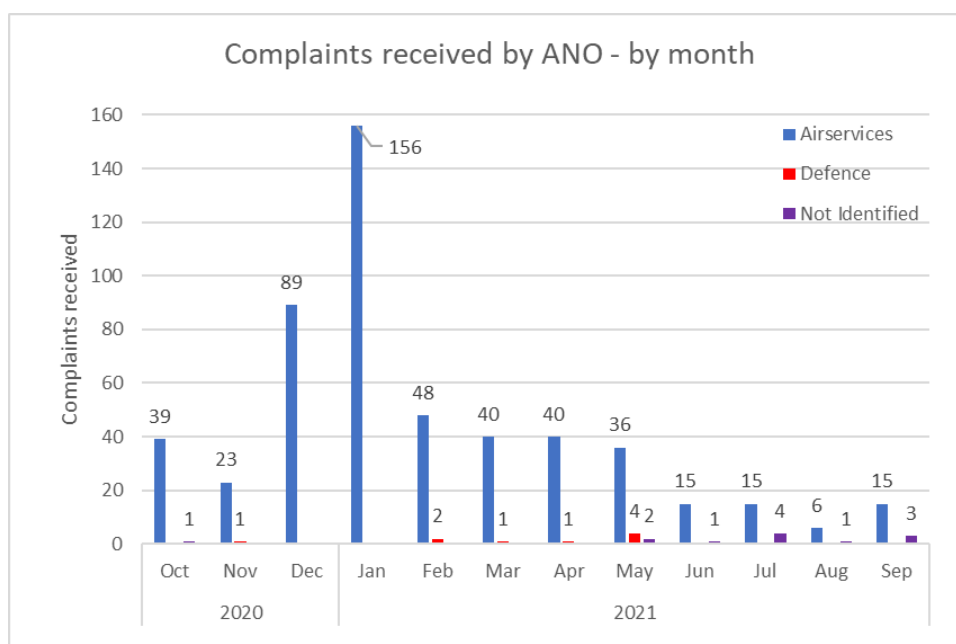


Figure 1 – Complaints received by ANO by month, October 2020 – September 2021

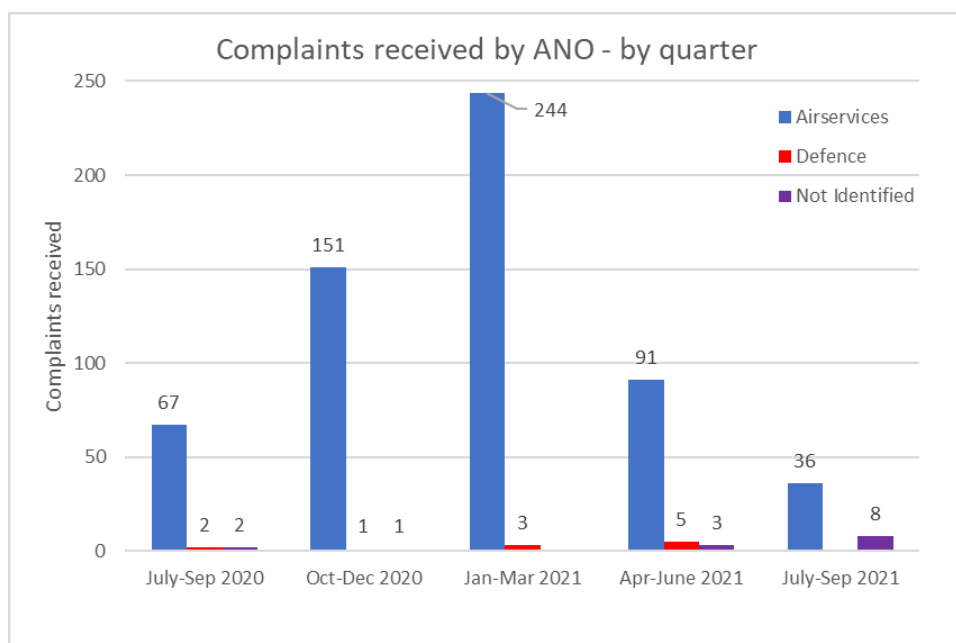


Figure 2 – Complaints received by ANO by quarter, July 2020-September 2021

Figure 3 below charts the average number of complaints over the past 3 years. The complaint numbers for this quarter are comparable to complaint numbers received outside of the peak complaint periods of April-June 2019 for the proposed Sunshine Coast Airport flightpath changes and October 2020-June 2021 for the Brisbane Airport new runway opening.

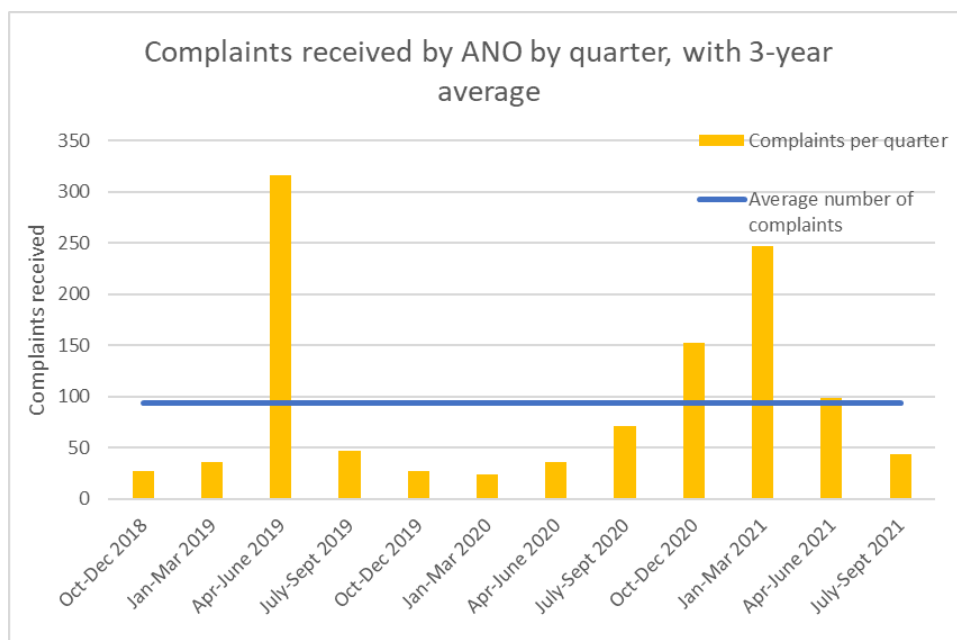


Figure 3 – Complaints received by ANO by quarter, with 3-year average for complaint trends.

The majority of complaints received from July – September 2021 continue to be attributed to the opening of two new runways in Queensland, with 15 complaints relating to Brisbane Airport and 5 relating to the Sunshine Coast Airport (Figure 4). The ANO also received one complaint related to Sydney Airport for an agency other than Airservices, which was referred to the correct authority.

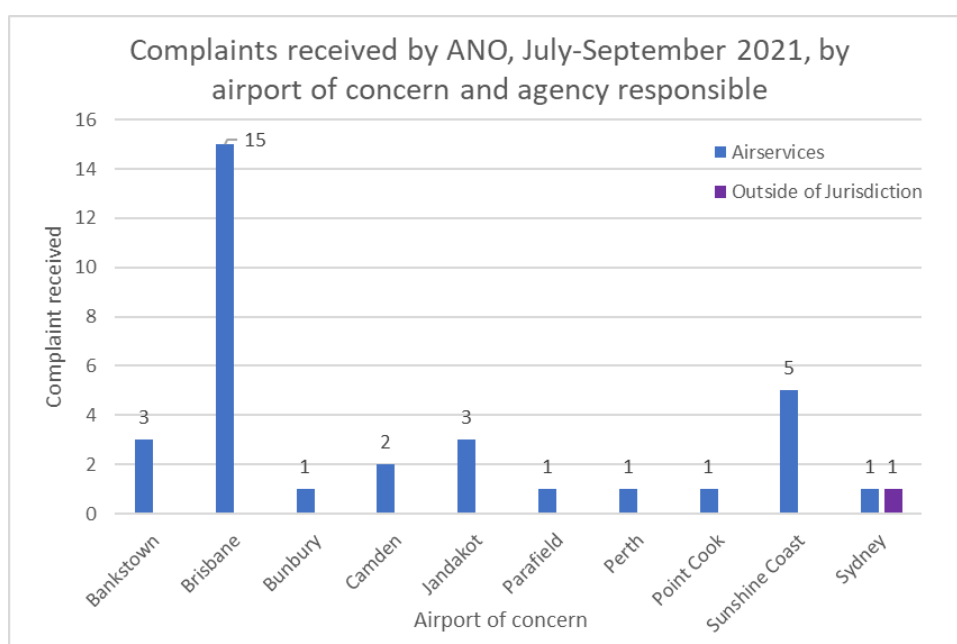


Figure 4 - Complaints received by ANO by Airport of concern, July-September 2021

Unidentified airports

In addition to the airport specific complaints above (Figure 4), a further 10 complaints related to unidentified airports. These included complaints related to helicopter operations, drone operations and where the complainant either did not identify their location or it was unclear which airport aircraft operations related to.

Closed cases

The ANO closed 58 cases for the quarter, 49 relating to Airservices, 1 relating to Defence and 8 without an agency identified¹.

Of the outcomes possible for the 49 cases relating to Airservices, 32 were closed as the complainants had either not yet complained to, or finalised their complaint with, Airservices. 11 resulted in no change possible; and 5 resulted in a change being adopted by Airservices, including one where Airservices incorrectly closed the complainant's case without a response. The remaining case was closed due to the complainant not providing additional information to the ANO to enable an investigation to progress.

In relation to the Defence case closed this quarter, no change was possible in relation to the complaint received.

As at 1 October 2021, 268 complaints remain open. The majority of these complaints are part of the ANO's multi-complaint review of the Brisbane flight paths, which will be closed in October 2021.

Full complaint data for the quarter are presented at Attachment 1.

2.2 Issues raised in complaints

From 1 July 2021, the ANO has been able to capture and report the issues raised by complaints. It is expected that the number of issues raised per quarter will be greater than the number of complaints, as complainants normally raise a number of issues per complaint.²

Complaints received during this quarter are classified by the ANO office under one of three themes - Agency-specific issues (which are set out in more detail below), aircraft noise issues or issues outside of the jurisdiction of the ANO. Figure 5 below shows the distribution of the issues raised during the quarter. As would be expected, the most common issue raised with the ANO office are aircraft noise related concerns.

¹ This includes situations where the agency of concern is outside of the ANO's jurisdiction.

² For each complaint, the ANO office identified the main issues raised in the complaint. This will generally an average of three issues per complaint.

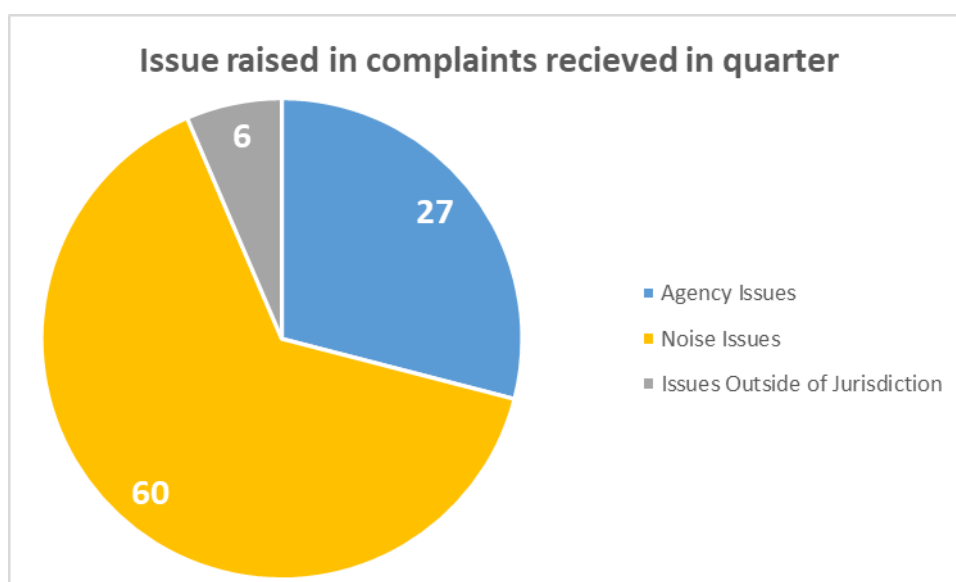


Figure 5 – Issues raised in complaints received by the ANO, July 2021 – September 2021

As shown in Figure 6, complaints about Airservices management of complaints included 7 about its community engagement. It is anticipated that complaints about community engagement will increase as Airservices develops its practice in this area.

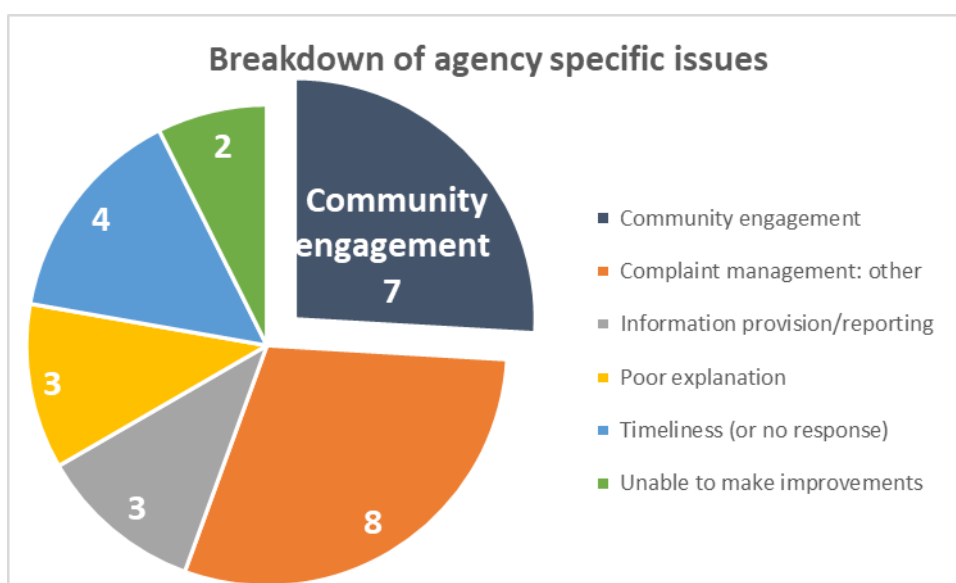


Figure 6 – Agency specific issues raised in complaints received by the ANO, July 2021 – September 2021

Figure 7 shows the most common aircraft noise issue related to flight path changes. This was the most frequent issue overall, logged by the ANO office during the quarter.

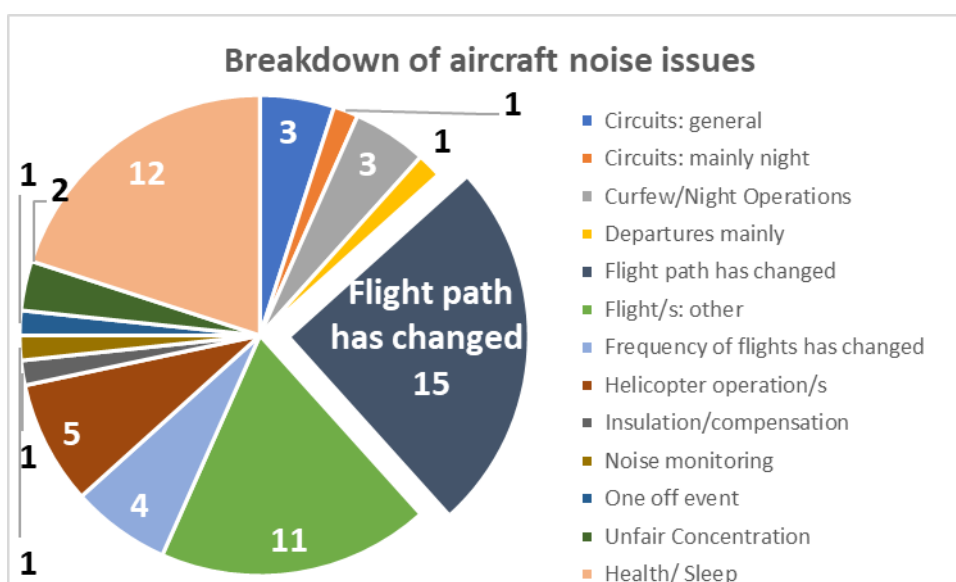


Figure 7 – Aircraft noise related issues raised in complaints received by the ANO, July 2021 – September 2021

Figure 8 below shows issues raised by complainants separable from the conduct of Airservices and/or Defence.

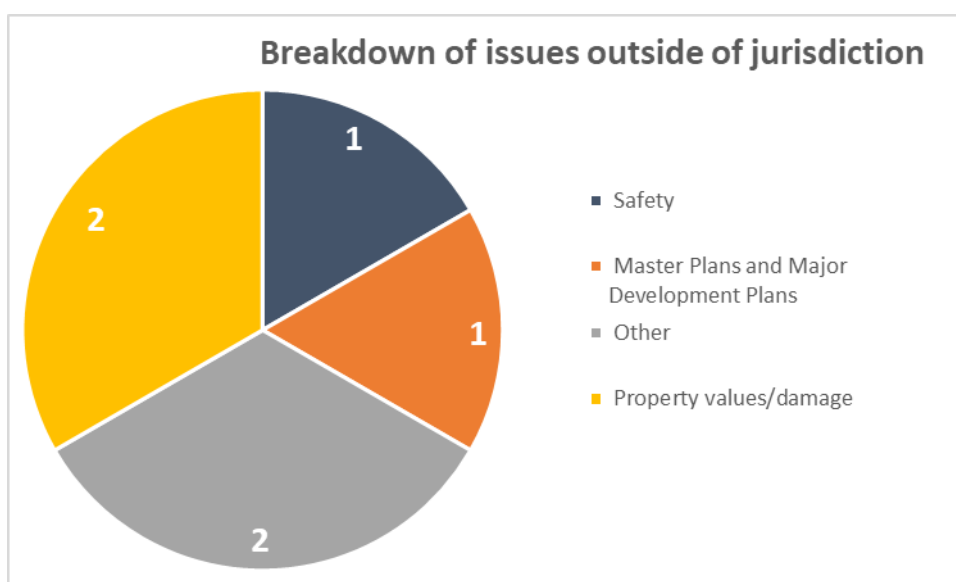


Figure 8 – Issues outside of the ANO's jurisdiction, raised in complaints received by the ANO, July 2021 – September 2021

2.3 Multi Complainant Reviews – Brisbane

In December 2020, the ANO commenced a multi-complaint review, due to the large number of complaints the ANO's office received about Airservices' community engagement practices for the Brisbane Airport new flight paths. These complaints were received after the opening of the new runway and commencement of the new flight paths at Brisbane Airport.

The ANO report and Airservices' Board response were released on 12 October 2021 and are available on the ANO [website](#). Airservices Board accepted all 4 recommendations of the ANO.

A summary of the recommendations is provided in Attachment 2. Reporting against these recommendations will be addressed in the next quarterly report.

2.4 East Melbourne investigation

The ANO completed its assessment of these complaints in October 2020 and referred it to Airservices to attempt resolution. The matter could not be resolved and the ANO finalised its report to the Airservices Board.

Airservices Board accepted all 3 recommendations of the ANO, with the [ANO report and Airservices Board response](#) released on 19 July 2021.

Airservices have provided an update on its progress against all 3 recommendations, with Recommendation 2 deemed closed based on the provided update. Implementation of recommendation 1 and 3 are ongoing by Airservices. A summary of the recommendations is provided in Attachment 2.

2.5 ANOCS

The ANO office introduced key performance indicators (KPI) for its complaint handling processes at the start of the quarter. These KPIs were approved by the Airservices' Board in May 2021. All complaints handled in the quarter have been captured against the appropriate KPI targets.

KPIs for complaints received by the ANO office are divided based on whether the complaint is a single complaint or part of a multi-complaint review³. Regardless of whether a complaint is part of a multi-complaint review or not, the ANO office aims to finalise all complaints within a maximum of 12 months from the date of receipt.

The ANO has a KPI of 2 day and 3 days to acknowledge complaints related to single complaints and multi-complaints respectively. A high level of compliance was achieved for this KPI, with only one complaint which did not meet this target, as shown in Figure 9.

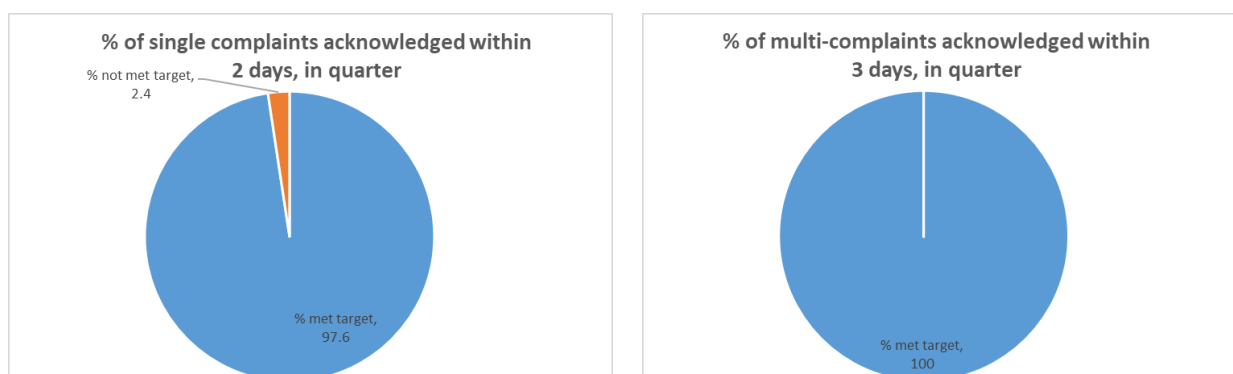


Figure 9 - % of single and multi-complaints acknowledged within target period, July – September 2021

Once a complaint is received, the ANO has 14 days for single complaints, or 21 days for multi-complaints, to determine whether the complaint is within the scope of the ANO Charter. This was determined for all complaints received in the quarter within the target timeframe.

³ Separate KPI's for complaints within a multi-complaint review reflect the more complex nature of multi-complaint reviews and that these reviews will generally involve the consideration of large amounts of evidence. This results in these complaints generally remaining open longer than individual cases.

The ANO office is committed to providing regular updates on the progress to complainants during the course of an investigation⁴. In this quarter, there have been some occasions where updates were not provided in the target 28 days as can be seen in Figure 10.

As the Brisbane multi-complaint report was reported to the Board in September and nearing publication, the ANO office delayed its September 2021 update to complainants until the Brisbane report was made public. This delay is reflected in Figure 10⁵. The ANO released the Brisbane report to complainants on 12 October 2021.

In a similar manner, a small number of individual complaints did not receive all updates within the specified timeframes, generally due to the complaint nearing finalisation and as such, the decision to hold off and await the outcome of the complaint.⁶

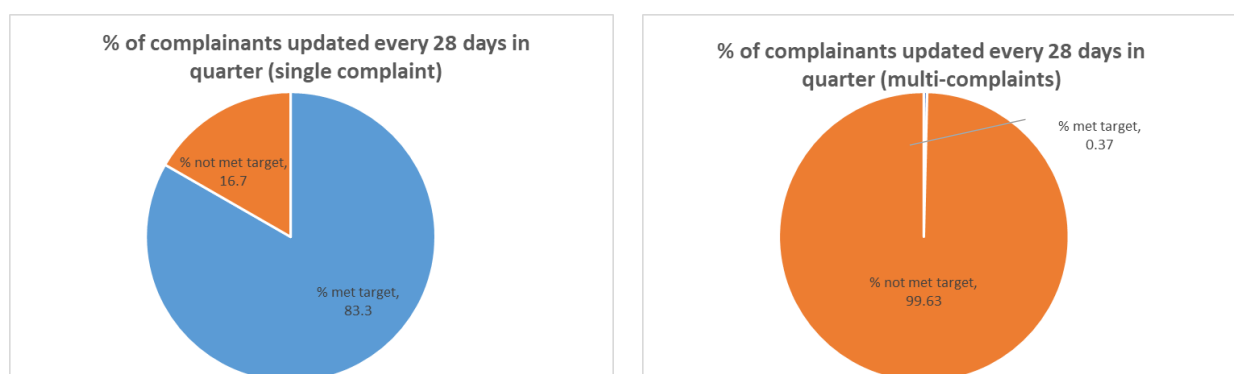


Figure 10 - % of single and multi-complainants updated within target period, July – September 2021

Of the 58 cases closed in this quarter, as shown in Figure 11, 54 were individual complaints with all single complaints closed within 3 months of receipt. Of the 4 multi-complaint cases closed, 3 related to the East Melbourne review, where the ANO provided Airservices with an extensive period of time to attempt resolution of the complaints.

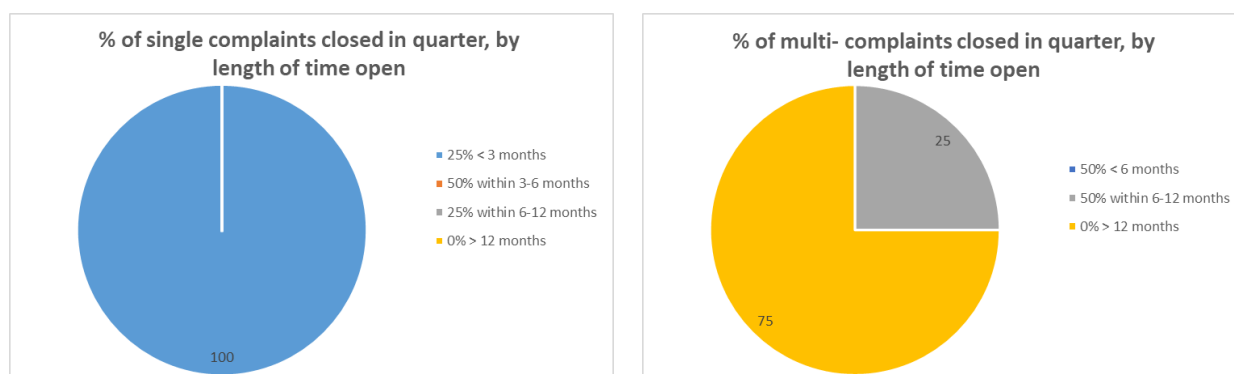


Figure 11 - % of single and multi-complaints closed in quarter by length of time open

Full KPI performance data for the quarter are presented at Attachment 3.

⁴ For both individual complaints and multi-complaint reviews, the KPI target is for updates to occur every 28 days or less.

⁵ Updates to complainants are registered by ANOCs as either passing or failing for the quarter. While 2 of the 3 updates were provided within the KPI target, it is recorded as a failure due to the delay of the 3rd update.

⁶ The majority of individual cases handled by the ANO in the quarter, totally 38 of the 56 active cases, were closed prior to an update being required and as such, are not represented in Figure 10.

2.6 Liaison with Noise Complaints Information Service (NCIS)

The ANO office and Airservices' NCIS team held a workshop in late June 2021. As a result of this workshop, updated communication protocols were implemented in July 2021 which have streamlined processes and increased the timeliness of information provision for both the ANO and NCIS team.

In October 2021, the ANO office and Airservices' NCIS team commenced the first of its quarterly meetings. These meetings have been established as an opportunity to discuss trends that the ANO office and NCIS team are observing in complaints received. It offers a chance for the NCIS and the ANO to provide informal feedback on complaint handling, as well as to continue to generally improve communication between the ANO office and NCIS team.

3 Community Engagement and Noise Information Provision

3.1 Sunshine Coast

The ANO made 2 recommendations in the report of its *Investigation into complaints about the introduction of new flight paths in Sunshine Coast* (released on 30 June 2020). With the effective implementation of a PIR process that delivers the community consultation recommended by the ANO both recommendations are now closed.

A summary of the final recommendation is at Attachment 2.

3.2 Community engagement Complaint handling

In September 2021 the ANO commenced an investigation into the Airservices' complaint management systems and processes for handling complaints about community engagement and the provision of noise information. This was instigated following a complainant receiving inadequate responses due to apparent confusion between the NCIS and community engagement areas. The investigation is assessing the capacity of Airservices to adequately manage complaints about issues other than the impact of aircraft noise. Such complaints are expected to increase in future as Airservices delivers increasing community engagement.

3.3 ANO Monitoring Activities

The ANO Charter requires the ANO to monitor and report on Airservices' and Defence's community engagement processes and the presentation and distribution of aircraft noise related information.

The ANO continued to work with Airservices this quarter liaising with Airservices staff on engagement projects as they are delivered. This has included attending 3 community aviation consultation group (CACG) meetings in this quarter.

The monthly meeting between ANO senior advisors and Airservices senior community engagement staff has provided regular updates on ongoing community engagement processes and actions undertaken by Airservices. In addition, the ANO and Airservices communicated frequently during the quarter to receive point-in-time updates on specific engagement activities and to identify opportunities for complaint resolution by Airservices.

Kieran Pehm

Aircraft Noise Ombudsman

2 November 2021

Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

The following tables summarise the complaint statistics for the quarter.

AIRSERVICES	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	15	6	15	36
Complaints closed:	27	7	15	49

Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	15	4	14	33
Complainant did not provide further information	-	-	1	1
Outside charter scope	-	-	-	0
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	15	4	13	32

Total complaints closed - reviewed:	12	3	1	16
No change possible - explanation provided	8	2	1	11
Change adopted by Airservices Australia	4	1	-	5

DEFENCE	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	-	-	-	0
Complaints closed:	1	-	-	1

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:	1	-	-	1
No change possible - explanation provided	1	-	-	1
Change adopted by Defence	-	-	-	0

	Airservices	Defence	No agency assigned*	Total
Complaints carried forward on 1 July 2021 (beginning of quarter)	281	1	0	282
Complaints received	36	0	8	44
Complaints closed	49	1	8	58
Complaints open at 1 October 2021 (first day of next quarter)	268	0	0	268

*No agency assigned includes where the identified Agency is outside of the ANO's jurisdiction, or where complainants do not provide sufficient information to identify the agency.

Attachment 2 Outstanding ANO recommendations

The following tables set out the status of outstanding recommendations made by the ANO and the ANO's assessment of action against each. Recommendations that were previously reported as complete have been removed.

Airservices – Investigation into complaints about the introduction of new flight paths in Sunshine Coast (April 2020)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 2 – Airservices should, as soon as practicable, design an effective post-implementation review (PIR) process for the Sunshine Coast flight path designs, that does not perpetuate design constraints requiring alignment with EIS concepts, and which encompasses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) consideration of identified community-suggested alternatives b) a community engagement process that provides for genuine opportunities for community contributions to influence decisions c) application of the latest version of Airservices' National Operating Standard (NOS) Environmental Management of Changes to Aircraft Operations (AA-NOS-ENV-2.100). 	<p>Closed: After considerable community engagement, Airservices finalised the terms of reference for the PIR on 1 February 2021.</p> <p>Airservices has updated and finalised the Community Engagement Plan (CEP) for the PIR process, including a realigned PIR timeline.</p> <p>The PIR process has been designed without restraint (aside from safety being the priority) that encompasses the particular expectations set out by the ANO.</p>

Airservices – Investigation into complaints about flight paths over East Melbourne (July 2021)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 1 – I recommend Airservices continue its efforts to engage with the complainants to resolve their complaints including careful consideration of the alternate flight path suggested by them.</p>	<p>Ongoing: Airservices advise that they continue to work with the East Melbourne Group (EMG) on the EMG's suggestion. The suggestions (3) have been assessed to determine if they are safe and flyable. Work is continuing by Airservices on community impacts of the suggested changes.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 – Airservices provide a copy of this report to Essendon Airport and invite it to review the community membership of its Community Aviation Consultation Group and consider the adequacy of the representation of communities affected by aircraft noise.</p>	<p>Closed: Airservices have advised that it has completed this action, including following up with Essendon Airport CACG with CACG presentations, complaints hotspot information and formal correspondence.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3 – As part of its regular attendance at other airports' CACG meetings, or equivalents, Airservices should present the findings of this report and invite the CACGs to review the adequacy of their representation of their community membership given that the aircraft noise from "smart tracking" flight paths and sightseeing operations affects areas at considerable distances from airports.</p>	<p>Ongoing: Airservices have sent correspondence including the report findings and 3-years of complaints hotspot information to the majority of the Airport Community Groups / CACGs which Airservices regularly attend. Airservices have been following this correspondence up with presentations to the community groups, with only a small number outstanding at this stage due to meetings being delayed by COVID-19 impacts.</p>

Attachment 3 Key performance indicator's for ANO complaint handling

The following table summarise the performance of the ANO against the identified complaint handling KPIs for July-September 2021. KPI performance will be reported both by quarter and financial year, as more data is captured. Performance against the ANO KPIs is determined based on 12 months of data, for July-June of each financial year.

Complaint type	Key performance indicator	Benchmark	% met target (July Sept 2021)	% met target (2021 22 FY)
Single complaint	Acknowledgement of complaint	Within 2 business days	97.6	97.6
	Decision on whether complaint is within jurisdiction within 14 business days	Within 14 business days	100	100
	Update to complainant on progress of complaint	Every 28 days	83.3	83.3
	Time from complaint received to closed	25% < 3 months	100	100
		50% within 3-6 months	0	0
		25% within 6-12 months	0	0
		0% > 12 months	0	0
Complaints in a multi-complaint review	Acknowledgement of complaint	Within 3 business days	100	100
	Decision on whether complaint is within jurisdiction	Within 21 days	100	100
	Update to complainant on progress of complaint	Every 28 days or less	0.37	0.37
	Time from complaint received to closed	50% < 6 months	0	0
		50% within 6-12 months	25	25
		0% > 12 months	75	75