



# Quarterly Report

## March – May 2011

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## 1 Introduction

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- 1.1 This report includes complaint statistics and a commentary on the third quarter of operations of the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO). The report is structured around the three key functions of the ANO, these being review and monitoring of Airservices Australia's complaint-handling, consultation, and the provision of information about aircraft noise.
- 1.2 During the quarter, the Ombudsman was unavailable for some weeks due to medical leave, however, the office continued to manage the day-to-day processing of individual complaints. Work on finalising the terms of reference for the next reviews was, however, delayed.
- 1.3 The office has also focussed on developing the working relationship with Airservices Australia (Airservices), particularly to facilitate implementation of the recommendations from the *Review of Complaints Handling* - February 2011.

## 2 Complaint handling

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- 2.1 In the March to May 2011 quarter, the ANO received 31 new individual complaints (compared with 37 in the first quarter and 30 in the second quarter). This brings the total number of complaints received to the end of May 2011 to 98. Of these, 81 were closed as at the end of May, although just under half of these are closed because the complaint has been or will be addressed by systemic issues reviews. This is reflective of the strong emphasis this office is placing on considering broader effects and seeking opportunities for medium to long term improvements to aircraft noise outcomes.
- 2.2 Attachment 1 provides a more detailed summary of the ANO's complaint statistics.
- 2.3 As foreshadowed in our last Quarterly Report, systemic issues emerging from complaints have prompted the office to initiate targeted reviews to consider issues arising from Sydney, Perth, and Fingal Head (Gold Coast). Terms of reference are being developed and these reviews will be a focus in the latter half of 2011.

### ***Implementation of Review of Complaints Handling - Airservices Australia February 2011***

- 2.4 It has now been over three months since the Ombudsman delivered the first formal report. It is therefore appropriate to reflect on the progress of implementation of the report. The ANO office is aware of substantial preparatory, planning and development work in Airservices for the purposes of implementing the 18 recommendations of the report. We are also aware of discussions between Airservices and other agencies about better cross agency handling of complaints and better handling of difficult complainant behaviours. At the same time it is important that the public should see evidence of the implementation of the report. With this in mind the ANO held discussions with

Airservices' staff with a view to expediting the implementation of some recommendations. The discussions identified two areas as suitable to expedite: those recommendations dealing with a clearer focus on resolving complaints (recommendations 1 & 2) and that dealing with the shift to a focus on issues rather than contacts as the key measure of complaint (recommendation 13). The end of the financial year was set as a target date for these two changes.

### 3 Consultation

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- 3.1 Consultation processes will be addressed as a key aspect of the systemic issues reviews which are currently being scoped.
- 3.2 During the quarter, the Ombudsman attended consultative forums for five airports with attendances at other locations scheduled. This activity is intended both as a learning/research exercise as well as a promotional and networking opportunity. The Ombudsman also attended two industry forums during the quarter with more scheduled.
- 3.3 The ANO office will target input on consultation processes as the reviews and outreach activities are progressed.

### 4 Information Provision

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- 4.1 The presentation and distribution of information related to aircraft noise is the third function of the ANO charter and one that is intrinsically related to the effectiveness of both complaint handling and consultation processes. For this reason, an examination of information provision will be incorporated into the systemic issue reviews referred to above.
- 4.2 In parallel the office has been researching best practice in the provision of information about aircraft noise. The work undertaken by the Department of Infrastructure and Transport and also by some leading airports (such as Brisbane and Perth) provide an insight into more effective ways of providing noise information.
- 4.3 The office is also working on specific initiatives:
  - 4.3.1 Developing a brochure that can be provided to complainants to pass on messages that might be considered offensive if directed individually to complainants. These messages might be more acceptable if embedded in a general brochure and are those that deal with living with aircraft noise. They would include suggestions such as moving house, insulating houses or just bedrooms (at the complainant's expense), and seeking medical help with the stress from constant or frequent noise.
  - 4.3.2 Working with Airservices to develop a process and content for clear and timely advice on aircraft noise that can be provided to lawyers and conveyancers at the time when they handle property sales. This would then be made available to purchasers as part of the information about the property.

## 5 Conclusions

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- 5.1 The third quarter of ANO operations has seen continued work on resolving individual complaints, developing relationships with stakeholders and continuing research to finalise the definition of the reviews for Perth and Sydney. The Ombudsman must make clear that the reviews are to focus on the handling of complaints, information and consultation, not on redesigning airspace or reviewing air traffic management.
- 5.2 Airservices continues to work with the ANO office to respond to individual cases and support the work on broader systemic issues. The office is keen to work with Airservices to achieve rapid reform in complaint handling, information sharing and consultation processes, especially in the wake of the first report. At the same time the office is conscious of the challenges faced in managing a very difficult constituency of complainants while maintaining a clear focus on the priority of safety.



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17 June 2011

## Attachment 1 Summary of complaint statistics

	Mar-11	Apr-11	May-11	Qtrly Total	Totals 1-Sep-10 to 31-May-11
Number of complaints:	16	8	7	31	98
State/Territory of complaints:	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>98</b>
ACT	0	0	0	0	1
NSW	8	3	1	12	34
NT	0	0	0	0	0
QLD	0	0	1	1	5
SA	0	2	1	3	15
TAS	0	0	0	0	0
VIC	5	1	1	7	18
WA	3	2	3	8	25
Total closed:	<b>23</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>81</b>
Complaints not reviewed:	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>
Complainant did not provide further info	0	0	0	0	7
Outside charter scope	0	0	0	0	3
Addressed in separate review	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>35</b>
Outcome of reviewed complaints:	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>36</b>
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	1	0	1	2	7
Referred to Air Force to respond directly	0	1	0	1	1
Referred to Airport operator to respond dir.	0	0	0	0	1
No change possible - explanation provided	7	9	3	19	24
Change adopted by Airservices	0	0	0	0	1
Change adopted by Airport operator	1	0	0	1	1
Change adopted by operators	0	0	0	0	1
Time taken to close complaints: average days, including weekends and public holidays, from lodgement to close:	62				