



Quarterly Report

October-December 2021

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1 Overview

The Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) carried forward 268 complaints on 1 October 2021. During this quarter (October-December 2021), the ANO received 81 new complaints, closed 339 complaints, and therefore carries forward 10 complaints to January 2022. Of the open cases carried forward to January 2022, 7 were received over the ANO Christmas shutdown period, with the remaining three received during December 2021.

The bulk of open complaints during this quarter related to Brisbane Airport multi complaint review, with 268 cases closed after the investigation was finalised on 12 October. A further 58 individual complaints related to the new parallel runway at Brisbane Airport were received throughout the quarter, with 49 closed during the 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 flight paths associated with the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane airports. Regular monthly meetings have been ongoing between the ANO senior advisors and Airservices senior community engagement staff.

The ANO commenced an investigation into a matter where a complainant had received a response to a complaint about noise from Airservices' NCIS, which made no reference to a previous response to a previous related complaint about Airservices' community engagement. It has become apparent that while the NCIS has well developed systems for handling noise complaints, Airservices does not have a robust system to deal with complaints about community engagement. Such complaints have been treated as general correspondence and their management has not been integrated into Airservices' noise complaint handling systems. Airservices has assured the ANO that it is working to address this deficiency and the ANO will work constructively with Airservices to ensure that it is resolved.

The ANO will also continue to review and suggest improvements to the NCIS' existing complaint handling processes and welcomes the appointment of a Manager for the NCIS team.

In this quarter, the ANO received and closed three Defence complaints. As of 1 January 2022, there are no outstanding Defence recommendations. No complaints related to Defence remained open at the end of the quarter.

2 Complaint handling

2.1 Complaints managed in quarter

During the quarter, the ANO received 81 complaints - 75 relating to Airservices, 3 related to Defence and a further 3 complaints that had no agency identified due to insufficient information provided by complainants. 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 but have increased compared to the previous quarter.

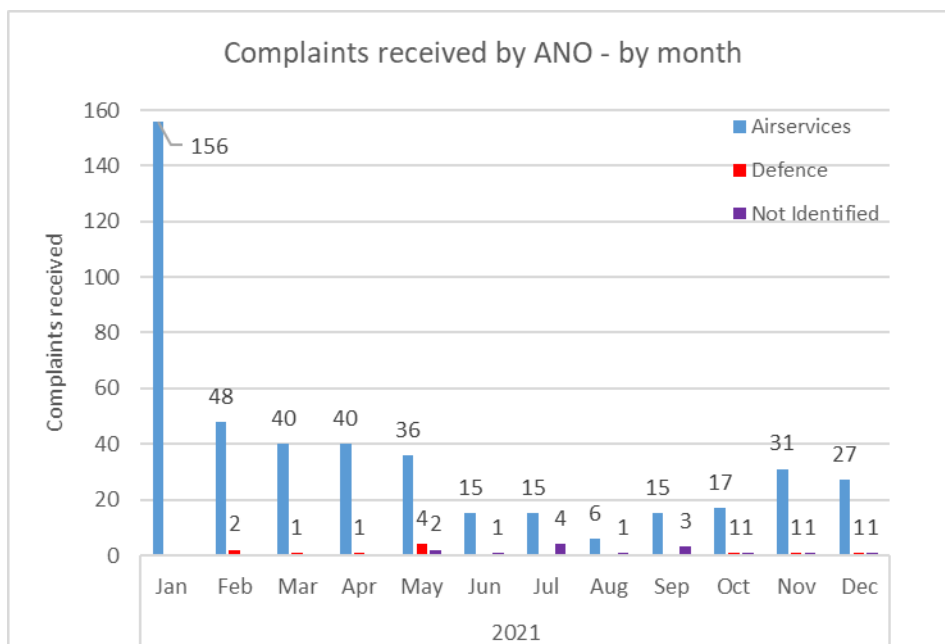


Figure 1 – Complaints received by ANO by month, January 2021 – December 2021

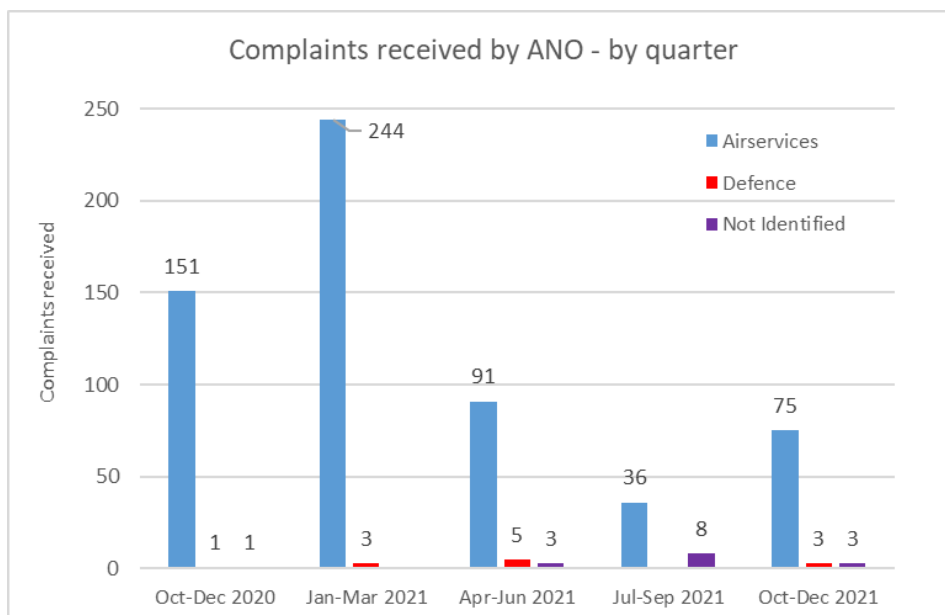


Figure 2 – Complaints received by ANO by quarter, October 2020-December 2021

Figure 3 below charts the average number of complaints over the past 3 years. The complaint numbers for this quarter are slightly higher, when compared to complaint

numbers received outside of the peak complaint periods of April-June 2019 for the proposed Sunshine Coast Airport flightpath changes and July 2020-March 2021 for the Brisbane Airport new runway opening.

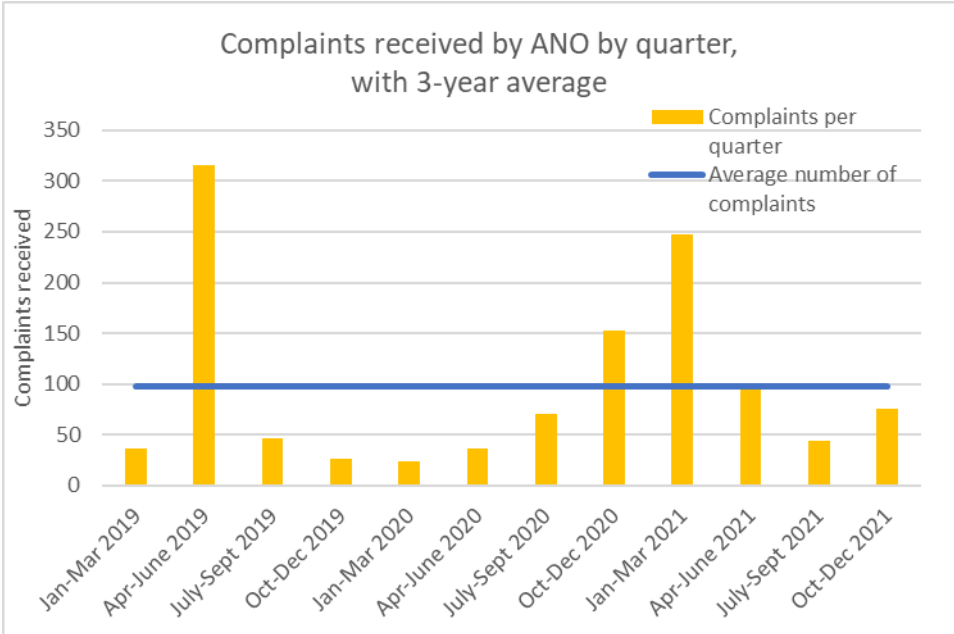


Figure 3 – Complaints received by ANO by quarter, with 3-year average for complaint trends.

The majority of complaints received from October - December 2021 continue to be attributed to the opening of two new runways in Queensland, with 58 complaints relating to Brisbane Airport and 3 relating to the Sunshine Coast Airport (Figure 4).

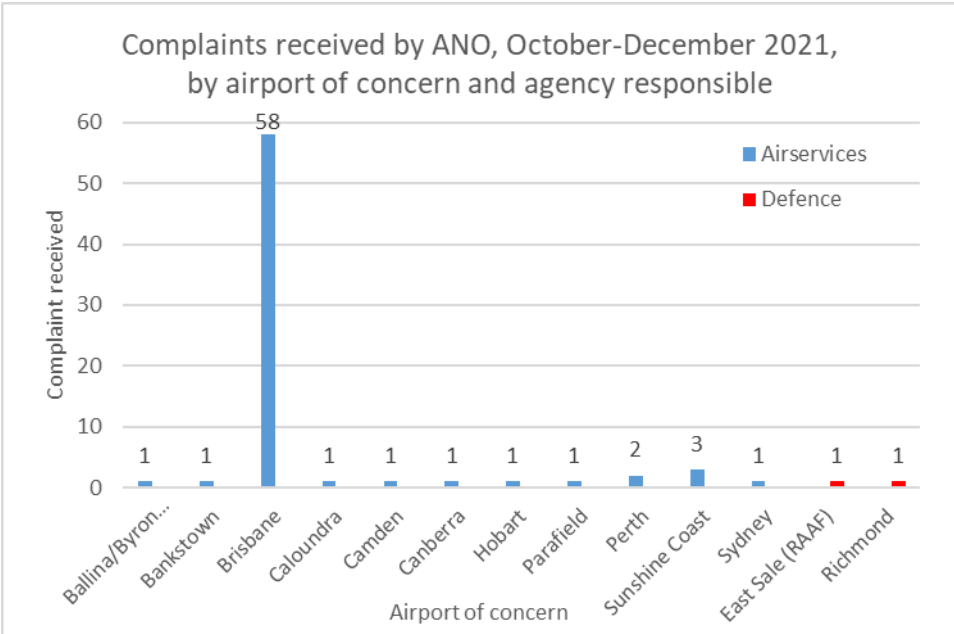


Figure 4 - Complaints received by ANO by Airport of concern, October-December 2021

Unidentified airports

In addition to the airport specific complaints above (Figure 4), a further 8 complaints related to unidentified airports. This included complaints related to helicopter 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 339 cases for the quarter, 333 relating to Airservices, 3 relating to Defence and 3 without an agency identified.

Of the outcomes possible for the 333 cases relating to Airservices, 38 were closed as the complainants had either not yet complained to, or finalised their complaint with, Airservices. Nine resulted in no change possible; and 279 resulted in a change being adopted by Airservices, all which related to the ANO's Brisbane investigation. Three complaints were outside of the ANO's Charter. The remaining 4 cases were closed due to the complainant not providing additional information to the ANO to enable an investigation to progress.

Of the outcomes possible in relation to the 3 Defence case closed this quarter, no change was possible in relation to 2 complaints received and the remaining case was referred to Defence to respond directly.

As of 1 January 2022, 10 complaints remain open. The majority of these complaints were received during the ANO shutdown period, with the oldest of these cases open less than a month as of 1 January.

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

2.2 Issues raised in complaints

The ANO captures and reports on issues raised by complaints during the quarter. 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.¹

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 and other issues outside of the remit of the ANO. Figure 5 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 For each complaint, the ANO office identified the main issues raised in the complaint. This will generally be an average of three issues per complaint.

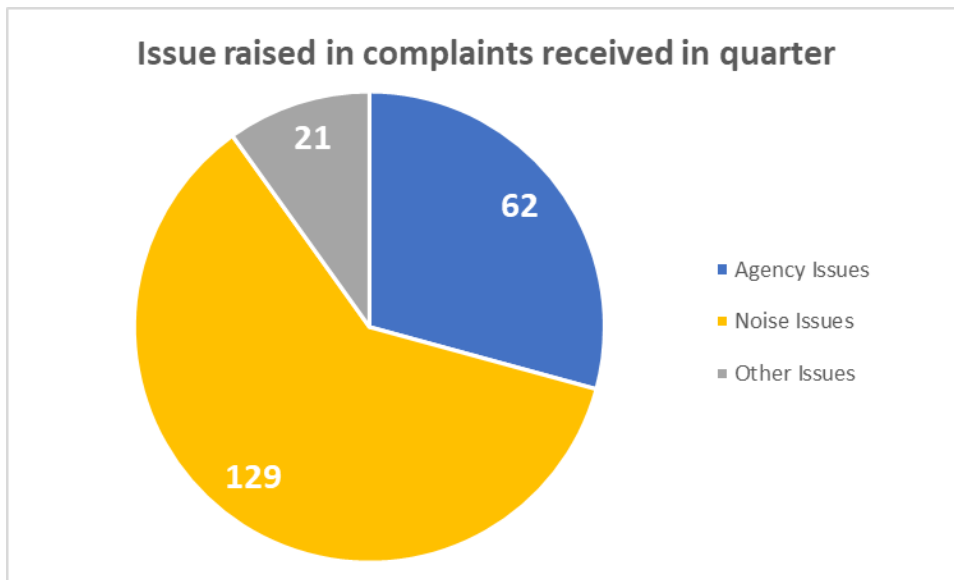


Figure 5 – Issues raised in complaints received by the ANO, October 2021 – December 2021

As shown in Figure 6, complaints about Airservices management of complaints included 29 about its community engagement. It is anticipated that complaints about community engagement will increase as Airservices develops its practice in this area. In this quarter, these concerns related predominantly to a combination of concerns about activities prior to the opening of the new Brisbane Runway, or the ongoing Post-Implementation Review. The increasing number of complaints about community engagement underscores the need for Airservices to develop robust systems for handling complaints in this area.

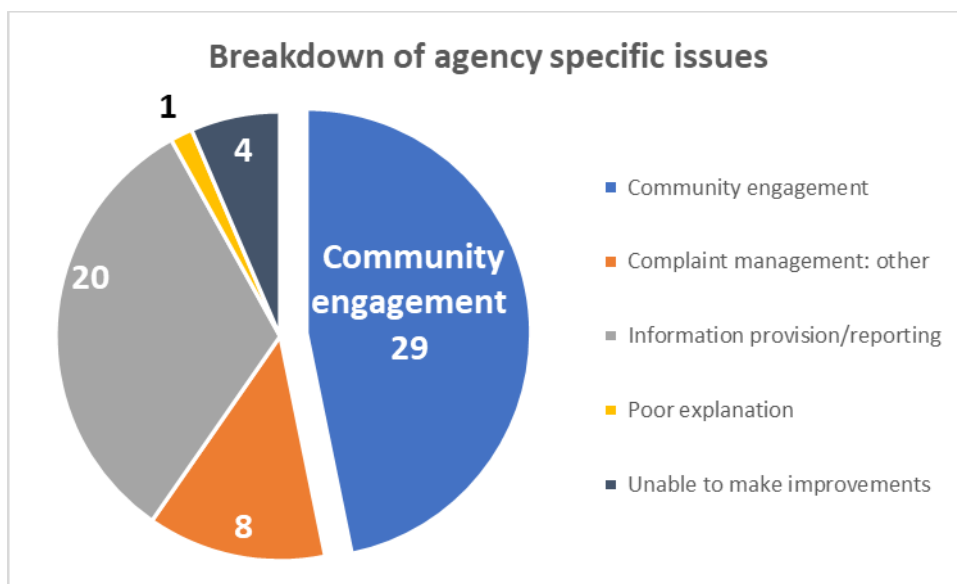


Figure 6 – Agency specific issues raised in complaints received by the ANO, October 2021 – December 2021

Figure 7 breaks down noise complaints by the most common issues raised. Flight path changes and their impacts on health are the dominant issues. Health concerns include impacts upon sleep, mental health, stress, and concerns about pollutants in drinking water.

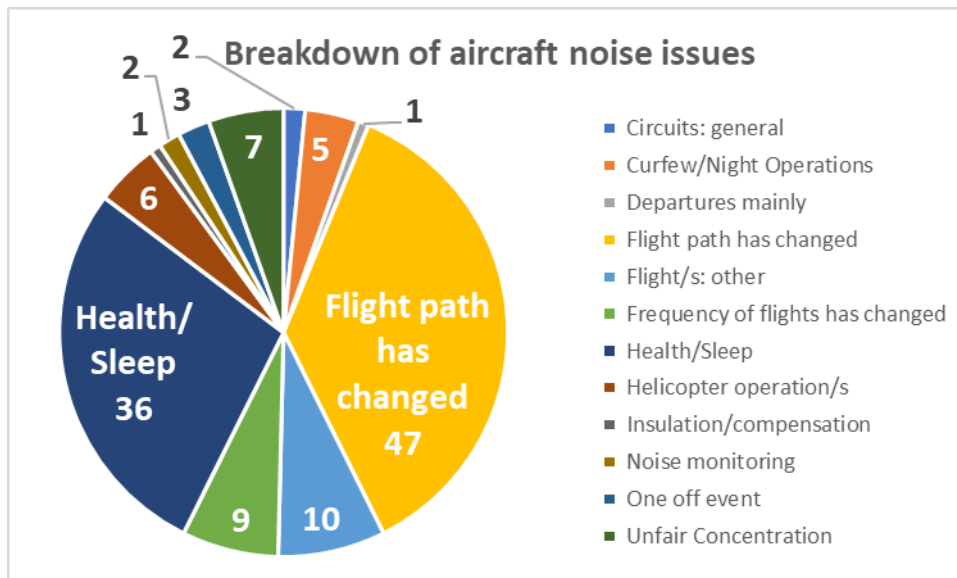


Figure 7 – Aircraft noise related issues raised in complaints received by the ANO, October 2021 – December 2021

Figure 8 below shows other issues raised by complainants that were outside the remit of the ANO.

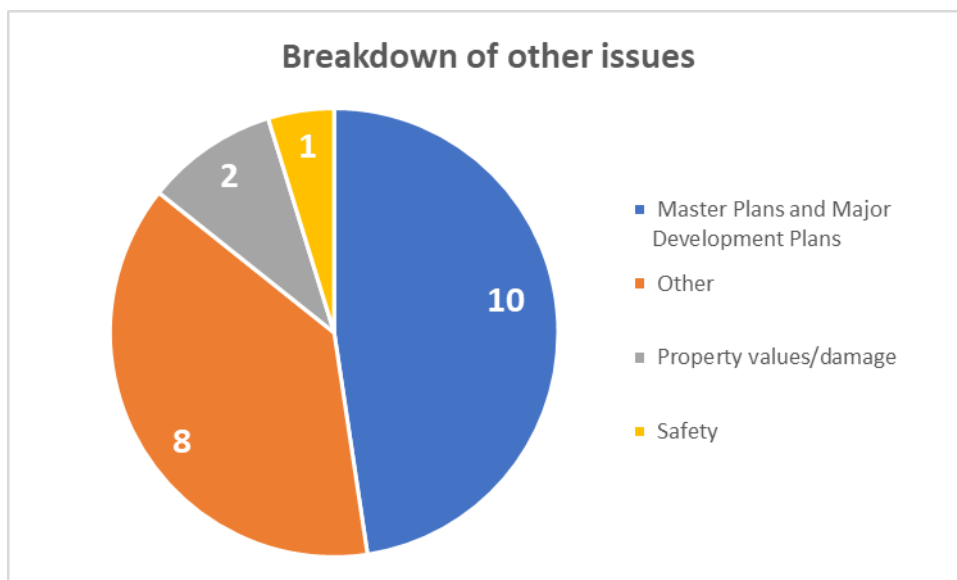


Figure 8 – Issues outside of the ANO’s jurisdiction, raised in complaints received by the ANO, October 2021 – December 2021

2.3 Brisbane investigation

The ANO report on the multi-complaint review into Airservices’ community engagement practices for the Brisbane Airport new flight paths, made 4 recommendations for the Airservices’ Board to consider. Airservices’ Board accepted all 4 recommendations of the ANO with [the ANO report and Airservices’ Board response](#) published on 12 October 2021.

Airservices have provided an update on all 4 recommendations. The implementation of recommendation 1 and 2 is ongoing and action against recommendations 3 and 4 is scheduled to commence in early 2022. A summary of the progress in implementing the recommendations is provided in Attachment 2.

2.4 East Melbourne investigation

The ANO *Investigation into complaints about flight paths over East Melbourne* report included 3 recommendations by the ANO, which were accepted by Airservices. The [ANO report and Airservices Board response](#) were published on 19 July 2021.

Based on information provided by Airservices previously, recommendation 2 was deemed closed in the July – September 2021 Quarterly Report. Airservices have provided an update on its progress against the remaining recommendations, with implementation of recommendation 1 and 3 ongoing. A summary of the recommendations is provided in Attachment 2.

2.5 Liaison with Noise Complaints Information Service (NCIS)

In October 2021, the ANO office and Airservices' NCIS team held the first of its quarterly meetings. In addition to formal meetings, staff from the ANO office and NCIS team speak regularly to discuss matters identified through individual reviews.

During this quarter, the ANO office identified areas in which frequent concerns were being raised by complainants about the NCIS and will work with Airservices to identify opportunities to improve its complaint handling processes.

3 Community Engagement and Noise Information Provision

3.1 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 inquired into the capacity of Airservices to adequately manage complaints about issues other than the impact of aircraft noise, as well as those received through channels other than the NCIS team. Such complaints are expected to increase in future as Airservices delivers increasing community engagement.

A draft report of the ANO's investigation was provided to Airservices' on 18 October 2021. Airservices' responded to the effect that an organisation-wide computer system was to be installed by early 2022 to address this issue. As Airservices appears to understand the importance of this issue and has undertaken to address it, the ANO has paused its investigation and will work constructively with Airservices towards a satisfactory outcome.

3.2 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 staff on engagement projects as they were delivered. This has included attending 2 community aviation consultation group (CACG) meetings and 4 PIR community information sessions, in this quarter and reviewing relevant documentation when requested to do so by Airservices.

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.

4 Key performance indicators

The ANO office introduced key performance indicators (KPI) for its complaint handling processes in July 2021. KPI compliance levels are determined based on results throughout the applicable financial year.

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 review². 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.

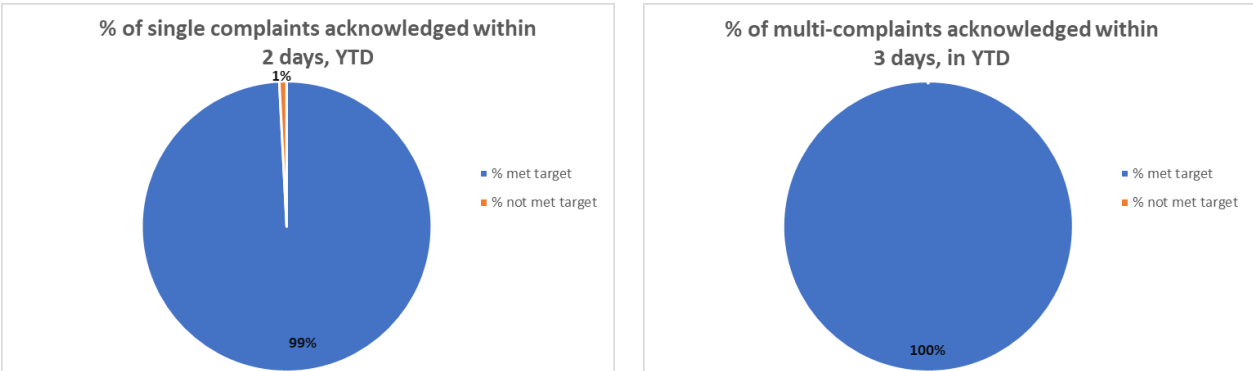


Figure 9 - % of single and multi-complaints acknowledged within target period, for year to date.

The ANO has a KPI of 2 days and 3 days to acknowledge complaints related to single complaints and multi-complaints respectively. Full compliance was achieved for this KPI, this quarter. In the previous quarter there was one single complaint which did not meet this target, which is reflected in the year to date (YTD) data in Figure 9 above.

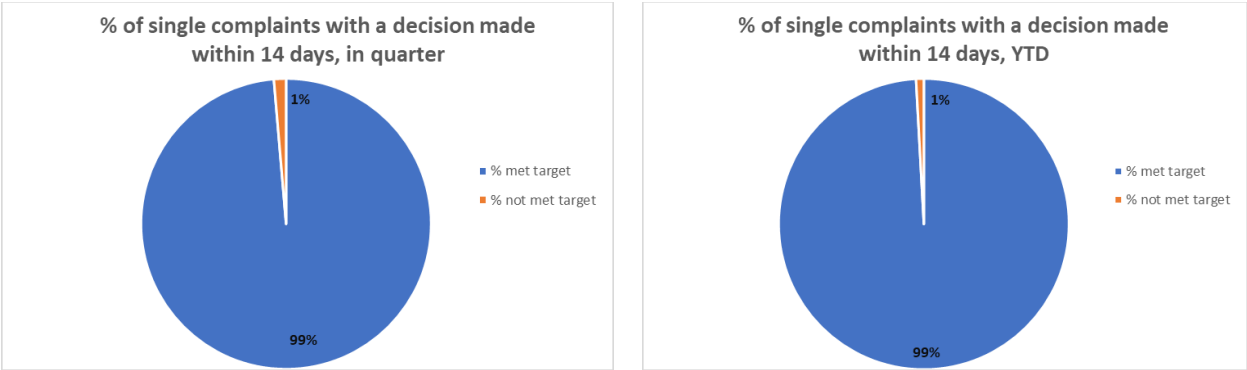


Figure 10 - % of single complaints with a decision made within target period, for October – December 2021 (left) and year to date (right)

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. During the past quarter, a single complaint remained open beyond the identified 14 days, as shown in Figure 10. This was due to the ANO office awaiting additional information

² 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.

from the complainant to determine whether the complaint was in scope. The ANO received no new complaints that related to multi-complaint investigations during this quarter and has met this target for all multi-complaints for the year to date.

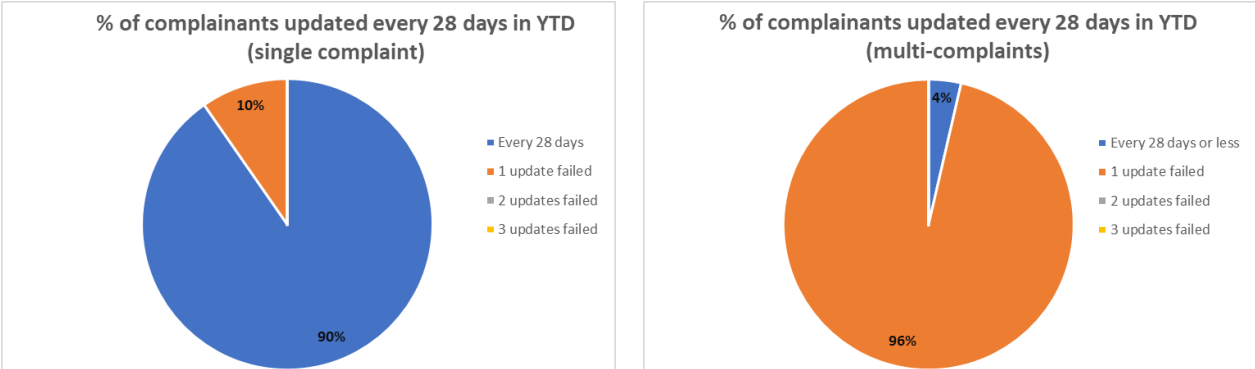


Figure 11 - % of single and multi-complainants updated within target period, for year to date.

The ANO office is committed to providing regular updates on the progress to complainants during the course of an investigation³. In this quarter, all updates were provided in the target 28 days, however as Figure 11⁴ shows, the year to date (YTD) for both single and multi-complaints reflect occasions in the July-September 2021 quarter where this was not achieved – this was due to an unexpectedly prolonged period while Airservices formulated its response to the ANO’s report on the Brisbane investigation.

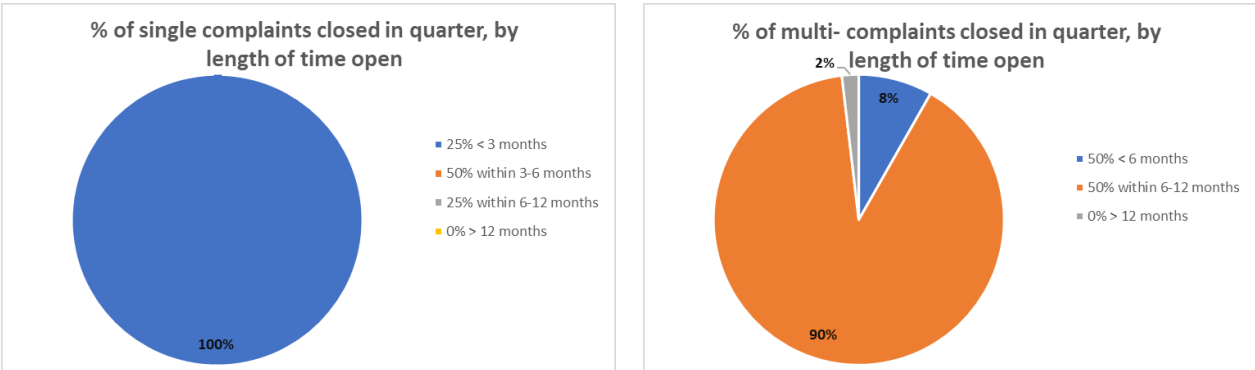


Figure 12 - % of single and multi-complaints closed in quarter by length of time open

Of the 339 cases closed in this quarter, as shown in Figure 12 above, 72 were individual complaints with all single complaints closed within 3 months of receipt. Of the 267 multi-complaint cases closed, all related to the Brisbane review with 22 closed within 6 months, 240 closed within 12 months and 5 complaints which had been open for more than 12 months.

³ For both individual complaints and multi-complaint reviews, the KPI target is for updates to occur every 28 days or less.

⁴ Additional information has been added to this KPI graph since last quarter’s report, to reflect the number of updates failed. Each case has a maximum of 3 updates required per quarter, though a complainant may receive more frequent updates than required under the KPI targets.

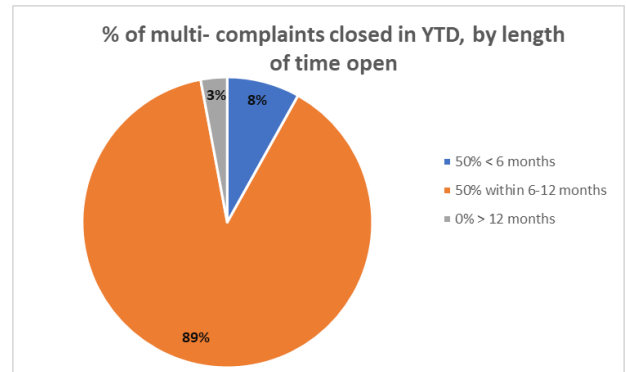
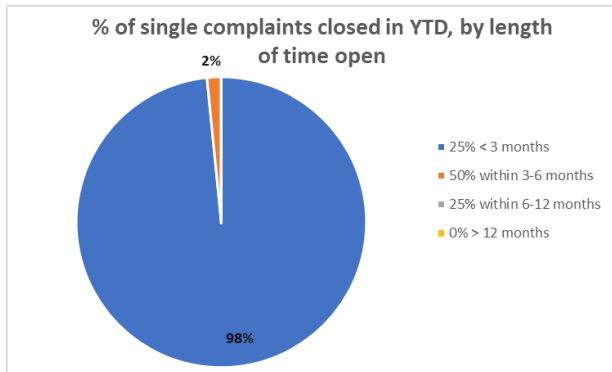


Figure 13 - % of single and multi-complaints closed in year to date, by length of time open

Closed data for the year to date, which is shown in Figure 13 reflects the low number of multi-complaints outside of the Brisbane review. Figure 13 also highlights the high closure rates of single cases within 3 months of receipt.

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

Kieran Pehm

Aircraft Noise Ombudsman

3 February 2022

Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

The following tables summarise the complaint statistics for the quarter.

AIRSERVICES	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	17	31	27	75
Complaints closed:	280	29	24	333

Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	14	11	20	45
Complainant did not provide further information	3	1	-	4
Outside charter scope	1	1	1	3
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	10	9	19	38

Total complaints closed - reviewed:	266	18	4	288
No change possible - explanation provided	-	7	2	9
Change adopted by Airservices Australia	266	11	2	279

DEFENCE	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	1	1	1	3
Complaints closed:	-	2	1	3

Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	-	-	1	1
Complainant did not provide further information	-	-	-	0
Outside charter scope	-	-	-	0
Referred to Defence to respond directly	-	-	1	1

Total complaints closed - reviewed:	-	2	-	2
No change possible - explanation provided	-	2	-	2
Change adopted by Defence	-	-	-	0

	Airservices	Defence	No agency assigned*	Total
Complaints open at 1 October 2021 (first day of next quarter)	268	0	0	268
Complaints received	75	3	3	81
Complaints closed	333	3	3	339
Complaints open at 1 January 2022 (first day of next quarter)	10	0	0	10

*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 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 advised 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 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 all of the Airport Community Groups / CACGs which Airservices regularly attend. This has included presentations to the community groups.</p> <p>Airservices have advised that a final report of these activities will be provided to the ANO in early 2022.</p>

Airservices – Investigation into complaints about the flight paths associated with the Brisbane Airport new parallel runway (October 2021)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 1: Airservices Post Implementation Review of the Brisbane flight paths includes a community engagement process that provides reasonable opportunities for community contributions and the consideration of community suggested alternatives to the current flight paths.</p>	<p>Ongoing: Airservices have finalised the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the PIR on 17 December 2021, following five community meetings and two rounds of community feedback on the TOR.</p> <p>Engagement with the community is scheduled to continue through 2022, including a series of community workshops to discuss noise, COVID-19 operations and to co-design potential noise improvements, prior to the public submission period.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Airservices review the effect of its managerial separation of flight path design, environmental assessment and community engagement, and implement a management structure that includes these functions under the same manager or demonstrate how effective community engagement is incorporated into the flight path change process under the current structure.</p>	<p>Ongoing: Airservices have implemented a new process for Flight Path Change management to provide improved multi-disciplinary governance of flight path changes and collaboration across each phase of the change program. The Procedure Manual for the Flight Path Change Process has been updated to reflect this process.</p> <p>Additionally, Airservices advised that assurance is being actively conducted by Airservices community engagement on third party engagement plans, with extensive feedback provided.</p>

	Airservices' have yet to provide evidence of a review of the effect of separating flight path design, environmental assessment and community engagement.
Recommendation 3: Airservices update its Third-Party Framework to ensure that Airservices' obligations regarding community engagement are properly acquitted when it enters into cooperative arrangements for community engagement with third parties.	Yet to begin: Airservices have advised that an update of the Third-Party Framework is planned for early 2022.
Recommendation 4: Airservices update its policies to ensure that if metrics for the assessment of significance have changed since the initial EIS assessment and approval, the originally approved designs and data should be used to produce the relevant applicable metrics, retrospectively. If the original approved data does not support production of the additional metric, for comparison against the final flight path designs, the comparative assessment should clearly explain the reasons for the alternate assessment method selected.	Yet to begin: Airservices have advised that its policies will be reviewed in early 2022.

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 October-December 2021. KPI performance are reported both by quarter and financial year. 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 (Oct Dec 2021)	% met target (2021 22 YTD)	
Single complaint	Acknowledgement of complaint	Within 2 business days	100	99	
	Decision on whether complaint is within jurisdiction within 14 business days	Within 14 business days	99	90	
	Update to complainant on progress of complaint	Every 28 days	100	90	
		1 update failed	0	10	
		2 updates failed	0	0	
		3 updates failed	0	0	
	Time from complaint received to closed	25% < 3 months	100	98	
		50% within 3-6 months	0	2	
		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
		Update to complainant on progress of complaint	Every 28 days or less	100	4
1 update failed			0	96	
2 updates failed			0	0	
3 updates failed			0	0	
Time from complaint received to closed		50% < 6 months	8	8	
		50% within 6-12 months	90	89	
		0% > 12 months	2	3	