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Quarterly Report

January-March 2023

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1 Overview

As reported last quarter, the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) has improved its reporting by capturing data on all complaints received, rather than only reporting those on which the ANO could take action under the Charter. Last quarter's report complaints were categorised and reported as either substantive complaints or complaint notifications. More careful consideration by the Office recognised that all complaints have some degree of substance and has settled upon what are considered to be the more accurate descriptive terms of "actionable" complaints, which may give rise to reviews and "non-actionable" complaints which, for reasons explained previously, no action by the ANO can reasonably be taken under the Charter. The nature of non-actionable complaints is discussed more fully in Section 2 of the report.

The ANO received a total of 1,367 complaints during the quarter. This includes 1,220 non-actionable complaints. The remaining 147 actionable complaints can be compared with the number of complaints previously reported by the ANO as new complaints, prior to the last quarter's report.

The ANO carried forward 15 complaints on 1 January 2023. During this quarter (January-March 2023), the ANO closed 141 actionable complaints, and therefore carries forward 21 to April 2023.

During the quarter, the ANO continued to see complaints across a variety of airports, reflecting the increase in aircraft operations across Australia. However, the bulk of complaints continued to relate to Brisbane Airport with 96 actionable complaints and the vast majority of non-actionable complaints.

The ANO continued to monitor Airservices' community engagement processes under clause 71 of the ANO Charter, including the Post Implementation Review (PIR) process for the flight paths associated with the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane airports.

During this quarter, both the regular monthly meetings between the ANO senior advisors, Airservices' senior staff in the community engagement team and the Noise Complaint and Information Service (NCIS) have been combined, reflecting both the connection between NCIS and community engagement activities, and improving the efficiency of these monthly meetings for all parties. The quarterly meetings between the ANO and NCIS teams has also been expanded to include Airservices' community engagement team, with the intent of improving information flow and awareness of issues across all attendees.

The ANO continues to suggest improvements to the NCIS complaint handling processes. This includes an ongoing discussion on opportunities for improved reporting by the NCIS of complaints received.

In this quarter, the ANO managed one new actionable complaint about Defence and closed one complaint. Two Defence complaints remained under review at the end of the quarter.

During this quarter, the Aviation White Paper announced by the federal government in 2022, invited submissions to the Terms of Reference (TOR). The ANO made a submission to the TOR which can be viewed on the ANO website [here](#) and promoted awareness of the opportunity to participate to complainants throughout the submission period. Submissions to the next stage, the Green Paper, are expected to open mid-year and the ANO will continue to contribute and highlight the opportunity to complainants, when appropriate.

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The ANO continued its transition to the new document management system, during this quarter. As a complex project which is being undertaken by the ANO staff in parallel with managing incoming complaints this process will continue until the end of the current financial year. The ANO extends its thanks to Airservices' records management team, who are supporting the transition.

2 Complaint handling

The complaints received by the ANO office can be divided into two categories: those which require action and management by the ANO office and those that do not.

Complaints requiring substantial action and management, referred to in this report as actionable complaints, include new complaints raised by an individual complainant, and complaints requiring referral to another agency or review by the ANO office. This includes all complaints from first-time complainants to the ANO office. Complaints by existing complainants which raise issues distinct from their previous complaint(s) are also recorded and managed as new actionable complaints. Historically, the ANO has reported only these matters as complaints.

From 1 October 2022, the ANO office introduced the capacity to track and report on complaints which although assessed, do not require further action or management by the ANO, referred to in this report as non-actionable complaints. The majority of these are complaints where the complainant expresses a broad, general grievance about aircraft noise, but the complaint is clearly directed to another party, such as the responsible Minister or another agency, and the correspondence is merely copied to the ANO. This category also includes complaints where the subject matter has previously been reviewed by the ANO and no further action can reasonably be taken under the ANO Charter. In such cases, the complainant may be advised that further correspondence on that matter will be recorded but no response provided unless the complaint raises new issues beyond the original complaint. Section 2.1 below provides a summary of these non-actionable complaints received during this quarter, with the remaining sections focussing on complaints actionable by the ANO office during the quarter.

2.1 Non-actionable complaints received in quarter

During the quarter, 1,367 complaints were raised with the ANO office – 1,220 of these were non-actionable complaints. Figure 1 shows the number of complaints raised per month since October 2022, including both actionable and non-actionable complaints.

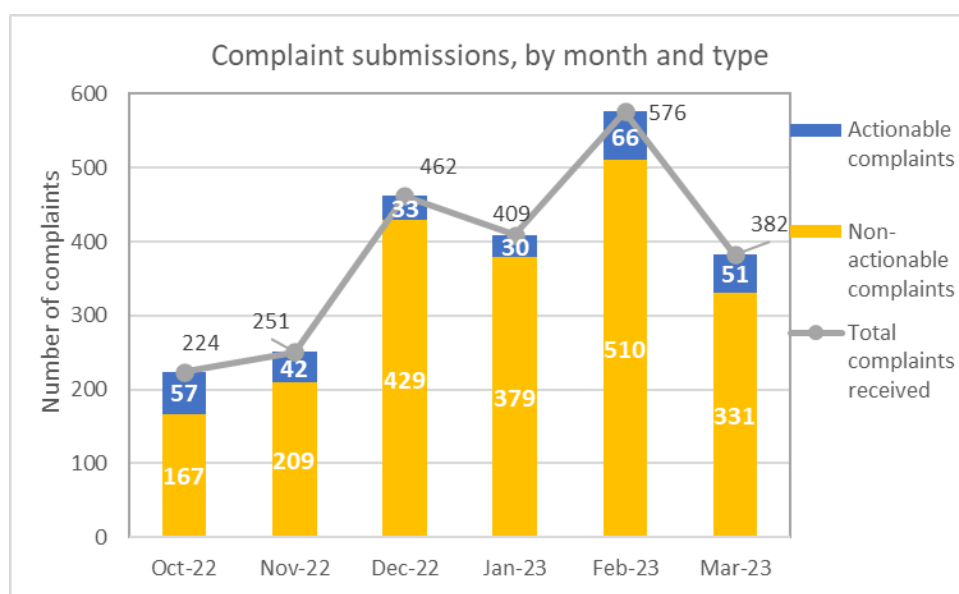


Figure 1 –Complaint submissions by month from October 2022, highlighting actionable and non-actionable complaints.

Non-actionable complaints increased by over 50% this quarter, compared to the previous

quarter. Similar to last quarter, the majority of non-actionable complaints received this quarter can be attributed to the opening of the new runway for Brisbane. Of these, 97 complainants raised a total of 1203 complaints about operations associated with Brisbane Airport.

While the overall numbers are large, non-actionable complaints do not have a significant impact on the ANO’s budget as they are mainly recorded and closed. In a few cases a limited advisory response on the ANO’s remit may be made.

Most of the non-actionable complaints were about flight paths associated with Brisbane Airport generated by inclusion of the ANO on a mailing list published by a community group encouraging people to voice their dissatisfaction about the impact of the new runway. Figure 2 below shows the breakdown of non-actionable complaints by airport, where identified.



Figure 2 – Non-actionable complaints received by Airport of concern, January – March 2023.

One complainant from Brisbane submitted 950 (78%) of the non-actionable complaints received during the quarter, with the complainant seeking action, including a curfew to address aircraft noise in Brisbane, outside of the ANO’s remit.

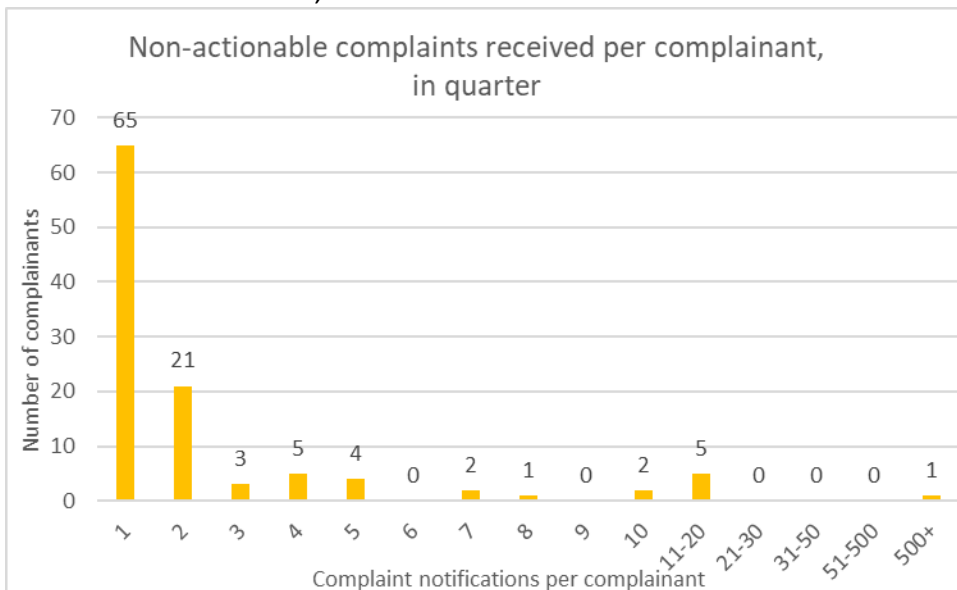


Figure 3 – Non-actionable complaints per complainant, January – March 2023

2.2 Actionable complaints in quarter

During the quarter, the ANO received 147 actionable complaints - 131 relating to Airservices and one relating to Defence. A further 14 complaints had no agency identified due to either insufficient information provided by the complainant, or the complaint related to an agency other than Airservices or Defence¹.

Additionally, one complaint about the ANO was received this quarter. The complaint related to inaction by the ANO office on matters outside of the ANO Charter, and the complainant was appropriately advised. This complaint is not included in the statistics of in this report.

Figures 5 and 6 below show the number of actionable complaints by agency. Complaints this quarter are consistent with the last quarter.

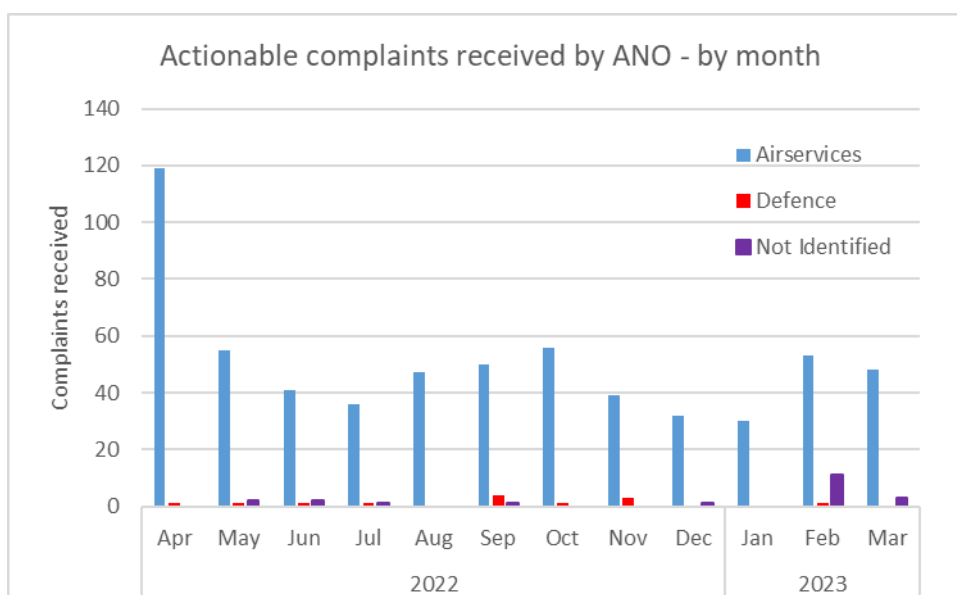


Figure 4 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by month, April 2022 – March 2023

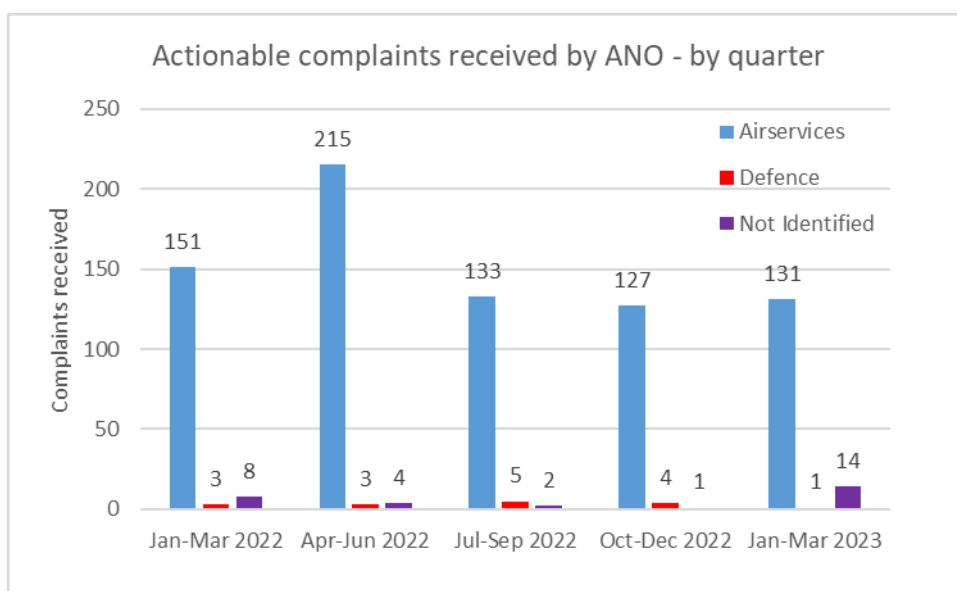


Figure 5 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by quarter, January 2022 – March 2023

¹ Where complaints are received about other agencies which sit outside of the ANO Charter, the ANO redirects complainants to the responsible agency.

Figure 6 charts the average number of actionable complaints over the past 3 years. Complaints made during this quarter were higher than the 3-year average.

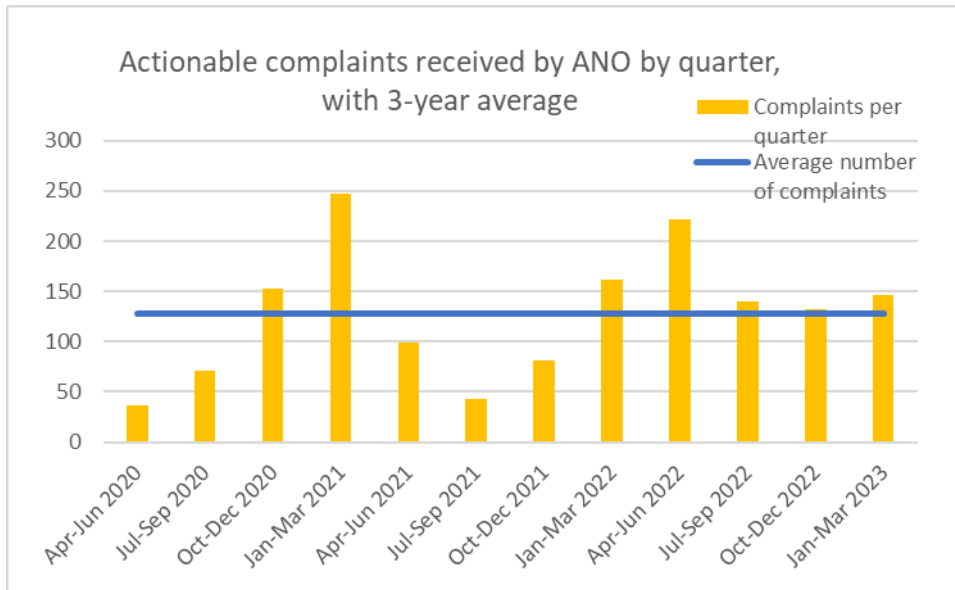


Figure 6 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by quarter, with 3-year average for complaint trends.

The majority of actionable complaints received this quarter continue to be attributed to the opening of the new runway for Brisbane, with 96 complaints (66%) of which 11 were related to an agency other than Airservices.

Figure 7 below shows the breakdown of complaints by airport, where it could be identified.

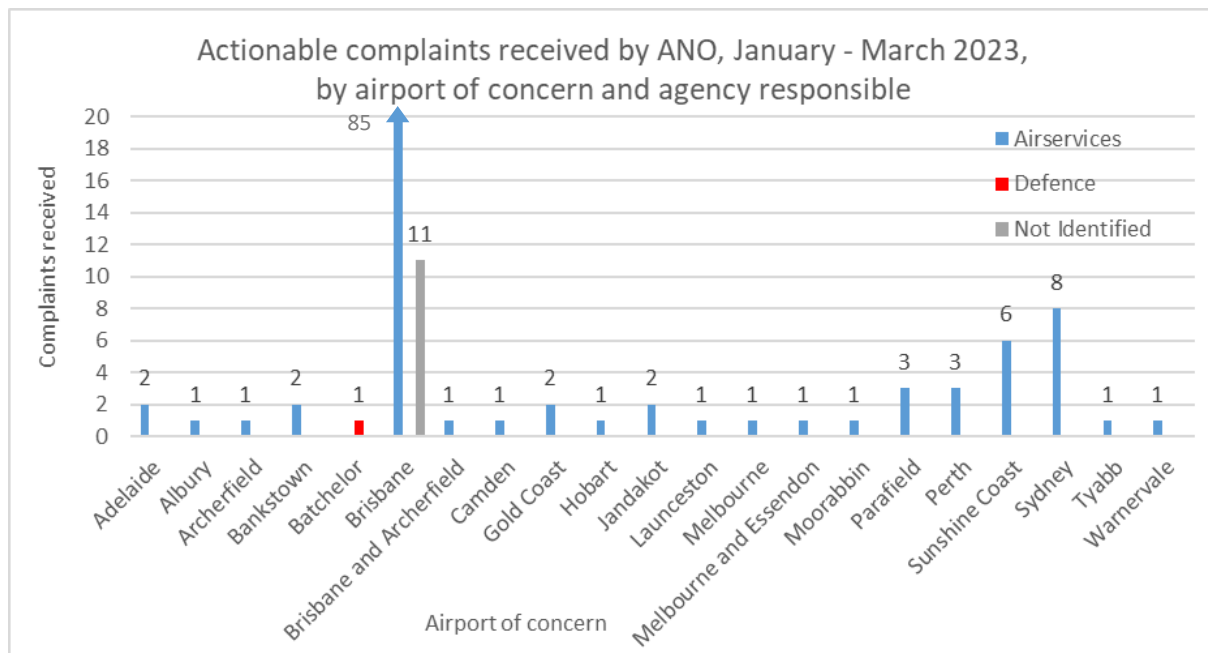


Figure 7 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by airport of concern and agency, January - March 2023.

In addition to the airport specific complaints above, a further 10 complaints did not include sufficient information to identify the airport of concern. This includes helicopter operations due to the range of potential helipads a helicopter may operate from.

Closed complaints

The ANO closed 140 actionable complaints for the quarter, 125 relating to Airservices, 1 relating to Defence and 14 without an agency identified. In addition, all non-actionable complaints were closed, as noted in Section 2.1.

Of the outcomes possible for the 125 actionable complaints relating to Airservices, 89 were closed as the complainants had either not yet complained to or finalised their complaint with Airservices. Eighty-nine of the 125 complaints related to Brisbane's new flight paths including the Airservices' post-implementation review (PIR) and the resulting Brisbane Noise Action Plan. Three resulted in no change possible, one complaint resulted in a change being adopted by Airservices, with a further 10 complaints closed due to the complainant not providing additional information to enable an investigation to progress. Of note in this quarter, 22 complaints were outside of the ANO's Charter and related to the complainant seeking regulation, enforcement or penalties be applied in relation to aircraft noise issues, as the main complaint raised.

Of the outcomes possible in relation to the actionable complaint for Defence which was closed in this quarter, the complaint resulted in a change being adopted by Defence.

As of 1 April 2023, 21 actionable complaints remain open. This includes 5 complaints related to the ANO's Gold Coast multi-complaint review. Fourteen of the open complaints were received between February and March 2023. The final 2 complaints under review were received by the ANO at the end of September 2022 and early December 2022 respectively.

The complaint received at the end of September 2022 was a complex complaint related to both community engagement and complaint handling practices. During the review, the Office made a number of requests for information. In relation to these requests, the agency experienced delays of approximately 2 months sourcing some of the requested documents internally, in relation to 2 separate requests made.

Full complaint data for the quarter is presented in Appendix 1.

2.3 Issues raised in complaints

The ANO captures and reports on the issues raised in actionable complaints during the quarter. The number of issues raised per quarter is greater than the number of complaints, as complainants normally raise a number of issues per complaint².

Actionable complaints received during this quarter are classified by the ANO office under one of 3 categories - 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 8 shows the distribution of the issues raised during the quarter. As would be expected, the most common issues raised with the ANO office are aircraft noise related concerns.

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

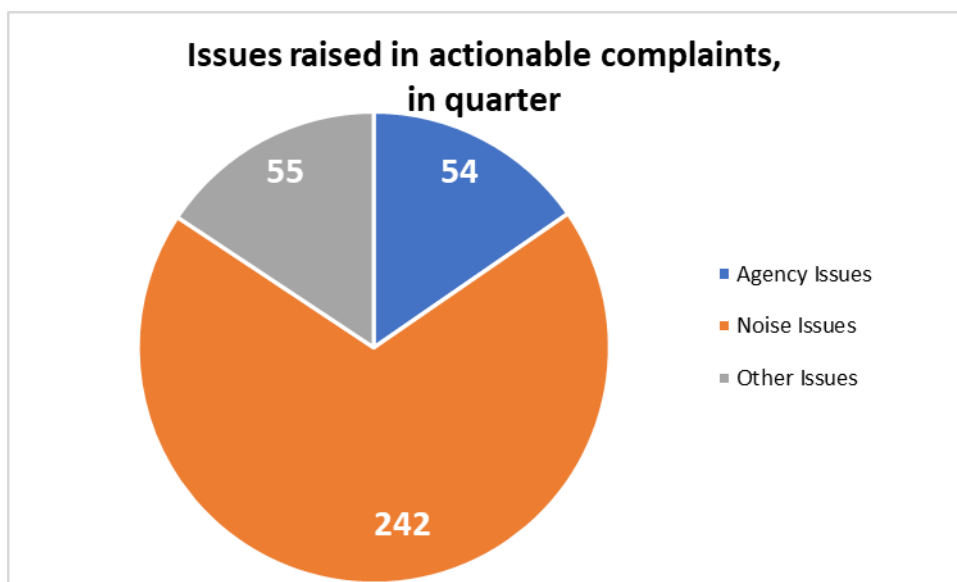


Figure 8 – Issues raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, January 2023 – March 2023

As shown in Figure 9 below, complaints about Airservices’ management of complaints included 20 about its community engagement. In this quarter, these concerns related predominantly to a combination of concerns about activities prior to the opening of the new Brisbane Runway, with a smaller number focussed on the Sunshine Coast PIR, and Brisbane PIR and post-PIR activities.

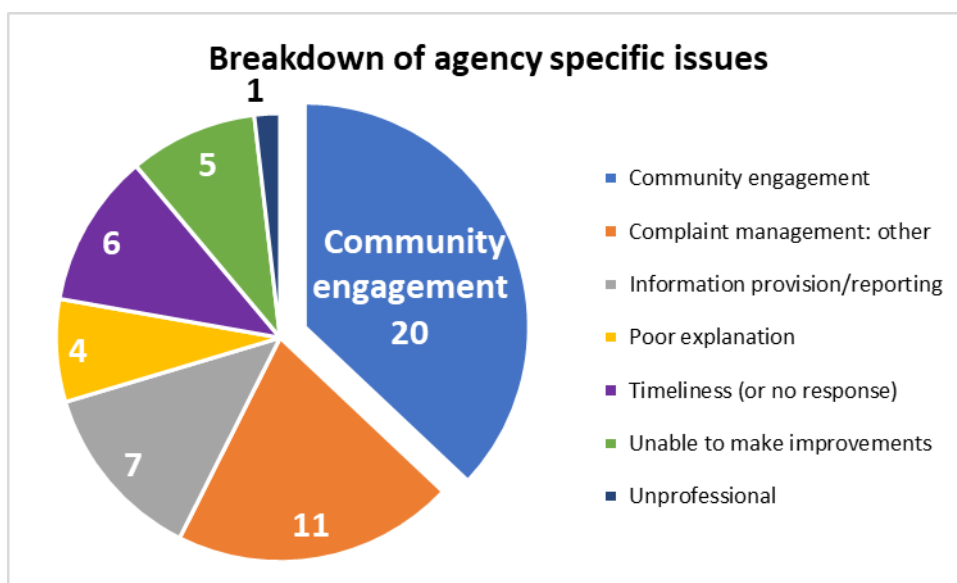


Figure 9 – Agency specific issues raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, January 2023 – March 2023

Figure 10 breaks down noise complaints by the most common issues raised. Flight path changes and their impacts on health continue to be dominant issues. Health concerns, which include impacts upon sleep, mental health, and stress, continued to be prevalent themes during this quarter. As in previous quarters, complaints about night operations continue to be a concern, including requests for curfews. Night operations were raised as a concern in relation to 5 airports this quarter. Brisbane Airport, with a total of 20, accounted for most of the 28 complaints where curfew/night operations were identified as a key concern.

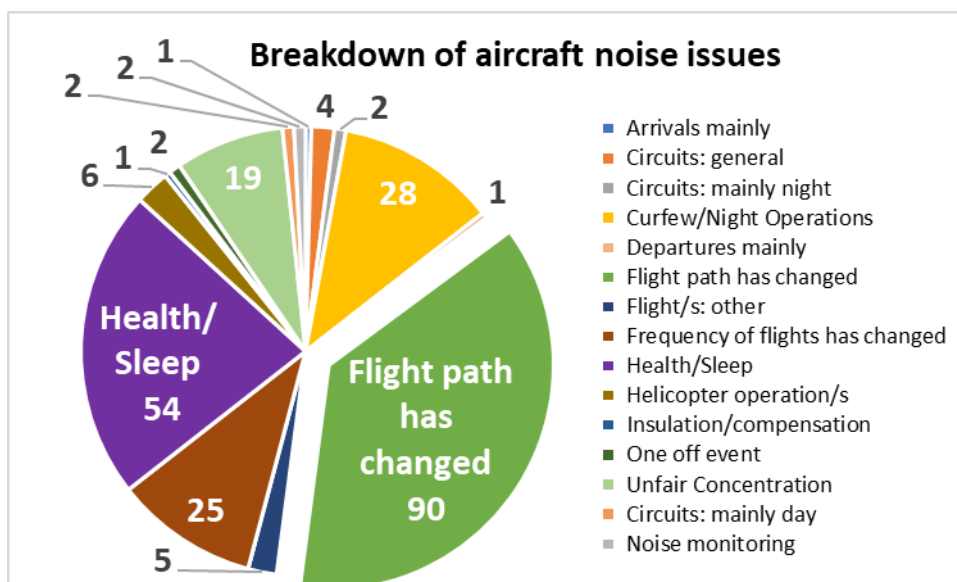


Figure 10 – Aircraft noise related issues raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, January 2023 – March 2023

Figure 11 shows other issues raised by complainants that were outside the remit of the ANO. This quarter, the majority of ‘other’ issues raised related to requests for greater regulation, or dissatisfaction with existing aviation regulation, and aircraft noise management.

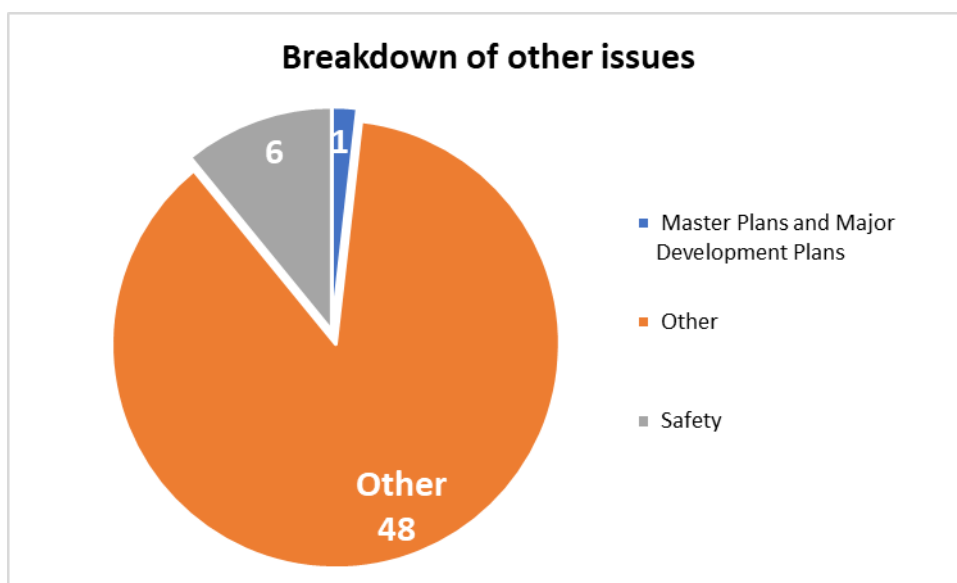


Figure 11 – Issues outside of the ANO’s remit, raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, January 2023 – March 2023

2.4 East Melbourne investigation

The ANO’s *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.

Airservices have provided an update on its progress against recommendation 3, confirming that implementation of this recommendation remains on hold while awaiting the outcomes of the Melbourne Airport consultation for the proposed new runway. Recommendation 1 and 2 were closed by the ANO in previous quarters. A summary of the outstanding ANO recommendation is provided in Appendix 2.

2.5 Gold Coast investigation

In July 2022, the ANO provided Airservices with its assessment of a multiple complaints review conducted under clause 47 of the ANO Charter, which concerned Airservices' handling of the Gold Coast Southern Operations Noise Improvement review. Airservices agreed to further engage with the complainants on this matter and, after a period of consultation, provided the complainants with its final Southern Operations Noise Improvement investigation report in March 2023. Prior to finalising the Gold Coast Southern Operations review report, Airservices opened the report to feedback from the complainants. Feedback provided reflected that Airservices' engagement on this matter was well received. Complainants also provided positive feedback to the ANO office and this matter has been finalised as resolved.

2.6 Liaison with Noise Complaints Information Service (NCIS)

The ANO office and Airservices' NCIS team continue to hold regular meetings. In addition to formal meetings, staff from the ANO office and NCIS team speak regularly to discuss matters identified through individual reviews.

The ANO and NCIS met in early April to discuss opportunities for improved accessibility of the NCIS' services, as well as opportunities for expanded reporting. The NCIS team is currently considering these opportunities.

2.7 Liaison with Defence

During this quarter, the ANO office held its regular quarterly meeting with the Staff Officer, Aircraft Noise Management for the Department of Defence, as well as informal meetings as required. This included discussing the findings of individual reviews and broader aircraft noise management issues and opportunities.

3 Community engagement and noise information provision

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. The ANO continues to be updated on engagement activities for Western Sydney Airport, from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

The monthly meeting between ANO senior advisors and Airservices senior community engagement staff, which also includes the NCIS Line Leader, 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.

The ANO has also increased the range of Community Aviation Consultation Groups (CACGs) and CACG-equivalent meetings which it attends, including online attendance of Darwin and Jandakot meetings. Attendance of the ANO at these meetings enables the ANO to monitor both Airservices' and Defence's noise information provision activities, as well as community engagement processes related to flight path reviews, as in Hobart.

4 Key performance indicators

The ANO office introduced key performance indicators (KPIs) for its complaint handling processes in July 2021³. The KPI targets apply to all substantive complaints received by the ANO office. KPI compliance levels are determined based on results throughout the applicable financial year.

KPIs for complaints managed by the ANO office are divided based on whether the complaint is a single complaint or part of a multi-complaint review⁴. 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.

Separate KPIs 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 complaints.

4.1 Acknowledgement of complaints

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 in relation to single complaints this quarter. No multi-complaints were received in the quarter.



Figure 12 - % of single acknowledged within target period, in quarter.

³ Complaints in Section 2.1 that are received but not managed by the ANO office, are excluded from KPI reporting.

⁴ 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.

4.2 Determination of complaints

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. Due to the Christmas shutdown of the ANO office, 3 complaints were submitted and became due for a decision during that time, and as a result, are shown as a failure against the single complaint KPI, in Figure 13.

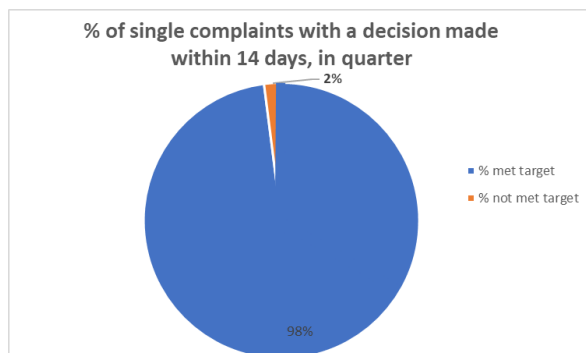


Figure 13 - % of single with a decision made within target period, in quarter.

4.3 Progress reports to complainants

The ANO office is committed to providing regular progress updates to complainants during the course of an investigation⁵. In this quarter, all updates for single complaints were provided in the target 28 days.

Under the ANO Charter, where the ANO reviews and provides its assessment of a complaint to the responsible Agency, the Agency must be allowed a reasonable opportunity to address any concerns raised by that assessment. If the Agency attempts to resolve the concerns identified in the initial ANO assessment, the ANO does not provide progress reports to complainants. The 5 complaints associated with the Gold Coast multi-complaint review are in this category and were placed on hold during the quarter, while Airservices attempted to resolve the matter. Further, future reporting on the time taken to finalise such matters will deduct the time from the matter being referred to the Agency to finalisation of the matter by the ANO.

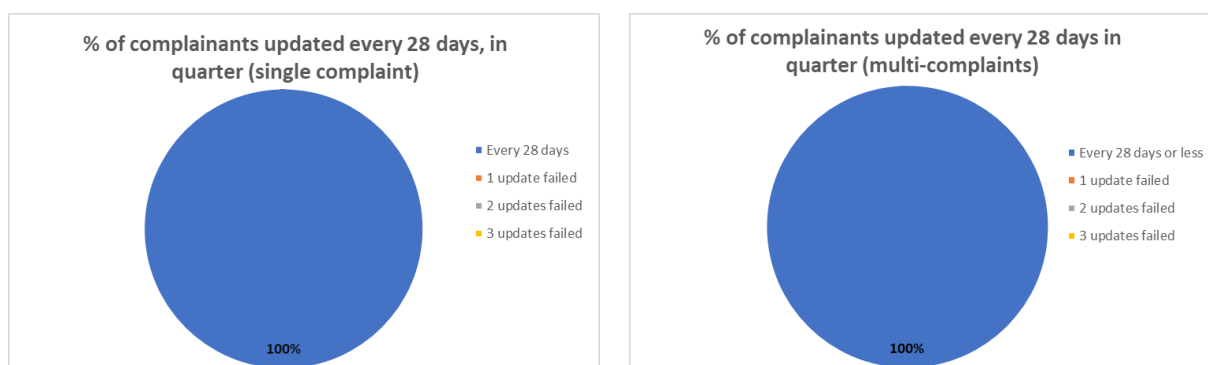


Figure 14 - % of single and multi-complainants updated within target period, in quarter.

⁵ For both individual complaints and multi-complaint reviews, the KPI target is for updates to occur every 28 days or less.

4.4 Time taken to finalise complaints

Of the 141 actionable complaints closed in this quarter, as shown in Figure 15, all were single complaints. The majority of the complaints (139) were closed within 3 months of receipt. Two complaints were closed within 6 months of receipt, with this extended timing reflecting both the complexity of the complainant’s concerns and multiple periods where the complaint was on hold while the Agency attempted to address the complainant’s concerns. No multi-complaint reviews were closed during the quarter.

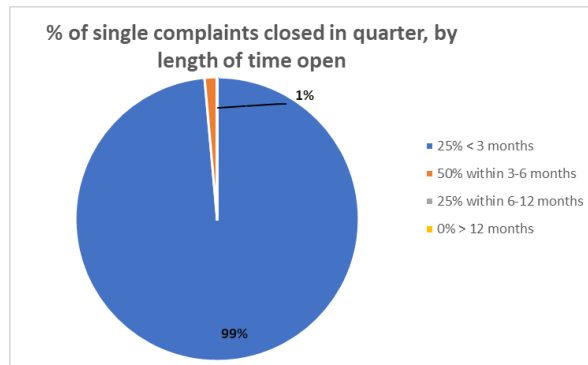


Figure 15 - % of single closed in quarter, by length of time open

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

Kieran Pehm

Aircraft Noise Ombudsman

8 May 2023

Appendix 1 Statistics for complaints received in quarter

The following tables detail the statistics for complaints received in the quarter.

AIRSERVICES - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	30	53	48	131
Complaints closed:	28	53	44	125

Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	27	51	43	121
Complainant did not provide further information	1	4	5	10
Outside charter scope	3	16	3	22
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	23	31	35	89

Total complaints closed - reviewed:	1	2	1	4
No change possible - explanation provided	0	2	1	3
Change adopted by Airservices Australia	1	0	0	1

DEFENCE - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	0	1	0	1
Complaints closed:	0	0	1	1

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

Total complaints closed - reviewed:	0	0	1	1
No change possible - explanation provided	0	0	0	0
Change adopted by Defence	0	0	1	1

	Airservices	Defence	No agency assigned*	Total
Actionable complaints open at 1 January 2023 (first day of quarter):	13	2	0	15
Non-actionable complaints received:	1,220	0	0	1,220
Actionable complaints received:	131	1	14	146
Actionable complaints closed:	125	1	14	140
Actionable complaints open at 1 April 2023 (first day of next quarter):	19	2	0	21

*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.

Appendix 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>On hold: 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. Airservices have confirmed that the proposed changes are at the stage where community and industry consultation would be required.</p> <p>Due to Melbourne Airport's Major Development Plan (MDP) and Master Plan 2022 (MP) consultation (January – May 2022), Airservices have advised that this work is on hold until after that consultation activity, including confirmation of any changes to the MDP reflecting community feedback, is complete. While the MDP has been submitted, approval is currently outstanding.</p>

Appendix 3 Key performance indicators for ANO complaint handling

The following table summarises the performance of the ANO against the identified complaint handling KPIs for January-March 2023. KPI performance is reported for actionable complaints, 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 (Jan Mar 2023)	% Met target (2022 23 YTD)
Single complaint	Acknowledgement of complaint	Within 2 business days	100%	100%
	Decision on whether complaint is within jurisdiction within 14 business days	Within 14 business days	98%	99%
	Update to complainant on progress of complaint	Every 28 days	100%	98%
		1 update failed	0%	2%
		2 updates failed	0%	0%
		3 updates failed	0%	0%
	Time from complaint received to closed	25% < 3 months	99%	99% ⁶
		50% within 3-6 months	1%	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	N/A	N/A
	Decision on whether complaint is within jurisdiction	Within 21 days	N/A	N/A
	Update to complainant on progress of complaint	Every 28 days or less	100%	100%
		1 update failed	0%	0%
		2 updates failed	0%	0%
		3 updates failed	0%	0%
	Time from complaint received to closed	50% < 6 months	N/A	N/A
		50% within 6-12 months	N/A	N/A
0% > 12 months		N/A	N/A	

⁶ The YTD statistics for single cases closed does not equal 100% due to the ANO reporting to the nearest whole number. Currently the YTD KPI for single cases closed has 99.3% of complaints finalised within 3 months, 0.5% within 3-6 months and 0.2% in 6-12 months of the date of submission.