



Quarterly Report  
July – September 2018

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## 1 Introduction

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- 1.1 This report includes complaint statistics and a summary of ANO activities during the July to September 2018 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.

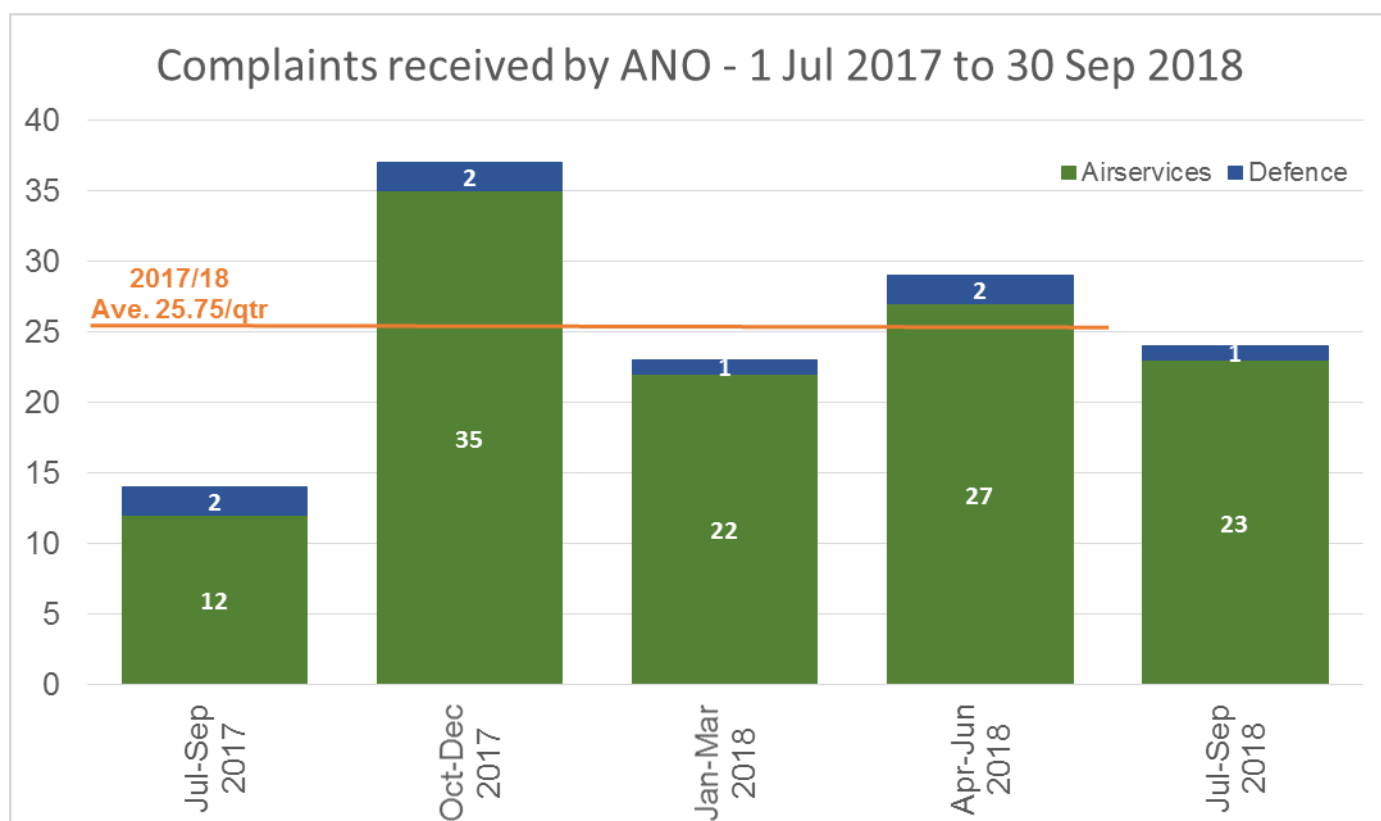
## 2 Overview

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- 2.1 From the start of July to the end of September 2018, the ANO received a total of 24 complaints, including one about Defence's management of aircraft noise issues. **Attachment 1** provides detailed complaint statistics for the quarter.
- 2.2 Airservices has demonstrated its genuine commitment to improving its community engagement in Hobart as it undertakes its airspace design review. In doing so, Airservices has addressed to completion five of the thirteen recommendations arising from our *Investigation into complaints about the introduction of new flight paths in Hobart (April 2018)*, which is very encouraging. We will continue to closely monitor Airservices' actions in this regard and to provide feedback where we consider it warranted and useful.
- 2.3 Defence has also continued to respond positively to feedback arising from complaints and is working to address the final recommendation from our *Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaints Management System (November 2016)*.
- 2.4 **Attachment 2** provides a summary of action on all outstanding recommendations from both of the Reviews referred to above.

### 3 Complaint handling

3.1 During the quarter the ANO received 24 new complaints, one of which related to Defence's aircraft noise management. This is slightly above the quarterly average of last financial year, as shown in the graph below.



3.2 Twenty-six complaints were closed during the quarter, of which 11 were reviewed in detail and seven were referred back to the relevant agency for a direct response. The remaining eight complaints were assessed as being outside of the ANO Charter scope. This unusually high number of out-of-scope complaints reflected some public confusion about where to submit feedback to airports. The eight out-of-scope complaints included submissions or enquiries about Perth Airport's new runway Major Development Plan, Melbourne Airport's Master Plan and Cairns Airport's ground running noise management strategy. At the end of the quarter, nine complaints remained open.

3.3 Complaint statistics for the quarter are summarised at **Attachment 1**.

## Noise improvement opportunities

- 3.4 Complaints reviewed by the ANO sometimes raise opportunities to improve noise outcomes. Sometimes a complainant will suggest a particular change which may in turn prompt consideration of additional options for improved outcomes. Generally, the practical opportunities for change arising from complaints received by the ANO are limited. This is due to it commonly being the case that there are no feasible, practical and safe alternatives available. In addition, Airservices and Defence may have already identified and implemented the available change opportunities.
- 3.5 However, even when no noise improvement can be achieved, the reflection on alternatives and provision of detailed and logical reasons for decisions not to pursue one or all of the alternatives considered promotes good decision-making. Occasionally, it highlights an opportunity that has not been fully explored.
- 3.6 The table below reports on the noise improvement opportunities that the ANO continues to pursue with Airservices, arising from ANO reviews of complaints about the agency's complaint handling.

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
June 2017	Perth: changes to northern smart tracking approach path to reduce noise impacts for residents	<p>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”. In January 2018, Airservices showed the ANO some material already developed by Airservices for a potential alternative approach path, which still needed to be consulted with relevant industry stakeholders ahead of possible community consultation later this year. We note that Airservices has emphasised that the changes are efficiency driven rather than purely noise focussed.</p> <p>While the ANO was pleased to see that Airservices has been pursuing the issue, we are concerned that, after such a protracted period, any potential change is yet to be prioritised and no timeframe can be provided by Airservices for when a change may be approved and implemented.</p>
June 2017	Wagga Wagga: changes to circuit operations	<p>The ANO received a complaint about Airservices not being able to pursue any changes to reduce the noise impacts of frequent circuit training flights over residential areas to the north of the airfield. The ANO sought advice from the airport operator, Wagga Wagga Council, about whether the sparsely populated area to the south could be used more often, when practical. The Council undertook to consider a change to the circuit direction and is developing a <i>Fly Friendly</i> procedure to accommodate this, subject to final approvals.</p> <p>The ANO continues to monitor this case until a decision is reached.</p>

## Improving aircraft noise management

- 3.7 A key objective of the ANO's investigation of complaints about Defence's and Airservices' aircraft noise management is the identification of potential improvements to the agencies' aircraft noise management-related practices. This includes complaint handling, community consultation and information provision. We do this through our review of decisions or actions in response to individual complaints, or as a single investigation in relation to multiple complaints such as our *Investigation into complaints about the introduction of new flight paths in Hobart (April 2018)* and our *Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaints Management System (November 2016)*.
- 3.8 See **Attachment 2** for details of Airservices' and Defence's progress on the recommendations arising from these reviews.

## 4 Consultation and Information Provision

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- 4.1 The ANO has been closely monitoring Airservices' consultation activities, particularly in relation to its ongoing review of flight paths in Hobart and as it responds to the recommendations of the ANO's *Investigation into complaints about the introduction of new flight paths in Hobart (April 2018)*. Airservices has made good progress during this quarter, with five of the thirteen recommendations closed during the period. Additionally, Airservices is making encouraging progress on the remaining recommendations. It must be recognised that these things take not only the effort that is clearly being made and the skill that is applied, but also some time.
- 4.2 We are pleased to see Airservices taking positive actions to better engage with the Hobart community and we are grateful to those community members who are letting us know how these new approaches are working for them. We have provided feedback to Airservices' management where applicable and continue to encourage Airservices to engage with the Hobart community thoroughly and strategically, and with the support of specialist expertise, as it undertakes its airspace design review. This is a relatively new approach for Airservices in an area that even the most experienced and skilful engagement practitioners find challenging. It is heartening to see the commitment with which Airservices is doing this essential work and trust that it will provide a knowledge and skills base for future similar community engagement.
- 4.3 In our monitoring more broadly this quarter, the ANO office attended a number of stakeholder and community consultative meetings. 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 the ANO's role and aircraft noise management issues.

Meetings attended included:

- Gold Coast Airport Community Aviation and Consultation Group meeting;
- Sydney Airport briefing on preliminary draft Master Plan;
- Melbourne Airport Community Aviation and Consultation Group meeting;
- Jandakot Airport Community Aviation and Consultation Group meeting;
- Perth Airport Municipalities Group meeting;
- Perth Airport Community Forum;
- Brisbane Airport Community Aviation and Consultation Group meeting;
- Government Aviation Complaint Handling Forum;
- Meeting with Western Sydney Airport representatives; and
- Community Aviation and Consultation Group Chairs Forum.

## 5 Closing remarks

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In closing, I acknowledge the departure of Mr Timothy Abberton, Deputy Aircraft Noise Ombudsman. Tim joined the office of the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman just 10 weeks after its establishment in 2010 and quickly became an integral part of our small team, contributing beyond measure to its development, growth and presence. Tim's extensive aviation knowledge and expertise, his kindness and generosity to complainants, his faultless eye for detail and his unwavering reliability, cheerfulness and collegueship will be missed. We wish Tim the best of adventures in this next chapter.



Narelle Bell  
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman  
17 October 2018



## Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

The following tables summarise the complaint statistics for the quarter.

<b>AIRSERVICES</b>	<b>Jul 2018</b>	<b>Aug 2018</b>	<b>Sep 2018</b>	<b>Total for quarter</b>
Complaints received:	5	10	8	<b>23</b>
Complaints closed:	9	7	9	<b>25</b>
<b>Total complaints closed - not reviewed:</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>
Complainant did not provide further information	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Outside charter scope	1	3	4	<b>8</b>
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	3	1	3	<b>7</b>
<b>Total complaints closed - reviewed:</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>
No change possible - explanation provided	5	3	2	<b>10</b>
Change adopted by Airservices Australia	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Change adopted by Airport operator	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Change adopted by Aircraft operator	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

<b>DEFENCE</b>	<b>Jul 2018</b>	<b>Aug 2018</b>	<b>Sep 2018</b>	<b>Total for quarter</b>
Complaints received:	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
Complaints closed:	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Total complaints closed - not reviewed:</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Complainant did not provide further information	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Outside charter scope	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Referred to Defence to respond directly	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Total complaints closed - reviewed:</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
No change possible - explanation provided	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
Change adopted by Defence	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

	<b>Airservices</b>	<b>Defence</b>	<b>Total</b>
Complaints carried forward on 1 July 2018	10	1	<b>11</b>
Complaints received	23	1	<b>24</b>
Complaints closed	25	1	<b>26</b>
Complaints open at 1 October 2018	8	1	<b>9</b>

## Attachment 2 Outstanding ANO recommendations

The following table sets 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.

### Defence Complaints System Review (November 2016)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<b>Recommendation 3</b> – 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. Defence is also reviewing the web information to address the issues identified in the review.

### Airservices - Investigation into complaints about the introduction of new flight paths in Hobart (April 2018)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<b>Recommendation 1:</b> Airservices should incorporate consideration of potential noise impacts from the commencement of flight path design and integrate that consideration throughout the design process.	<u>Closed</u> – Airservices has provided substantial evidence of actions taken including the updating of relevant flight path change procedures. In addition, key staff have been trained in the new requirements. .  ANO considers that Airservices has addressed this recommendation
<b>Recommendation 2:</b> Airservices should review its environmental assessment criteria to ensure they are appropriate as a quantitative measure for analysis against the EPBC Act requirements and for assessment of social impact.	<u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are 'in progress', including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it is reviewing its environmental assessment referral criteria to ensure it is appropriate and aligned to the EPBC Act requirements and when complete will seek the advice of the Department of Environment. This review will be completed by June 2019;</li> <li>- it is also developing social impact criteria for aircraft noise management, to be completed December 2018.</li> </ul>

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> Airservices should ensure that its additional analysis of social impact to form part of the Environmental Assessment:</p> <p>(a) includes a clearly defined purpose;</p> <p>(b) includes explicit commentary on social impact taking into account particular community history, context and sensitivities; and</p> <p>(c) incorporates a critically analytical assessment of the potential impact on the community of proposed change referring to both qualitative and quantitative values.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are ‘in progress’, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it has amended its Environmental Assessment template to document the more detailed social impact information required;</li> <li>- its subsequent stakeholder engagement plans will incorporate the appropriate social impact analysis and context;</li> <li>- it has contracted a social impact specialist firm to strengthen its community engagement planning;</li> <li>- this focus is already included in the re-engagement with Hobart stakeholders and the community.</li> </ul> <p>Airservices’ work to address this recommendation is expected to be completed in Q4-2018.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> In undertaking its Environmental Assessments and preparing reports on those assessments, Airservices should:</p> <p>(a) ensure that all assessment criteria, for both EPBC Act purposes and for assessment of social impact, are clearly explained in its documentation in a way that makes clear their purpose, whether they are primary or secondary, the assessment methodology, and the consequences that follow if a threshold is exceeded;</p> <p>(b) explicitly document any assumptions made and explain the basis for each assumption;</p> <p>(c) explicitly document its consideration of change proposals against its stated criteria;</p> <p>(d) undertake a more nuanced assessment of whether a change is ‘significant’ in social impact or under the EPBC Act requirements, taking into account both quantitative and qualitative values so that a non-binary and more informative approach is taken to assessment against criteria; and</p> <p>(e) refer to or document all relevant information that forms the basis of its environmental assessment and conclusions in a single explanatory Environmental Assessment report.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are ‘in progress’, and that its response is the same as for Recommendation 3.</p> <p>Airservices’ work to address this recommendation is expected to be completed in Q4-2018.</p>

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> Airservices should access, through recruitment or otherwise, skilled and experienced subject matter expertise in the practice of community consultation. Leadership should give prominent support to this expertise so as to promote its influence and effect on Airservices' better performance in community consultation.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are 'in progress', including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it has engaged a community engagement consultant;</li> <li>- it is conducting recruitment for a Group Community Engagement Manager who will be required to have community engagement experience and skills. Expected completion of this recruitment is Aug 2018;</li> <li>- external assistance may be sought on a case-by-case basis for other sensitive changes in the future.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> Airservices should abandon its stated policy of making the Community Aviation Consultation Groups the primary site of its community consultation and instead, with the input and leadership of a skilled practitioner of community engagement, develop a community consultation strategy and guidelines to inform individual detailed strategies for individual changes.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are 'in progress', and that its response is the same as for Recommendation 5.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7:</b> Airservices should develop a policy that, on those occasions when incorrect statements are made to the community or other stakeholders, it will acknowledge the error and remedy it.</p>	<p><u>Closed</u> – Airservices current values and procedures support a culture of acknowledging errors and taking appropriate action. Recent activities and awareness of the issues associated with the Hobart changes support closure of this recommendation.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8:</b> Airservices should ensure that, before deciding to propose a change and to commence to engage with a community about that change, it has acquainted itself with the context and recent history of that community and takes those matters into account, as far as practicable, in its decision making and in its engagement design.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are 'in progress', and that its response is the same as for Recommendation 3.</p> <p>Airservices' work to address this recommendation is expected to be completed in Q4-2018.</p>

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p><b>Recommendation 9:</b> Airservices should, as part of its community consultation activity, approach the assessments and other material on which it bases its consultations from a critically analytical perspective so as to ensure that all relevant matters have been considered and the information provided to the community is timely, correct, relevant, transparent, comprehensive, consistent and logically sound.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are complete.</p> <p>The ANO will await the current consultation efforts underway in Hobart before determining whether this recommendation can be closed.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 10:</b> In its Hobart SIDS and STARS Review, Airservices should consult with the community well in advance of settling its findings and recommendations. Airservices should take immediate steps to obtain the community's views on the most practical and effective ways to arrange this consultation.</p>	<p><u>Closed</u> – Airservices has undertaken a number of community engagement sessions through May and June 2018, during which it has sought community views on how to consult on its Airspace Design initial findings, now scheduled for October 2018. The draft Community Engagement Plan and Social Impact Overview documents indicate that Airservices is pursuing a change process that incorporates steps to obtain community views.</p> <p>The ANO considers Airservices has addressed this recommendation.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 11:</b> Where significant issues arise from complaints, Airservices should advise complainants and other stakeholders at the earliest possible stage of efforts being made, including investigation, to address concerns.</p>	<p><u>Closed</u> – Airservices has advised that the experience at Hobart highlighted the need for Airservices' staff to regularly familiarise themselves with existing policies and procedures, particularly if these policies have been refined or changed. Airservices revised its <i>Noise Complaints and Information Service Procedures for Managing Aircraft Noise Complaints and Enquiries C-PROC0336</i>, with Version 2 effective from 13 April 2018, including the requirement that complainants are kept informed about investigations. Training with all relevant staff was undertaken at this time.</p> <p>The ANO is satisfied that the procedures and training address this recommendation.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 12:</b> Where Airservices identifies through complaints inconsistencies in information provided to residents and other stakeholders, Airservices should take early action to correct information given.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that it has taken a number of actions that it considers address this recommendation, and that its response is the same as for Recommendation 7.</p> <p>The ANO will await the current consultation efforts underway in Hobart before determining whether this recommendation can be closed.</p>

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p><b>Recommendation 13:</b> Airservices should not preempt the outcome of internal investigations in its responses to complaints by advising complainants that there is unlikely to be any change.</p>	<p><b>Closed</b> – Airservices’ updated procedures <i>Noise Complaints and Information Service Procedures for Managing Aircraft Noise Complaints and Enquiries C-PROC0336 Version 2 Effective 13 April 2018</i> include specific reference to keeping complainants informed of the progress of investigations and advising the outcomes at the end of the investigations process. Training with all relevant staff has been undertaken.</p> <p>The ANO is satisfied that the procedures and training address this recommendation.</p>