

OFFICIAL



Quarterly Report

July-September 2023

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1 Overview

The Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) received a total of 1,326 complaints during the quarter. This includes 1,188 non-actionable complaints and 138 actionable complaints. The ANO carried forward 10 complaints on 1 July 2023. During this quarter (July-September 2023), the ANO closed 127 actionable complaints, and therefore carries forward 21 complaints to October 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. Following a review of complaints from Hobart, the ANO provided Airservices with its assessment of Airservices' decision on a proposed Noise Abatement Procedure in Hobart and has been advised that the decision and decision-making process will be reviewed.

During this quarter, 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. The ANO team also had its the quarterly meetings with Airservices' community engagement and NCIS teams.

In this quarter, the ANO received 2 new actionable complaints about Defence and closed 2 complaints. Four Defence complaints remained under review at the end of the quarter.

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, 1,326 complaints were raised with the ANO office – 1,188 of these were non-actionable complaints. Figure 1 shows the number of complaints raised per month over the past 12 months, including both actionable and non-actionable complaints.

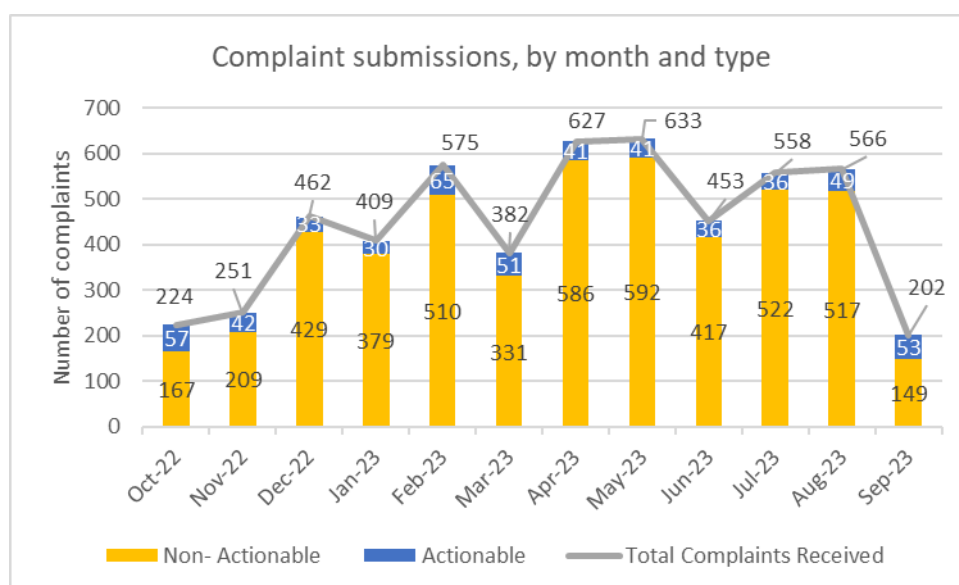


Figure 1 – Complaint submissions by month from October 2022 – September 2023, highlighting actionable and non-actionable complaints.

During this quarter, the ANO saw a reduction in non-actionable complaints, with a 26% decrease 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, 65 complainants raised a total of 1,154 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, July – September 2023.

One complainant from Brisbane submitted 933 (81%) of the non-actionable complaints received during the quarter. The complainant sought action outside of the ANO’s remit, including a curfew to address aircraft noise in Brisbane. Figure 3 below shows numbers of complaints made by individual complainants.

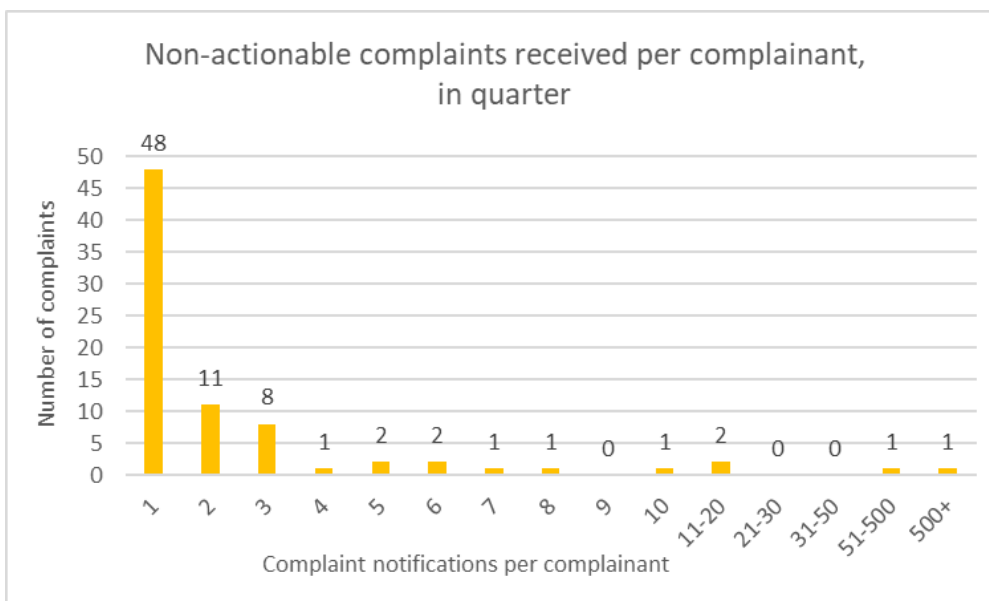


Figure 3 – Non-actionable complaints per complainant, July – September 2023.

2.2 Actionable complaints in quarter

During the quarter, the ANO received 138 actionable complaints - 129 relating to Airservices and 2 relating to Defence. A further 7 complaints had no agency identified due to either insufficient information being provided by the complainant, or the complaint relating 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 higher in relation to Airservices, while Defence complaints were lower than last quarter.

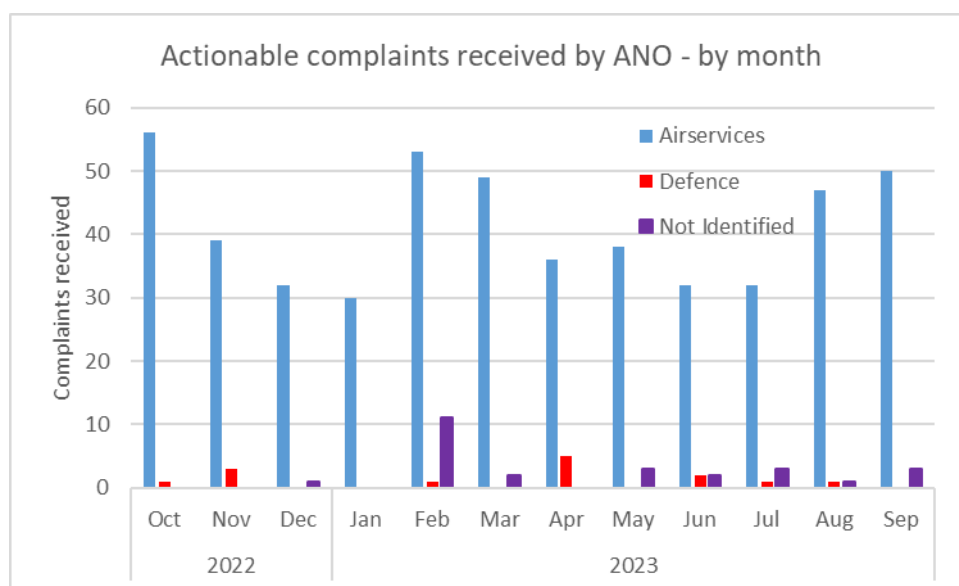


Figure 4 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by month, October 2022 – September 2023.

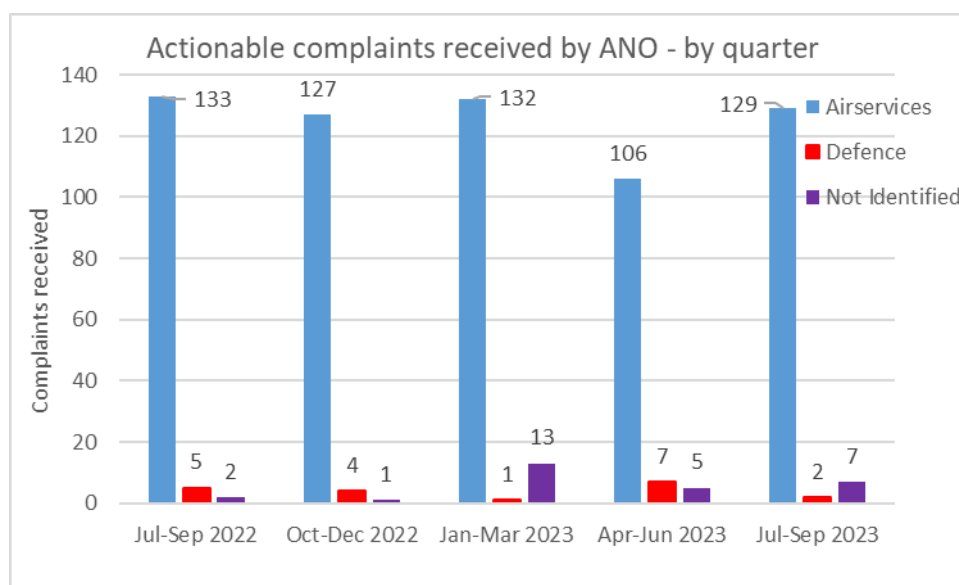


Figure 5 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by quarter, July 2022 – September 2023.

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 similar to the 3-year average.

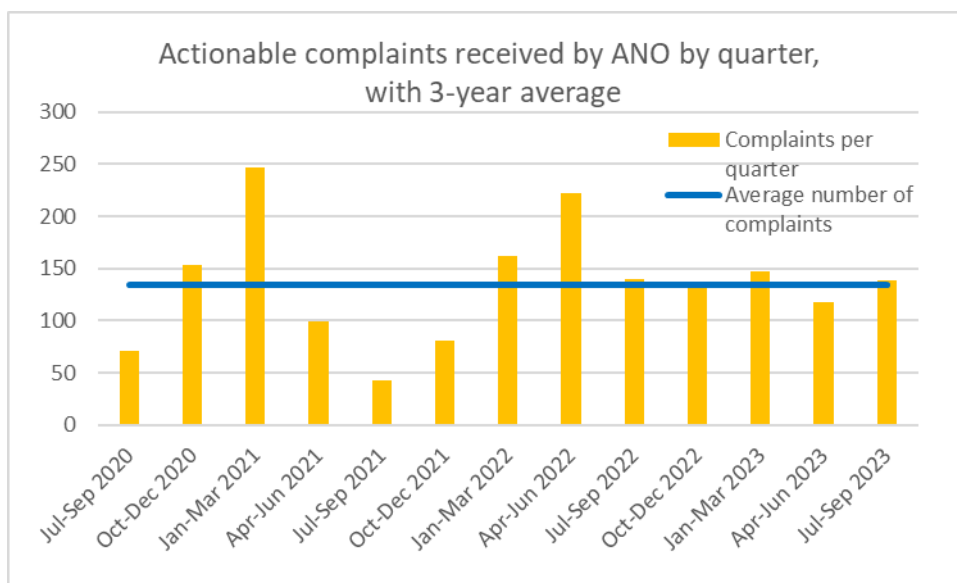


Figure 6 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by quarter, with 3-year average for complaint trends.

The majority of actionable complaints received this quarter continue to be attributed to the opening of the new runway for Brisbane, with 81 complaints (59%).

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

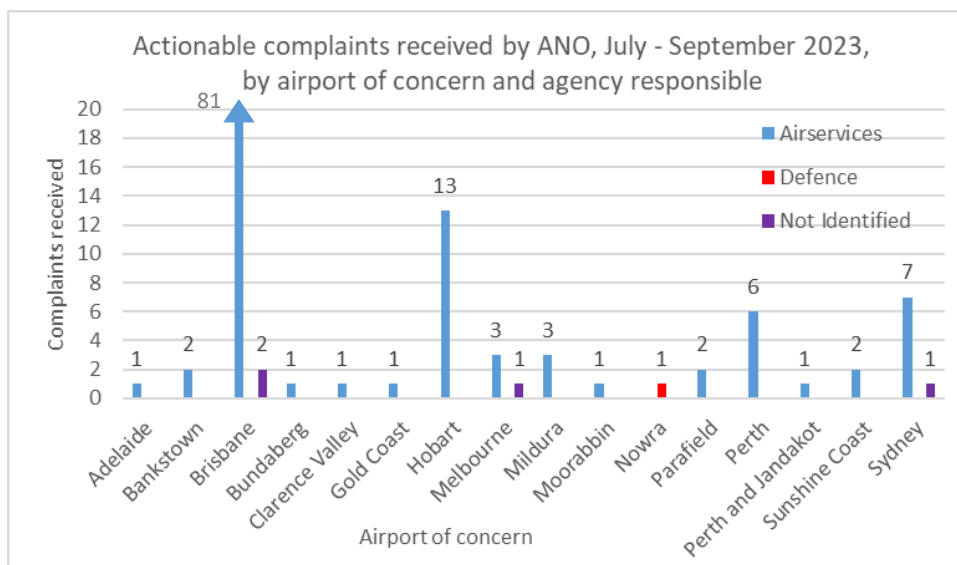


Figure 7 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by airport of concern and agency, July - September 2023

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

From 1 July 2023, the ANO’s reporting of closed complaints has been enhanced with expanded outcome options. This will improve transparency and the ANO’s reporting of its work and the outcomes of its reviews. The ANO closed 127 actionable complaints for the quarter, 118 relating to Airservices, 2 relating to Defence and 7 without an agency identified. In addition, all non-actionable complaints were closed, as noted in Section 2.1.

Of the outcomes possible for the 118 actionable complaints relating to Airservices, 100 were closed as the complainants had either not yet complained to or finalised their complaint with Airservices. Seven complaints resulted in no change possible, 3 complaints resulted in a change in process or systems being adopted by Airservices, and a further 3 complaints closed due to the complainant not providing additional information to enable an investigation to progress. The remaining 5 complaints were outside of the ANO's Charter, with 2 complainants referred to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts (the Department), a further 2 complainants referred to the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. These complaints 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 2 complaints about Defence which were closed in this quarter had either not yet complained to, or finalised their complaint with, Defence.

As of 1 October 2023, 21 actionable complaints remain open. This includes 3 complaints related to the ANO's Williamstown multi-complaint review and a further 8 related to the ANO's Hobart multi-complaint review. Ten of the open complaints were received during September 2023. The final 2 complaints under review were received by the ANO in June 2023 and August 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.

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.

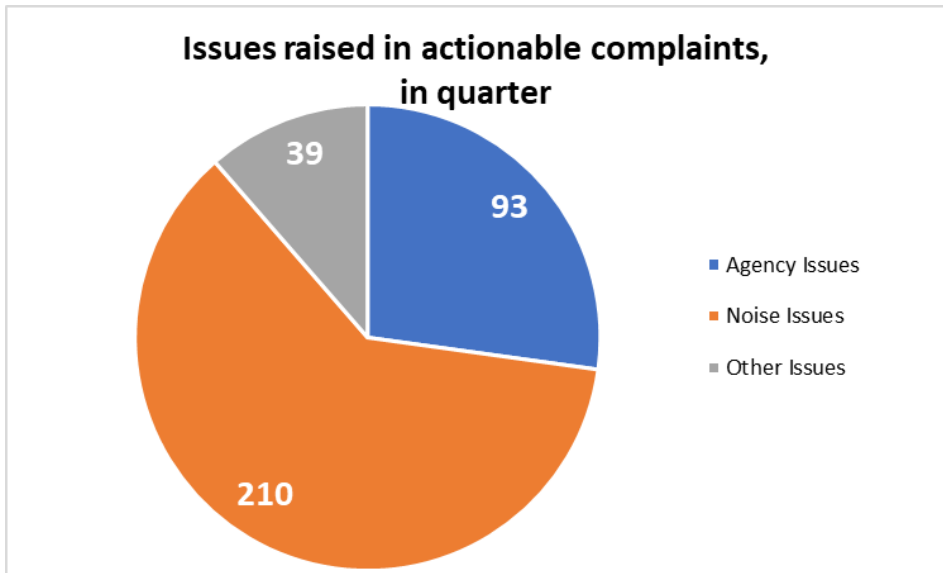


Figure 8 – Issues raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, July – September 2023

As shown in Figure 9 below, complaints about management of complaints included 33 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 and Hobart Airport post-PIR activities. Concerns related to response times, and lack of response to concerns raised, were raised 25 times this quarter, compared to 6 in the last quarter.

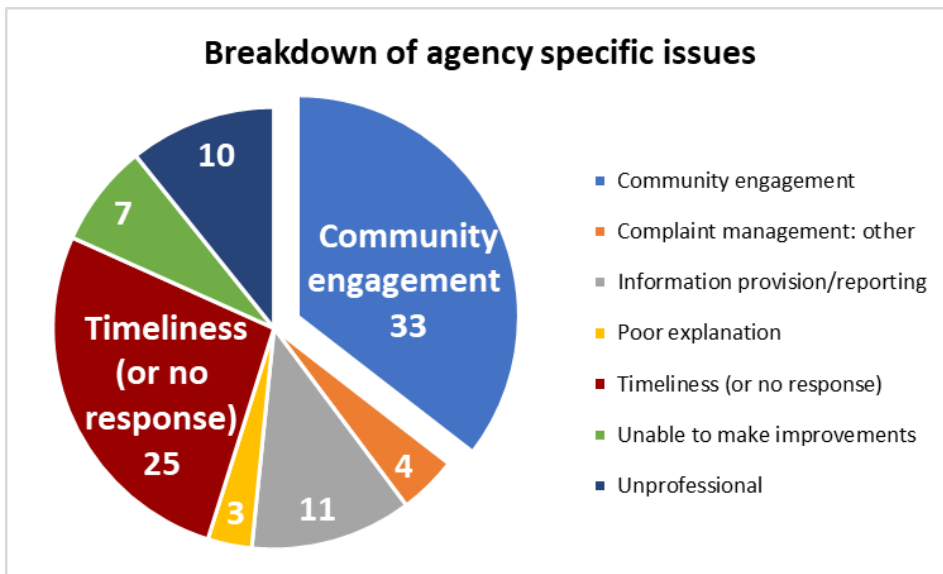


Figure 9 – Agency specific issues raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, July – September 2023.

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 include impacts upon sleep, mental health, and stress.

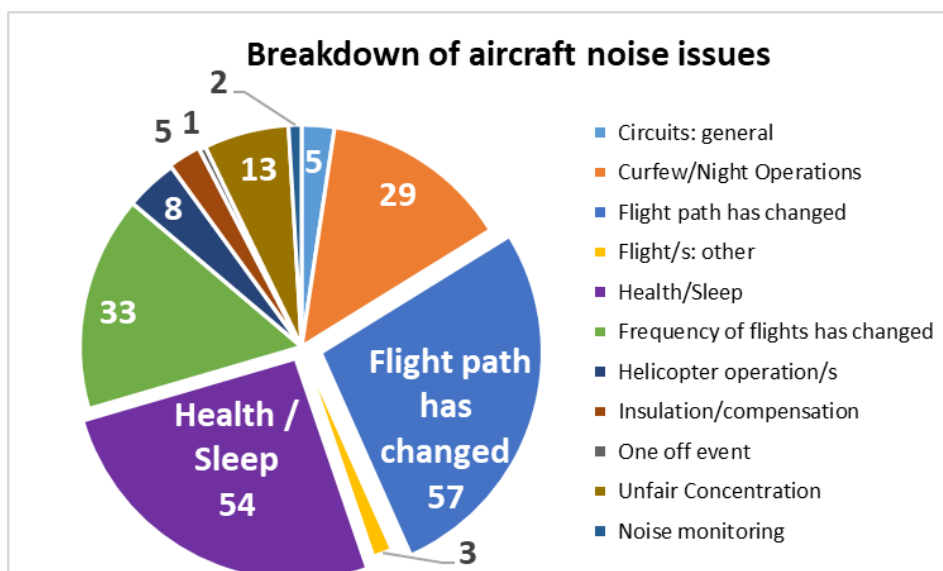


Figure 10 – Aircraft noise related issues raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, July – September 2023.

Figure 11 shows other issues raised by complainants that were outside the remit of the ANO. Concerns about regulation 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 18 of these complaints requesting a curfew.

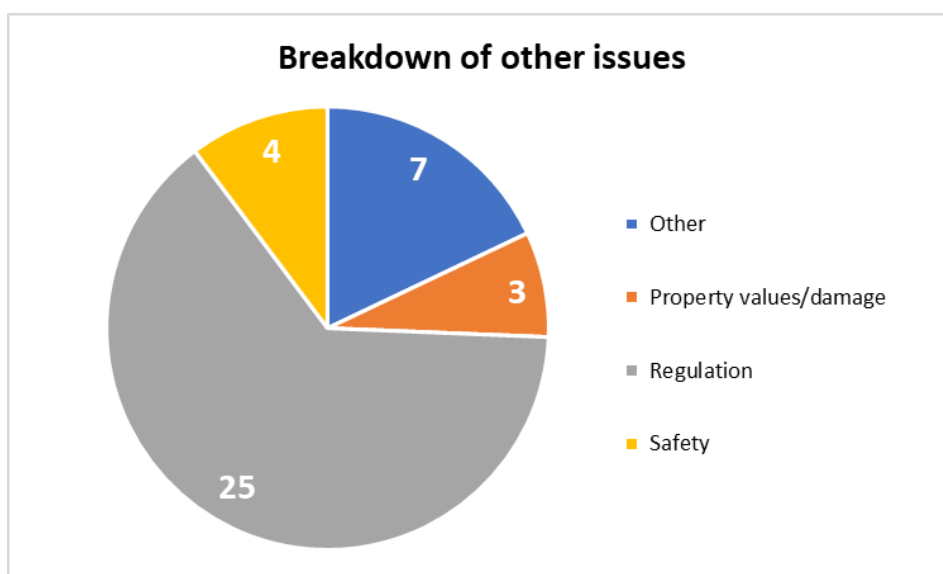


Figure 11 – Issues outside of the ANO’s remit, raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, July – September 2023.

2.4 Hobart Noise Action Plan trial investigation

In August 2023, the ANO commenced a multi-complaints review as provided for in clause 47 of the ANO Charter. The ANO’s assessment of the complaints has been provided to Airservices which advised that the decision the subject of complaint and the decision-making process will be reviewed. The ANO should be able to report more fully in the next quarter.

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 ANO’s assessment of the complaints was provided to Defence which have provided a response to the ANO detailing actions taken by Defence to resolve the

matter. The ANO is currently reviewing Defence's response and will report more fully in the next quarter.

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.

Continuing delays in Airservices' complaint handling became a significant source of complaints to the ANO last quarter. Pressure on the NCIS has also impacted its response times to ANO requests. As reported previously, Airservices is taking action to address the issue and the ANO has noted some improvement in the NCIS response time to complaints.

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 Phase 2 of the Noise Action Plan for Brisbane. The ANO attended two of the online community consultation sessions.

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.

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.

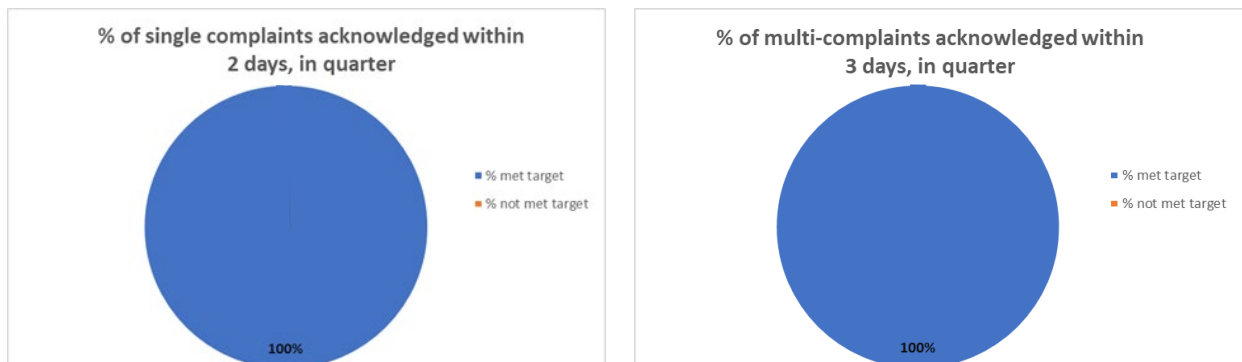


Figure 12 - % of single and multi- complaints acknowledged within target period, in quarter.

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

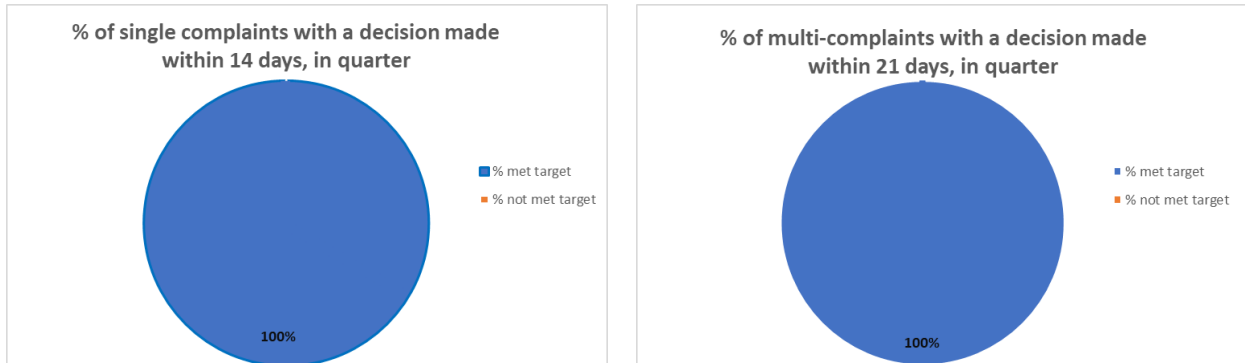


Figure 13 - % of single and multi-complainants with a decision made within target period, in quarter.

4.3 Progress reports to complainants

The ANO has a KPI to report progress to complainants every 28 days. Full compliance for both single and multi-complaints for this KPI was achieved this quarter, as shown in Figure 14.

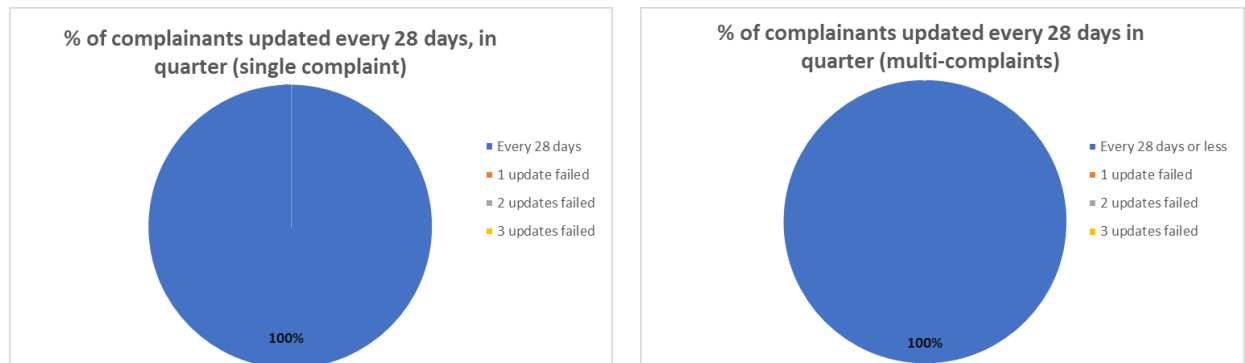


Figure 14 - % of single and multi-complainants updated within target period, in quarter.

4.4 Time taken to finalise complaints

Of the 127 actionable complaints closed in this quarter, all were single complaints. The majority of single complaints (126) were closed within 3 months of receipt, as shown in Figure 15. One complaint was closed within 6 months of receipt.⁵

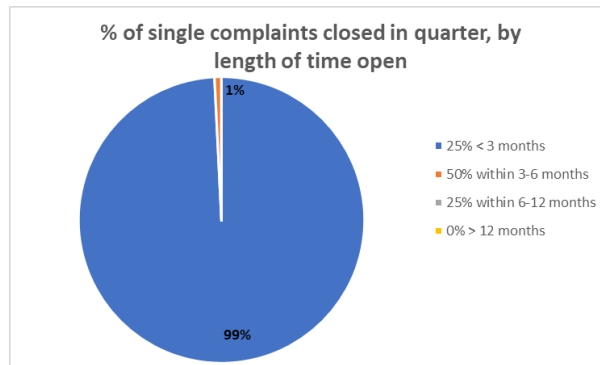


Figure 15 - % of single complaints closed in quarter, by length of time open.

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

Kieran Pehm

Aircraft Noise Ombudsman

26 October 2023

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

Appendix 1 Statistics for complaints received in quarter

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

AIRSERVICES - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	32	47	50	129
Complaints closed:	29	36	54	118

Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	24	33	52	109
Complainant did not provide further information	0	1	2	3
Outside Charter Scope - CASA	0	0	0	0
Outside Charter Scope – Department of Infrastructure	0	1	1	2
Outside Charter Scope - Minister	0	2	0	2
Outside Charter Scope - Other	0	1	0	1
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	24	27	49	100

Total complaints closed - reviewed:	5	3	2	10
No change possible - explanation provided	2	3	2	7
Agency agreed to reengage with complainant	0	0	0	0
Change in processes or systems adopted by Agency	3	0	0	3
Not resolved - Action taken by Agency to encourage change by others	0	0	0	0

DEFENCE - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	1	1	0	2
Complaints closed:	1	1	0	2

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

Total complaints closed - reviewed:	0	0	0	0
No change possible - explanation provided	0	0	0	0
Agency agreed to reengage with complainant	0	0	0	0
Change in processes or systems adopted by Agency	0	0	0	0
Not resolved - Action taken by Agency to encourage change by others	0	0	0	0

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SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS HANDLED	Airservices	Defence	No agency assigned*	Total
Actionable complaints open at 1 July 2023 (first day of quarter):	6	4	0	10
Non-actionable complaints received:	1,182	3	3	1,188
Actionable complaints received:	129	2	7	138
Actionable complaints closed:	118	2	7	127
Actionable complaints open at 1 October 2023 (first day of next quarter):	17	4	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 July-September 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 (Jul-Sep 2023)	% Met target (2023-24 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	100%	100%
	Update to complainant on progress of complaint	Every 28 days	100%	100%
		1 update failed	0%	0%
		2 updates failed	0%	0%
		3 updates failed	0%	0%
	Time from complaint received to closed	25% < 3 months	99%	99%
		50% within 3-6 months	1%	1%
		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%	100%
	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	0%	0%
		50% within 6-12 months	0%	0%
		0% > 12 months	0%	0%