

OFFICIAL



Quarterly Report

April-June 2023

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1 Overview

The Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) received a total of 1,713 complaints during the quarter. This includes 1,595 non-actionable complaints and 118 actionable complaints. The ANO carried forward 21 complaints on 1 April 2023. During this quarter (April-June 2023), the ANO closed 129 actionable complaints, and therefore carries forward 10 complaints to July 2023.

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 81 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. This included monitoring the Post Implementation Review (PIR) process for the flight paths associated with Sunshine Coast Airport, and the implementation processes for PIR recommendations related to Hobart 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) occurred, as well as the quarterly meetings between the ANO and Airservices' community engagement and NCIS teams.

The ANO provided feedback to Airservices' senior management and Board regarding ongoing delays in NCIS responses to complaints. Airservices have developed an action plan to address this issue and the ANO will monitor its effectiveness.

In this quarter, the ANO received 7 new actionable complaints about Defence and closed 5 complaints. Four Defence complaints remained under review at the end of the quarter.

During this quarter, the ANO met with the project staff for the Aviation White Paper, announced by the federal government in 2022, to discuss the ANO's submission to the Terms of Reference (TOR). The ANO also discussed potential amendments to the role of the ANO in the context of the White Paper.

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. These are 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, 1,713 complaints were raised with the ANO office – 1,595 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.

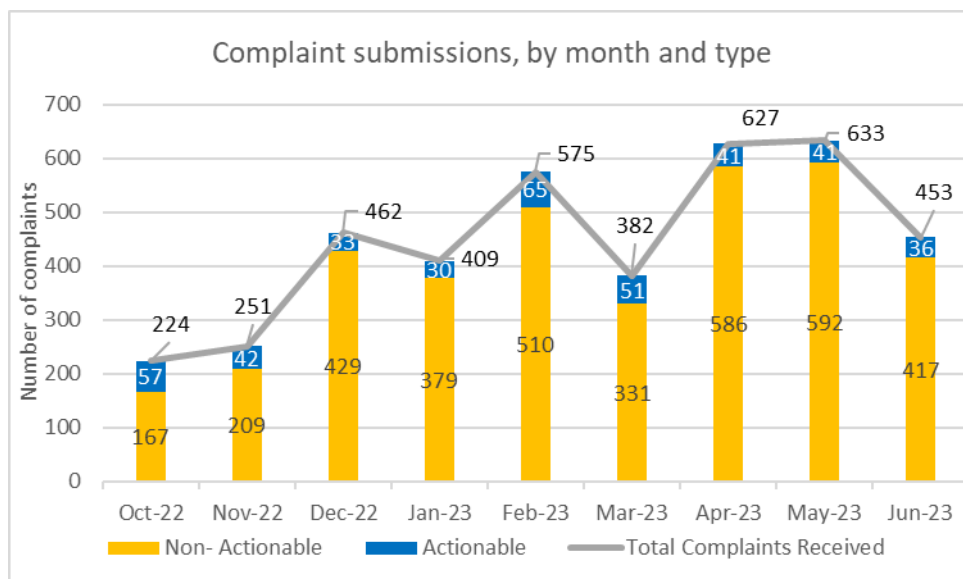


Figure 1 –Complaint submissions by month from October 2022, highlighting actionable and non-actionable complaints.

Non-actionable complaints continued to increase this quarter, with a 30% increase compared to the previous quarter. Like last quarter, the majority of non-actionable complaints received this quarter concern the operation of the new runway for Brisbane. Of these, 68 complainants raised a total of 1,575 complaints about operations associated with Brisbane Airport.

Figure 2 below shows the breakdown of non-actionable complaints by airport, where identified.

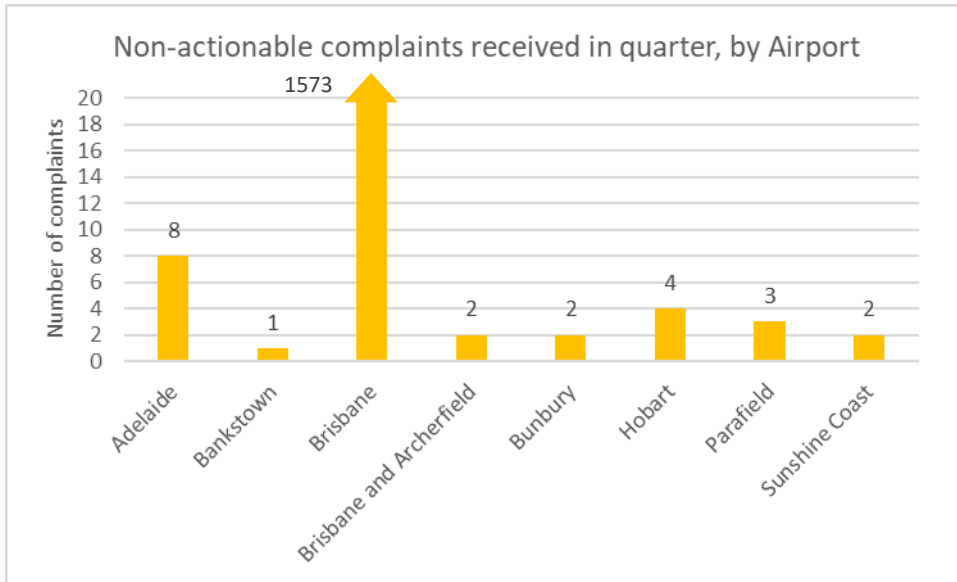


Figure 2 – Non-actionable complaints received by airport of concern, April – June 2023.

One complainant from Brisbane submitted 1,405 (88%) of the non-actionable complaints received during the quarter. The complainant sought action, including a curfew to address aircraft noise in Brisbane, outside of the ANO’s remit. Figure 3 below shows numbers of complaints made by individual complainants.

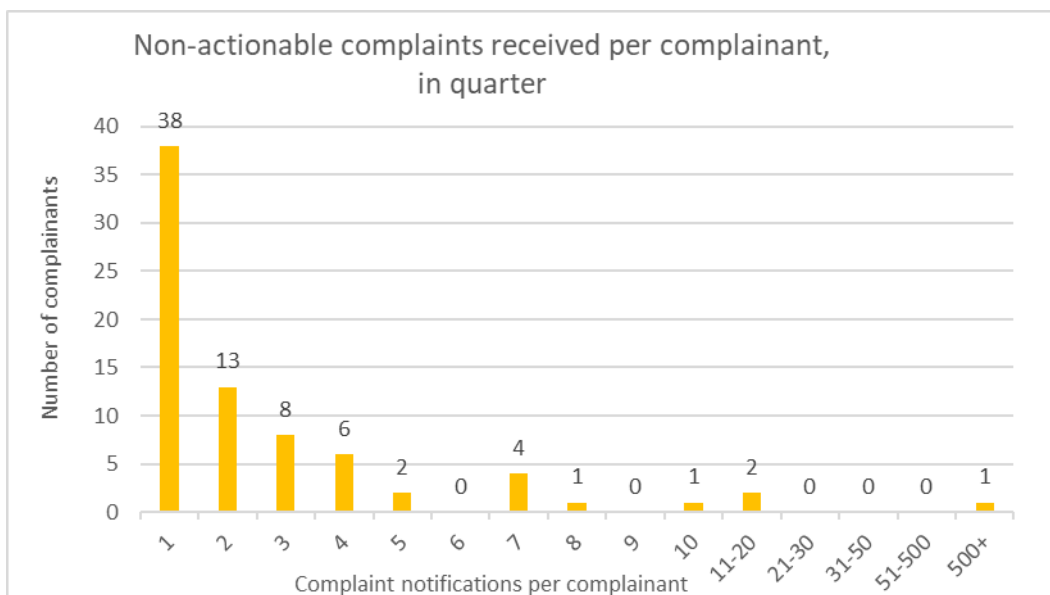


Figure 3 – Non-actionable complaints per complainant, April – June 2023.

2.2 Actionable complaints in quarter

During the quarter, the ANO received 118 actionable complaints - 106 relating to Airservices and 7 relating to Defence. A further 5 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.

Figures 4 and 5 below show the number of actionable complaints by agency. Complaints this quarter were lower in relation to Airservices, while Defence complaints were higher than last quarter.

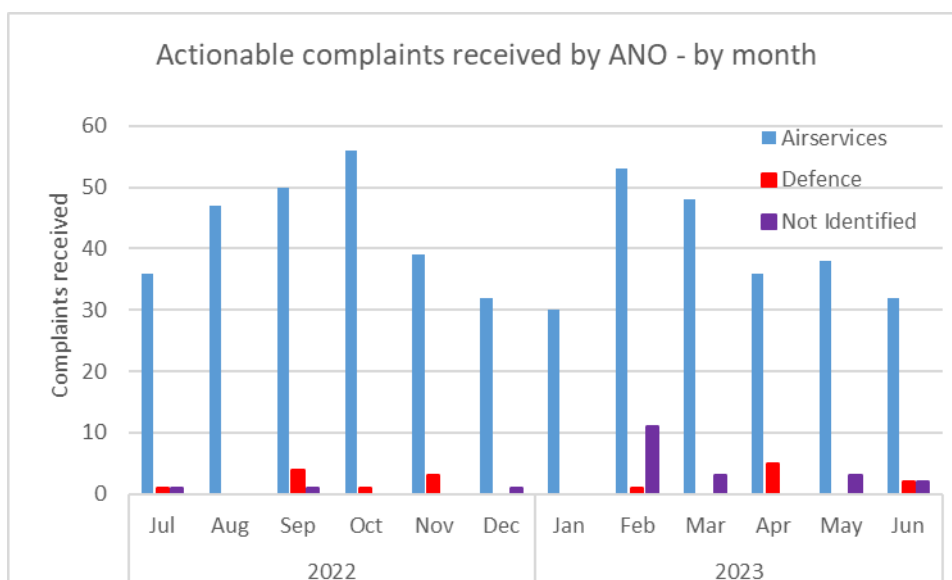


Figure 4 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by month, July 2022 – June 2023.

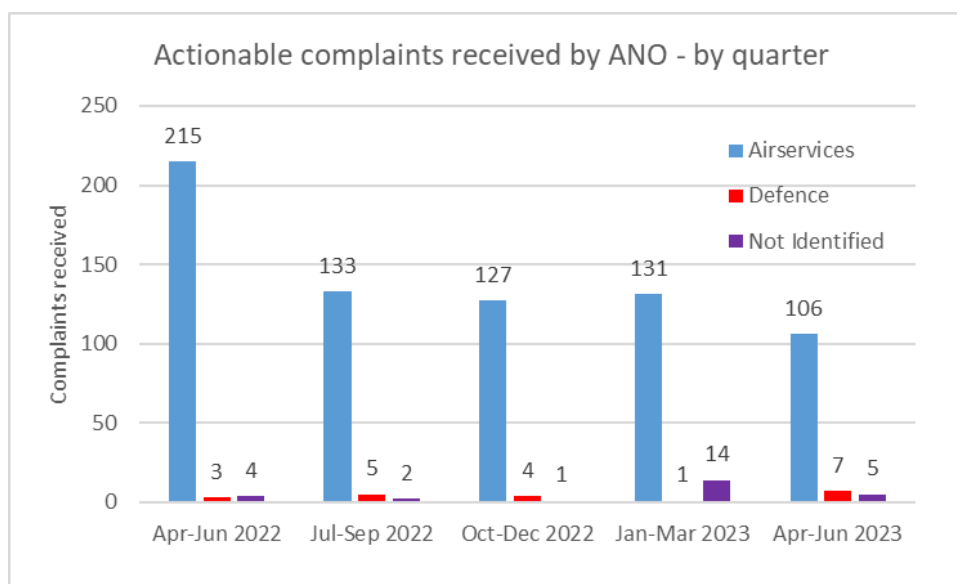


Figure 5 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by quarter, April 2022 – June 2023.

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 lower than the 3-year average.

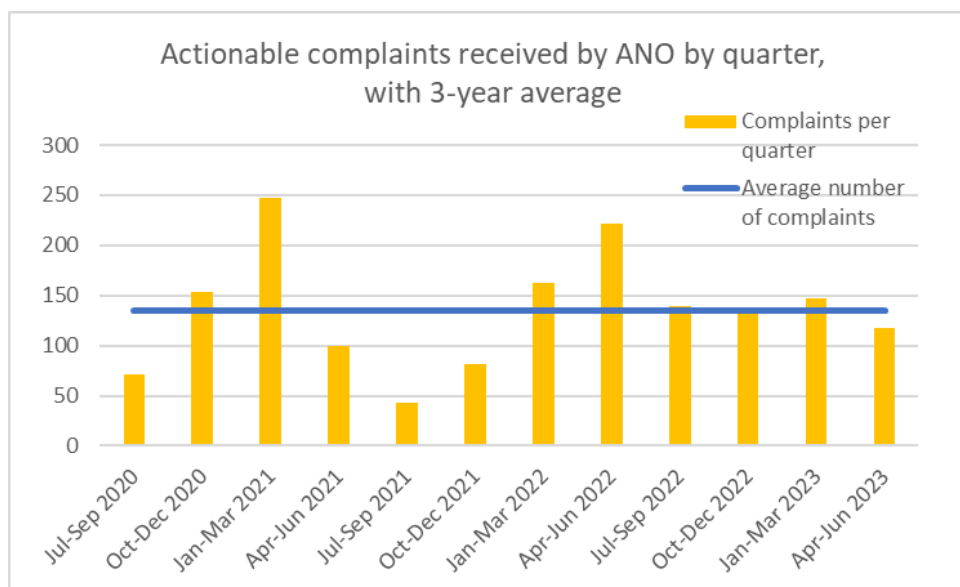


Figure 6 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by quarter, with 3-year average for complaint trends.

The majority of actionable complaints received this quarter continue to be attributed to the opening of the new runway for Brisbane, with 81 complaints (68%) including one complaint about Brisbane and Archerfield airports.

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

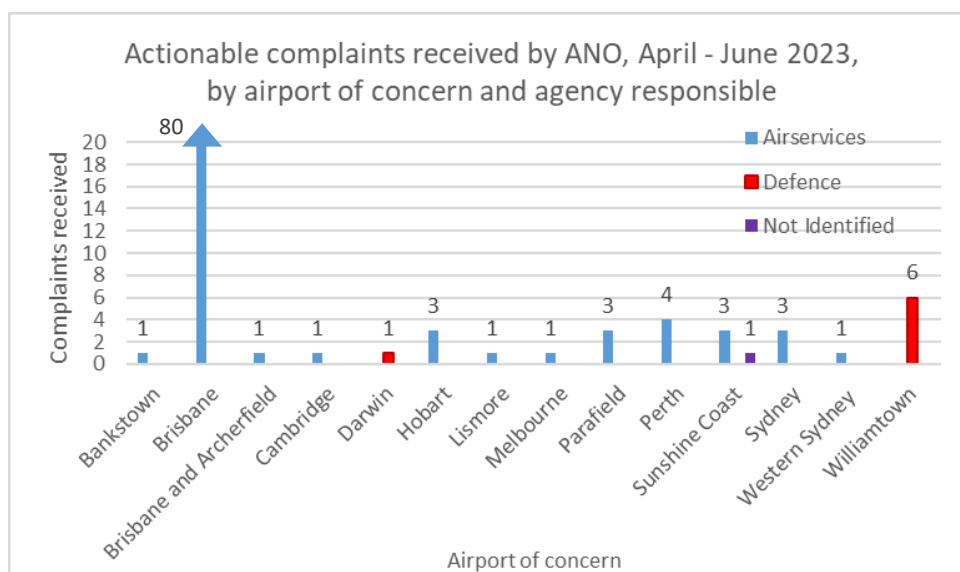


Figure 7 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by airport of concern and agency, April - June 2023.

In addition to the airport specific complaints above, a further 8 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 129 actionable complaints for the quarter, 119 relating to Airservices, 5 relating to Defence and 5 without an agency identified. In addition, all non-actionable complaints were closed, as noted in Section 2.1.

Of the outcomes possible for the 119 actionable complaints relating to Airservices, 94 were closed as the complainants had either not yet complained to or finalised their complaint with Airservices. Ten complaints resulted in no change possible, 5 complaints resulted in a change being adopted by Airservices, and a further 7 complaints closed due to the complainant not providing additional information to enable an investigation to progress. The remaining 3 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.

The outcomes for the 5 complaints about Defence which were closed in this quarter, included three complaints closed as the complainants had either not yet complained to or finalised their complaint with Airservices. The remaining 2 complaints resulted in a change being adopted by Defence.

As of 1 July 2023, 10 actionable complaints remain open. This includes 3 complaints related to the ANO's Williamtown multi-complaint review. Five of the open complaints were received between May and June 2023. The final 2 complaints under review were received by the ANO at the end of February 2023 and April 2023, respectively.

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.

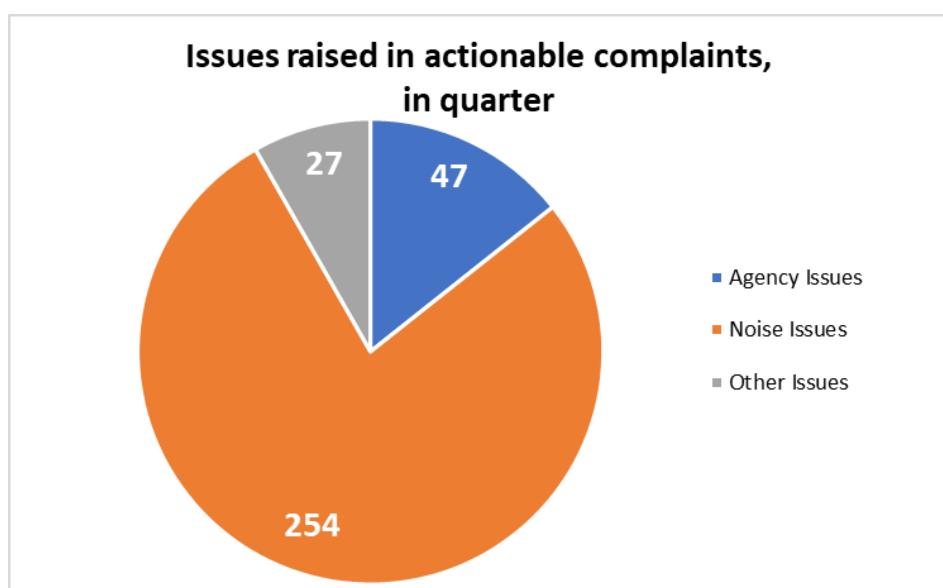


Figure 8 – Issues raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, April 2023 – June 2023

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.

As shown in Figure 9 below, complaints about management of complaints included 21 about community engagement by Airservices or Defence. In this quarter, these concerns mainly related to activities associated with the new runway for Brisbane Airport including post-PIR activities, Hobart Airport post-PIR activities, as well as in relation to consultation prior to an aerial display conducted by Defence from RAAF Base Williamstown.

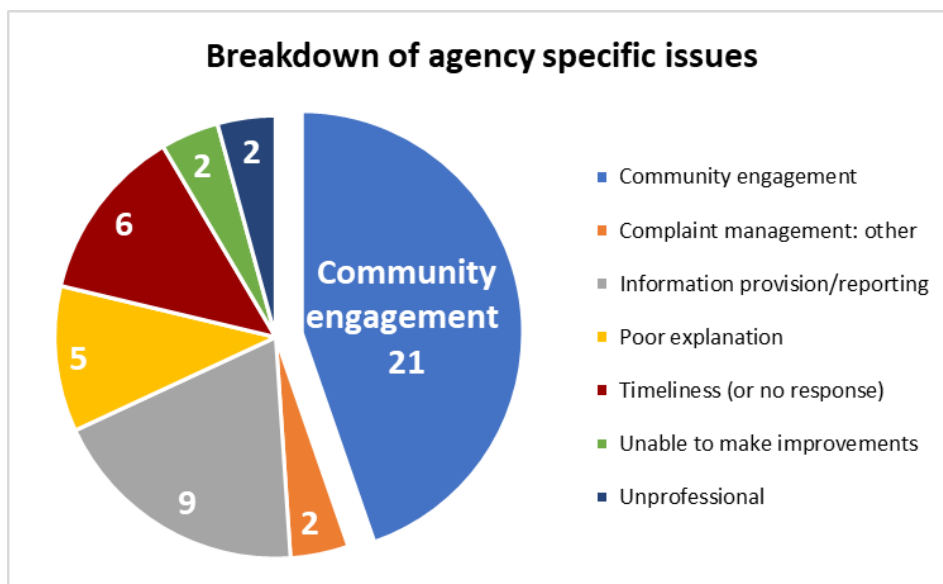


Figure 9 – Agency specific issues raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, April 2023 – June 2023.

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. Concerns about health impacts, which include impacts upon sleep, mental health, and stress, increased during this quarter, compared to last quarter.

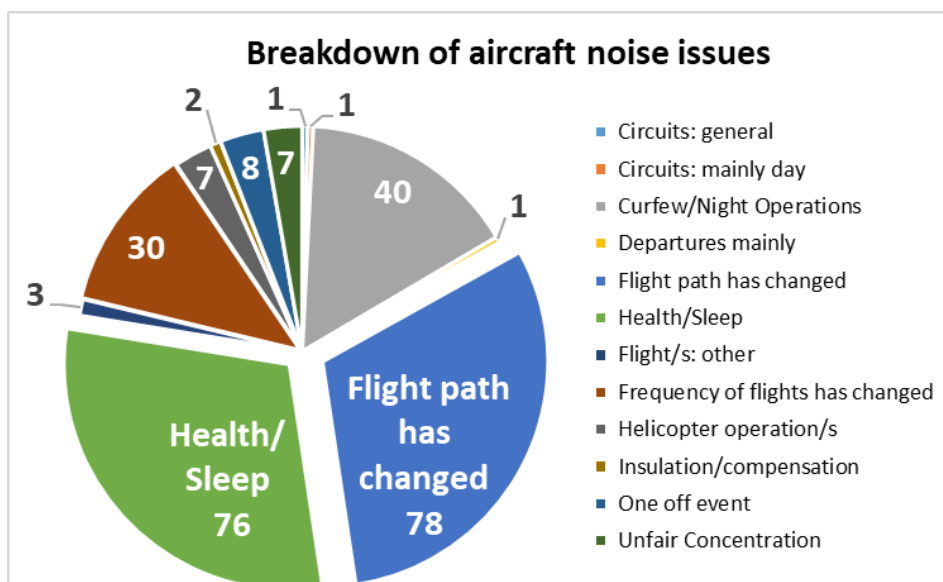


Figure 10 – Aircraft noise related issues raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, April 2023 – June 2023.

Figure 11 shows other issues raised by complainants that were outside the remit of the ANO. During this quarter, the ANO introduced a new category under other issues – Regulation. Regulation was introduced to capture the increasing number of requests for greater regulation, or dissatisfaction with existing aviation regulation, and aircraft noise management. Regulation was the most common of the other issues raised this quarter, with the majority of these complaints requesting a curfew.

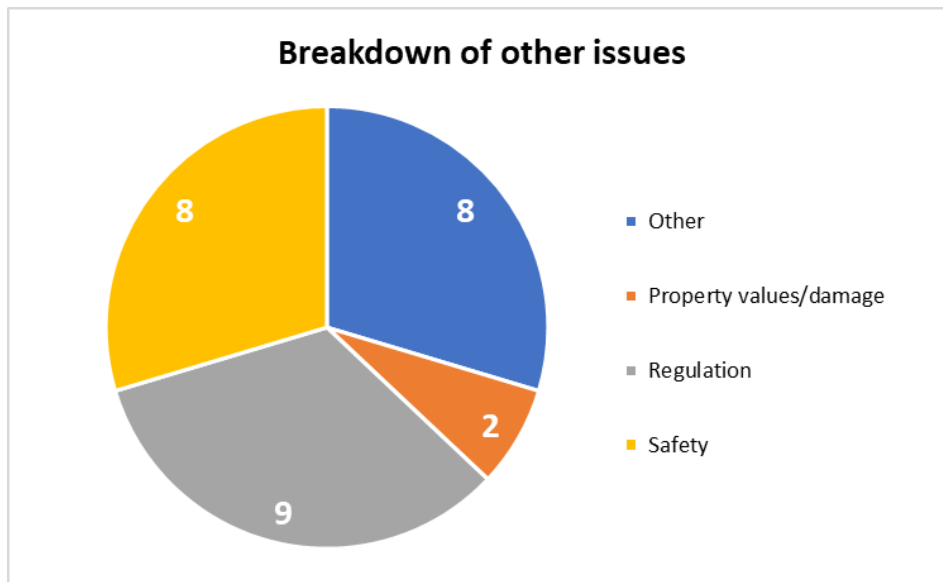


Figure 11 – Issues outside of the ANO’s remit, raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, April 2023 – June 2023.

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

2.5 RAAF Base Williamtown investigation

In April 2023, the ANO commenced a multi-complaints review as provided for in clause 47 of the ANO Charter. The review is ongoing, with the ANO currently awaiting further information from Defence to support the review.

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 expanded reporting. During the quarter, the NCIS shared with the ANO their plans to improve accessibility of the NCIS’ services and expand reporting.

Continuing delays in Airservices’ complaint handling have become a significant source of complaints to the ANO. The ANO has raised the issue with Airservices’ senior management and Airservices has developed a plan to address the issue, with initial actions in progress. The ANO will continue to monitor the progress of these actions.

2.7 Liaison with Defence

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 throughout the quarter. 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 continued to work with Airservices' staff on engagement projects as they were delivered. This quarter, Airservices' conducted consultation on the new Community Engagement Standards. The ANO attended two of the community consultation sessions and made a written submission on the draft standards to Airservices.

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.

During this quarter, the ANO has received complaints that Airservices has not completed reports on community engagement reviews by the deadlines published by Airservices on its Engage page. The ANO has discussed the issue with Airservices' community engagement staff and the novel nature of these reviews for Airservices as well as staff shortages have contributed to delays. The ANO has commenced a review on one such matter and will generally continue to monitor this issue.

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, with performance for the 2022-23 financial year to be reported in the upcoming ANO Annual Report.

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 and multi-complaints this quarter.

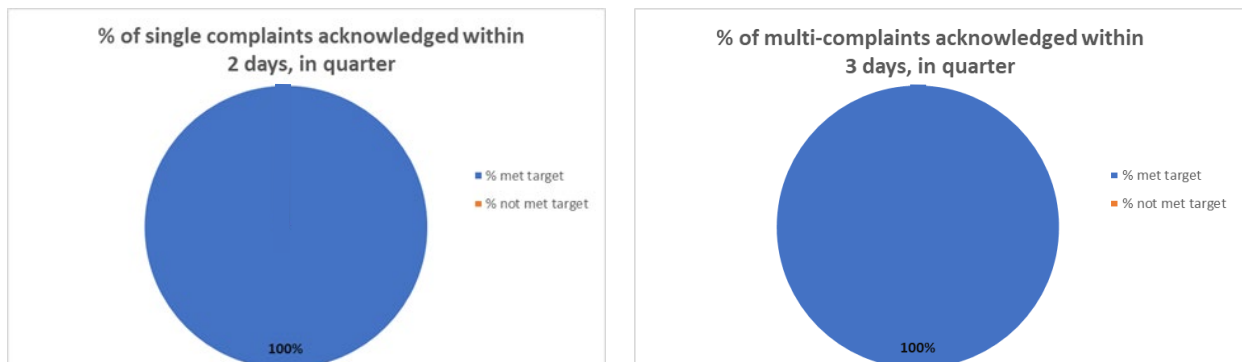


Figure 12 - % of single and multi- complaints acknowledged within target period, in quarter.

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. Full compliance was achieved for this KPI, as shown in Figure 13.

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.

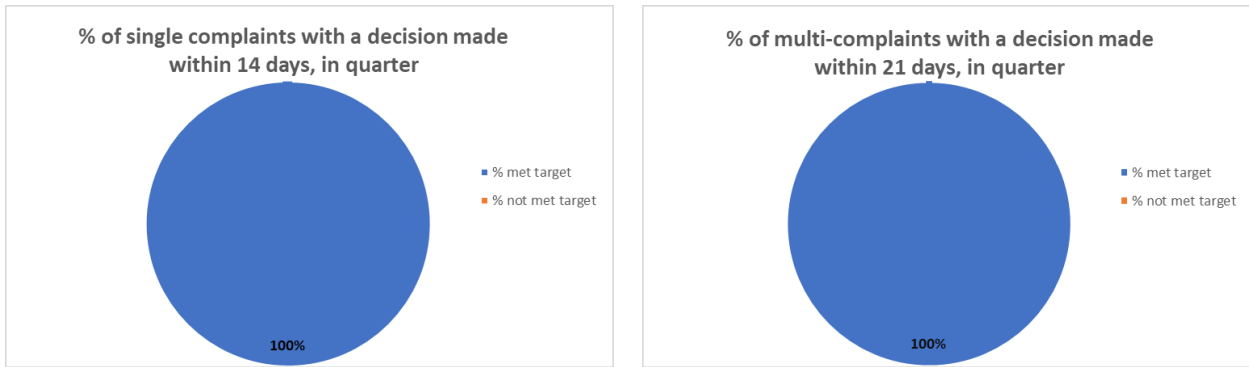


Figure 13 - % of single and multi-complainants with a decision made within target period, in quarter.

4.3 Progress reports to complainants

The ANO has a KPI to report progress to complainants every 28 days. Updates for the majority of open complaints were provided in the target 28 days during the quarter. During this quarter, an update for one single complaint and 2 multi-complaints was provided a maximum of 2 days late, due to human error. This has resulted in the ANO not achieving full compliance for this KPI as shown in Figure 14.

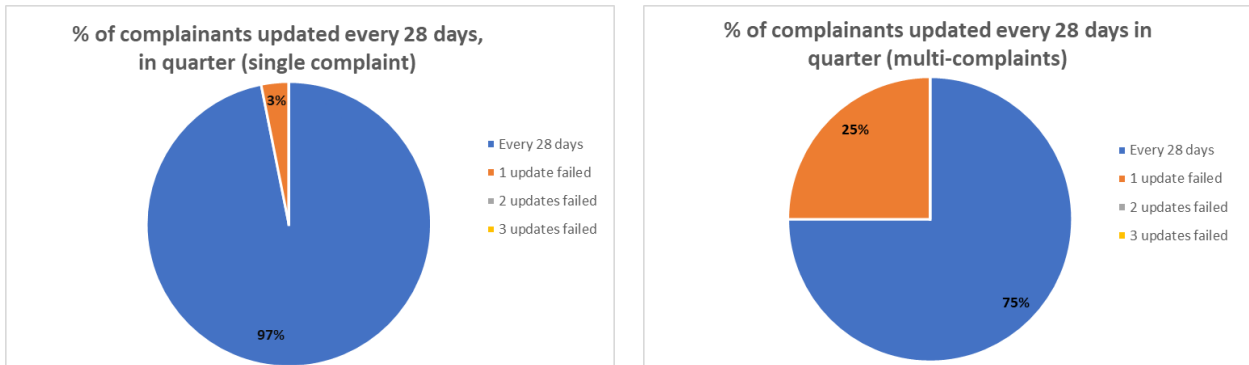


Figure 14 - % of single and multi-complainants updated within target period, in quarter.

4.4 Time taken to finalise complaints

Of the 129 actionable complaints closed in this quarter, all but 5 were single complaints. The majority of the single complaints (121) were closed within 3 months of receipt, as shown in Figure 15. One complaint was closed within 6 months of receipt and a further 2 complaints within 12 months of receipt.⁵ The extended timing for the two complaints open more than 6 months reflects both the complexity of the complainant’s concerns and multiple periods where the complaint was on hold while the Agency responded to ANO requests for additional information.

Five complaints associated with the Gold Coast multi-complaint review were also closed during the quarter. The ANO Charter requires that the Agency be given a reasonable opportunity to resolve the complaint, following the ANO’s assessment. This can result in an extended periods where the ANO review is placed on hold while the Agency re-engages with the complainants and attempts to resolve the matter. Consequently, the ANO deletes this time when reporting the time the ANO took to finalise the matter.

⁵ % compliance is rounded to the nearest whole number, which can result in some charts equalling less or more than 100%.

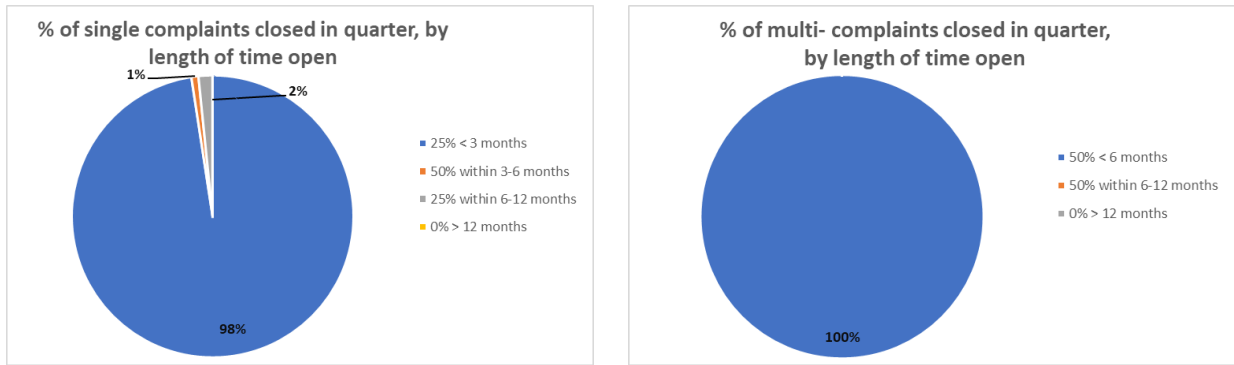


Figure 15 - % of single and multi-complaints closed in quarter, by length of time open.

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

Kieran Pehm
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman

8 August 2023

Appendix 1 Statistics for complaints received in quarter

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

AIRSERVICES - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	36	38	32	106
Complaints closed:	42	40	37	119

Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	35	37	32	104
Complainant did not provide further information	2	1	4	7
Outside charter scope	0	2	1	3
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	33	34	27	94

Total complaints closed - reviewed:	7	3	5	15
No change possible - explanation provided	2	3	5	10
Change adopted by Airservices Australia	5	0	0	5

DEFENCE - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	5	0	2	7
Complaints closed:	2	2	1	5

Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	2	0	1	3
Complainant did not provide further information	0	0	0	0
Outside charter scope	0	0	0	0
Referred to Defence to respond directly	2	0	1	3

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

	Airservices	Defence	No agency assigned*	Total
Actionable complaints open at 1 April 2023 (first day of quarter):	19	2	0	21
Non-actionable complaints received:	1,595	0	0	1,595
Actionable complaints received:	106	7	5	118
Actionable complaints closed:	119	5	5	129
Actionable complaints open at 1 July 2023 (first day of next quarter):	6	4	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.

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 April-June 2023. KPI performance is reported below for actionable complaints, over the quarter. Performance against the ANO KPIs is determined based on 12 months of data, for July-June of each financial year and reported in the ANO Annual Report.

Complaint type	Key performance indicator	Benchmark	% Met target (Jan-Mar 2023)
Single complaint	Acknowledgement of complaint	Within 2 business days	100%
	Decision on whether complaint is within jurisdiction within 14 business days	Within 14 business days	100%
	Update to complainant on progress of complaint	Every 28 days	97%
		1 update failed	3%
		2 updates failed	0%
	Time from complaint received to closed	3 updates failed	0%
		25% < 3 months	98%
		50% within 3-6 months	1%
		25% within 6-12 months	2%
	0% > 12 months	0%	
Complaints in a multi-complaint review	Acknowledgement of complaint	Within 3 business days	100%
	Decision on whether complaint is within jurisdiction	Within 21 days	100%
	Update to complainant on progress of complaint	Every 28 days or less	75%
		1 update failed	25%
		2 updates failed	0%
	Time from complaint received to closed	3 updates failed	0%
		50% < 6 months	100%
		50% within 6-12 months	0%
0% > 12 months	0%		