



Quarterly Report
April - June 2017

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1 Introduction

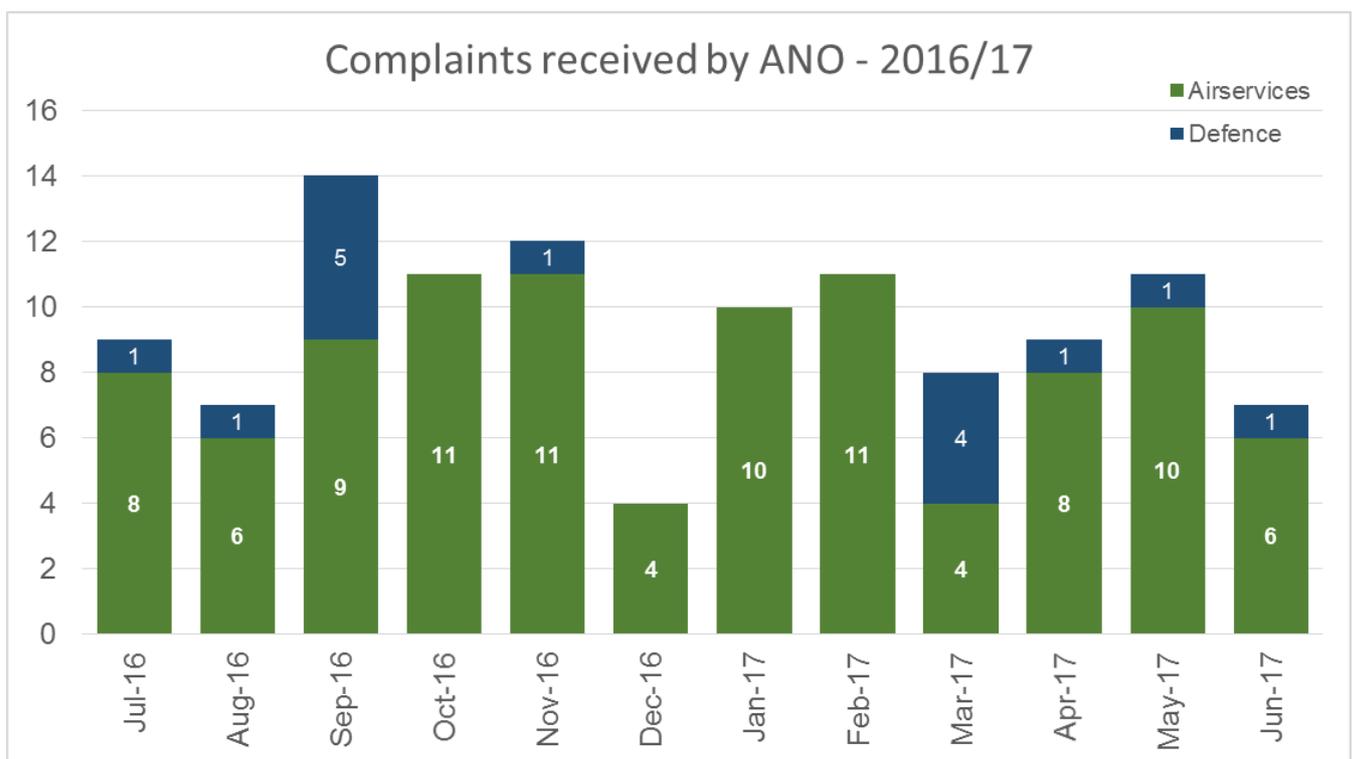
- 1.1 This report includes complaint statistics and a summary of ANO activities during the April to June 2017 quarter. It is structured around the three key functions of the ANO, these being the review and monitoring of Airservices Australia's and the Department of Defence's:
- a. complaint handling;
 - b. community consultation processes; and
 - c. provision of information about aircraft noise.

2 Overview

- 2.1 During the quarter, the ANO team has conducted a wide range of meetings and discussions with community members, Chairs and members of a variety of Community Aviation Consultation Groups, aviation representatives and government officials from all levels of government. This extensive engagement provides valuable insights into how Airservices and Defence are perceived to be managing their respective aircraft noise accountabilities and allows the ANO office to hone in on areas of potential improvement.
- 2.2 From the start of April to the end of June, the ANO received a total of 27 complaints, including three about Defence's management of aircraft noise issues. These numbers are in line with the long-term trend. Almost half of the complaints in the civilian space (11 out of 24) related to Perth Airport, largely reflecting continuing concern with night and early morning flights, seasonal weather effects, as well as impacts from runway closures.
- 2.3 The ANO was pleased to see the launch of Defence's online complaint form on 12 July, finalising the last of the outstanding recommendations from the ANO's 2015 Super Hornet Review. The other two recommendations that were outstanding at the start of the quarter were also closed out. These were addressed by RAAF Base Amberley establishing a regular reporting feature on its website to promulgate information to the public about any foreseen variations to the Noise Management Plan and through its improved record keeping for complaints.
- 2.4 The ANO's *Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaints Management System*, submitted to Defence in November 2016, made seven recommendations, all of which were accepted by Defence. The ANO is satisfied that Defence has undertaken action on each of these recommendations and is making solid progress towards improving its complaint management system.
- 2.5 **Attachment 2** provides a summary of progress against all outstanding recommendations.

3 Complaint handling

- 3.1 During the quarter the ANO received 27 new complaints, three of which related to Defence's aircraft noise management. This is in line with the long-term average for the number of complaints received. At the end of the quarter, twelve complaints remain open. Twenty-four complaints were closed in the quarter, with fifteen having been reviewed in detail and nine referred back to the relevant agency for a direct response.
- 3.2 The graph below shows the complete financial year, with Defence and Airservices complaints received by the ANO tracking at an average of 9.4 complaints per month. This comprises an average of 8.2 per month for Airservices and 1.2 per month for Defence.



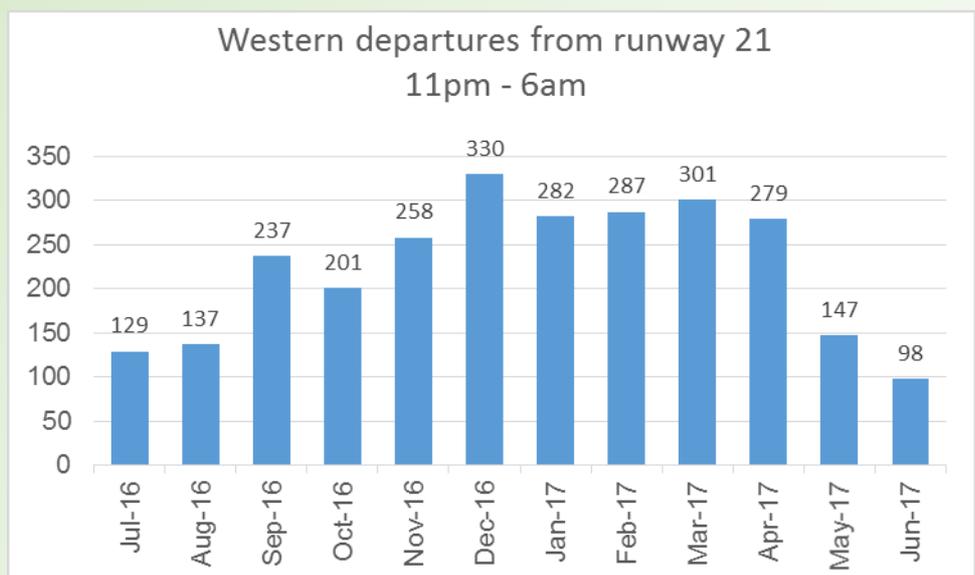
- 3.3 During the Apr-Jun 2017 period, almost half of the Airservices-related complaints stemmed from Perth (11 out of 24 complaints received). Of these eleven Perth complaints, seven were from suburbs within the Swan River corridor, reflecting ongoing concern from residents about the impacts of Fly in / Fly out (FIFO) departures in the early morning and night disturbances affecting the area. ANO investigations (see analysis on next page) showed that the level of air traffic over this part of Perth has reduced in recent years, in part due to initiatives pursued by Airservices in 2015 and in part due to the general decrease in traffic levels operating at Perth since the peak level in 2014. Despite the actual and relative improvements for this area, aircraft noise continues to be of concern to some residents, who consider that more should be done. Unfortunately, the ANO has not been able to identify any practical, feasible options for further reducing the impacts in this area of Perth in the short to medium term.
- 3.4 Complaint statistics for the quarter are summarised at **Attachment 1**.

ANO Perth analysis

In May 2015, Airservices introduced a change to the Preferred Runway System, with the intent that more departures (outside the morning FIFO departure push) could be directed to the north, avoiding overflight of the Swan River corridor suburbs.

Along with an overall fall in the number of flights at Perth Airport, this change has seen both the number of flights and the percentage of flights over the Swan River corridor suburbs decrease between 11pm and 6am. (Western departures from runway 21 are those departures that affect the Swan River corridor areas)

Within each year, seasonal effects - where prevailing winds tend to have a more southerly component in the warmer months and a northerly component in the cooler months - also affect the level of impact at any time.



Seeking noise improvement opportunities

3.5 In addition to reviewing Airservices' or Defence's handling of an aircraft noise issue, ANO investigations into complaints also look for the potential to improve noise outcomes. Generally there are very few practical opportunities for change as Airservices and Defence have previously identified and implemented available change opportunities over time. However, these rare chances for noise improvement present a highly effective way for Airservices or Defence to show the community that the agency takes aircraft noise management seriously and is prepared to seize opportunities for improvement whenever reasonably possible.

3.6 Table 1 (below) reports on the noise improvement opportunities that the ANO continues to pursue with Airservices and Defence.

Table 1: Noise improvement opportunities

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
Mar 2016	Sydney: adjustment to flight paths over water during curfew hours	The ANO asked Airservices to consider if a better noise outcome can be achieved for coastal residents south of Sydney Airport affected by flights departing during the curfew. Following ANO analysis and feedback, Airservices has re-visited its initial investigation into the feasibility of changing the standard instrument departure. Airservices considers a change may now be possible and has commenced the formal change process, including detailed procedure design, necessary assessments and relevant consultation. This work continues to proceed smoothly. Barring any unexpected issues, a change is likely to be introduced later this year that will potentially benefit thousands of coastal Sydney residents.
Nov 2016	Pallarenda: ATC procedure changes to reduce overflight of residential areas	The ANO is pursuing with Defence a possible noise improvement for residences in the Pallarenda area north of RAAF Base Townsville. The ANO has asked Defence to give detailed consideration to options to reduce the number of aircraft overflights by both civilian and military aircraft departing Townsville Airport to the north. In early July, the ANO team visited Townsville to progress this matter with Defence. A number of potential changes have been identified that could reduce the overflight of Pallarenda. Defence will explore the feasibility of these potential changes in detail and undertake the necessary consultations with operators before determining if and how any changes may be introduced.
Feb 2017	Brisbane: adjustment to arrival flight path to reduce overflight of residential areas	Following a suggestion from a resident of Clear Mountain (north of Brisbane Airport), the ANO has asked Airservices to give consideration to a possible noise improvement. The suggestion is that moving the Standard Terminal Arrival Route from the north-west to Brisbane Airport's main runway to approach from further west would potentially result in a significant reduction in the number of residential areas overflown. Airservices has done a preliminary investigation and advised the ANO that the proposal is not feasible at this time. However, the ANO is awaiting supporting evidence before determining a final outcome on this case.

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Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
May 2017	Point Cook: flying orders amendment	In response to complaints received about a recent exercise, Defence is investigating the opportunity to change flying orders at RAAF Base Williams in Point Cook to encourage helicopters to operate over less noise sensitive areas.
May 2017	Hobart: relocation of flying training area	Airservices has agreed to consider an alternative area for General Aviation training to reduce impacts on nearby residential areas. Consideration needs to be given to potential overflight of new residential areas by aircraft transiting to an alternative training area. The investigation is at an early stage.
June 2017	Perth: changes to northern smart tracking approach path to reduce noise impacts for residents	This suggestion was first raised by residents prior to the new path being introduced in Sept 2015. At the time Airservices advised that the 12-month trial would be conducted with the path as designed and consideration of options to change the path would be part of the Post Implementation Review (PIR) process. The PIR report noted that “the Perth Aircraft Noise Technical Working Group will consider the input from...residents when reviewing the use and design of Smart Tracking during 2017”. The ANO understands that Airservices has initiated discussions and is considering potential improvements for efficiency as well as noise benefits.

Seeking improvements in aircraft noise complaint handling

3.7 The ANO is heartened by Defence’s response to a recent complaint, which has the potential to lead to a noise improvement, better community engagement and improved public information around flying activity at RAAF Base Williams in Point Cook, Victoria. The Base amended its telephone voice message system to ensure that residents can contact the Base and receive a call-back from the right people about their issues. They have also undertaken to establish an email distribution list to allow direct notification of upcoming activities and made changes to improve the web-information available.

3.8 Defence also launched its online complaint form on 12 July and is working to progress actions in response to the recommendations made in our *Review of Defence’s Aircraft Noise Complaints Management System (November 2016)*.

4 Consultation

4.1 The ANO office attended a number of industry and community consultative meetings during the quarter. This activity supports the ANO’s role of monitoring Airservices’ and Defence’s consultation and information provision. It also fosters a broader understanding and awareness of aircraft noise management issues. The meetings this quarter were largely focussed on introducing the new Aircraft Noise Ombudsman and developing relationships. Meetings attended included:

- Airservices’ Board and key staff involved in aircraft noise management;
- Key Defence staff involved in aircraft noise management across various locations, including delivery of complaint management workshops;
- Western Sydney Unit of the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development;

- Australian Mayoral Aviation Council annual conference;
 - Canberra Community Aviation Consultation Group (CACG);
 - Representatives of Melbourne, Essendon and Moorabbin Airports and separately with Essendon and Moorabbin CACG Chairs;
 - Melbourne CACG and separately with CACG Chair and various Melbourne community members;
 - Brisbane CACG and separately with CACG Chair;
 - Perth Airport Community Forum (PACF) and Perth Municipalities Airport Group (PAMG), separately with PACF Chair and with various Perth community members;
 - Jandakot CACG and separately with the CACG Chair.
- 4.2 The ANO continues to closely monitor the quality and effectiveness of Airservices' community engagement. Further changes by Airservices to its structure around the roles and responsibilities for community and stakeholder engagement have delayed Airservices' development of its community engagement strategy. The ANO expects that this will be addressed as a priority in the coming quarter and looks forward to seeing Airservices positioning itself to provide more and better community engagement about aircraft noise.
- 4.3 The ANO has become a member of the well-regarded International Association for Public Participation (Australasia Affiliate). ANO team members have started pursuing professional development in community and stakeholder engagement, through the Association. This will underpin our work with Airservices and Defence on improving their community consultation and engagement.

5 Information Provision

- 5.1 The ANO continues to monitor information provision about aircraft noise by Defence and Airservices. Airservices has been busy working to expand its online information about general aviation airports and this is expected to 'go live' in the next quarter. Defence is working on improving its website incrementally, in the absence of resources that would enable a more detailed and comprehensive refresh.

6 Closing remarks

- 6.1 At the close of my second quarter as ANO I am pleased to report a number of positive developments in Airservices' and Defence's management of aircraft noise. Conversely, the potential for missed opportunities and backward steps is also apparent. At a time of significant development in aviation and aviation infrastructure, particularly in the Asia region, community consultation and effective community engagement have never been more important. The messages given now to the community by Airservices and by Defence will set the tone for the demanding and fast moving times ahead.
- 6.2 It is particularly important, at this time of significant expansion, that Airservices' and Defence's ongoing conversation with the community is forthright, constructive, informative and receptive. It should be supported by careful planning and transparent strategies, implemented with an eye to sustaining the continuing conversation.
- 6.3 It is trite to say that aviation's continued expansion depends on society's continued acceptance and approval. It is likely that approval will be tested in the near future. A platform of quality engagement with the community, supported by well developed strategies will do much to ensure that Airservices and Defence are positioned to contribute to aviation's expansion in a way that best balances the impacts and benefits across the Australian community.



Narelle Bell
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
25 July 2017

Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

The following tables summarise the complaint statistics both for the quarter.

AIRSERVICES	Apr 2017	May 2017	Jun 2017	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	8	10	6	24
Complaints closed:	8	10	4	22
Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	3	4	1	8
Complainant did not provide further information	0	0	1	1
Outside charter scope	0	0	0	0
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	3	4	0	7
Total complaints closed - reviewed:	5	6	3	14
No change possible - explanation provided	5	6	3	14
Change adopted by Airservices Australia	0	0	0	0
Change adopted by Airport operator	0	0	0	0
Change adopted by Aircraft operator	0	0	0	0

DEFENCE	Apr 2017	May 2017	Jun 2017	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	1	1	1	3
Complaints closed:	1	1	0	2
Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	1	0	0	1
Complainant did not provide further information	0	0	0	0
Outside charter scope	0	0	0	0
Referred to Defence to respond directly	1	0	0	1
Total complaints closed - reviewed:	0	1	0	1
No change possible - explanation provided	0	1	0	1
Change adopted by Defence	0	0	0	0

	Airservices	Defence	Total
Complaints carried forward on 1 Apr	7	2	9
Complaints received	24	3	27
Complaints closed	22	2	24
Complaints open at 1 July	9	3	12

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.

Super Hornet Review (August 2015)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
Recommendation 1 – Defence should adopt appropriate record management practices to ensure identified gaps in record-keeping are addressed.	<u>Completed</u> – Defence has demonstrated improved record management practices that align with its published Noise Management Plan.
Recommendation 6 – Defence should review the reporting requirements in the Noise Management Plan and establish systems to ensure adherence to the requirements.	<u>Completed</u> – Defence has demonstrated that it promulgates information and reports that align with the requirements of Noise Management Plan.
Recommendation 10 – Defence should expedite establishment of an online complaint lodgement capability.	<u>Completed</u> – Defence launched its online complaint capability on 12 July 2017.

Defence Complaints System Review (November 2016)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
Recommendation 1 – Defence should expand the focus of complaint investigation beyond compliance checking to also identify and pursue opportunities for noise improvements, improved community engagement and better public information.	<u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that work is underway to amend its internal complaint processes to incorporate the recommended improvements.
Recommendation 2 – To help in managing complainant expectations, Defence should improve the public information about the complaints process to address the information requirements outlined in the Standard and as identified within the report.	<u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that the Standard has been reviewed and public information about the complaints process is expected to be published next quarter.
Recommendation 3 – Defence should review the Defence Aircraft Noise web information and, taking account of comments in this report, make improvements to information provision, presentation and functionality.	<u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that it has made some changes already, including launching its online complaint form. Plans for a broader refresh are underway.

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Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 4 – To support the timely release of written responses, Defence should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. document the procedures to be followed in the event of written complaints (whether received through post, email or an online form), ensuring such procedures incorporate a timely acknowledgement of the complaint b. streamline any necessary review and approval processes for written responses to complaints c. consider the provision of training and support material for staff that will be responding to complaints, in particular via email following the introduction of electronic complaint submission. 	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that process review and refinement is underway.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5 – Defence should adhere to its existing requirements for complaint recording and tracking.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that work is underway to amend its internal complaint processes to incorporate the recommended improvements and improve adherence to existing requirements.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 – Defence should update its localised recording systems and the OA39 form as appropriate to incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Closing date b. A place to record consideration of noise improvement opportunities, community engagement improvements and public information improvements c. Undertakings or follow up action required (including who is accountable for delivery). d. A mechanism for tracking any undertakings or follow up actions through to completion. 	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that work is underway to amend its internal complaint processes to incorporate the recommended improvements.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7 – Defence should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. ensure that complaints not readily ascribed to a base are managed as effectively as other complaints b. share data, experience and learnings across bases to maximise noise improvement opportunities and enhance complaint management across Defence. 	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that initial consideration has been given to how to address this recommendation, with more detailed plans to be developed.</p>