

OFFICIAL



Quarterly Report

January-March 2024

Contents

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----------|
| 1 | Overview | 3 |
| 2 | Complaint handling..... | 4 |
| 2.1 | Non-actionable complaints received in quarter..... | 4 |
| 2.2 | Actionable complaints in quarter | 5 |
| | Closed complaints..... | 7 |
| 2.3 | Issues raised in complaints | 9 |
| | Issues by agency of concern | 10 |
| 2.4 | Hobart Noise Abatement Plan (NAP) trial investigation..... | 12 |
| 2.5 | Community engagement and noise information provision activities | 12 |
| 2.6 | Liaison with Noise Complaints Information Service (NCIS)..... | 13 |
| 2.7 | Liaison with Defence | 13 |
| 2.8 | Senate inquiry | 13 |
| 3 | Key performance indicators | 14 |
| 3.1 | Acknowledgement of complaints | 14 |
| 3.2 | Determination of complaints | 14 |
| 3.3 | Progress reports to complainants..... | 15 |
| 3.4 | Time taken to finalise complaints | 16 |
| Appendix 1 | Statistics for complaints received in quarter | 17 |
| Appendix 2 | Outstanding ANO recommendations..... | 19 |
| Appendix 3 | Key performance indicators for ANO complaint handling..... | 20 |

1 Overview

The Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) received a total of 326 complaints during the quarter. This includes 211 non-actionable complaints and 115 actionable complaints. The ANO carried forward 28 complaints on 1 January 2024. During this quarter (January-March 2024), the ANO closed 131 actionable complaints, and therefore carries forward 12 complaints to April 2024.

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 71 actionable complaints and most non-actionable complaints.

In this quarter, the ANO received 5 new actionable complaints about the Department of Defence (Defence) and closed 6 complaints. One Defence complaint remained under review at the end of the quarter.

The ANO continued to monitor Airservices Australia's (Airservices') community engagement processes under clause 71 of the ANO Charter. This included the implementation processes for Post Implementation Review (PIR) recommendations related to Hobart and Brisbane airports.

The ANO provided its 2024-2027 Strategic Plan and budget to Airservices' Board and the Chief of the Air Force in February 2024. The Strategic Plan includes refined Key Performance Indicators which will commence from 1 July 2024.

Regular monthly meetings between the ANO senior advisors, Airservices' senior staff in the community engagement team and the Noise Complaint and Information Service (NCIS) Manager continued. The ANO team also had quarterly meetings with Airservices' community engagement and NCIS teams.

In addition to the regular quarterly meeting between the Defence staff officer and the ANO Unit Manager, the ANO also met with the Defence staff officer in March.

ANO expenditure for the year to date was \$439,233 at 31 March 2024, slightly higher than the ANO's average nine-monthly expenditure of \$425,115 over the past five years and below the YTD budget forecast of \$685,972.

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 within the scope of the ANO Charter requiring ANO review and complaints requiring referral to another agency.

The ANO office also tracks and reports on complaints which are about aircraft noise but are not actionable within the scope of the Charter. These are referred to in this report as non-actionable complaints. The majority of these are complaints expressing a broad, general grievance about aircraft noise, but where the complaint is clearly directed to the responsible Minister or another agency. This category also includes complaints where the subject matter has previously been reviewed by the ANO and no further action can reasonably be taken. Section 2.1 below provides a summary of these non-actionable complaints.

2.1 Non-actionable complaints received in quarter

During the quarter, 326 complaints were raised with the ANO office – 211 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.

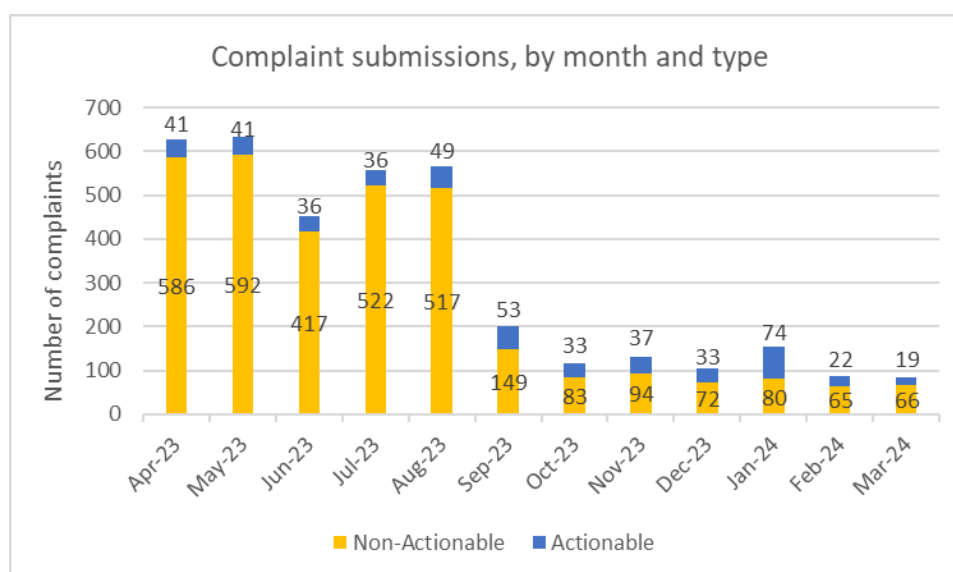


Figure 1 – Complaint submissions by month from April 2023 – March 2024, highlighting actionable and non-actionable complaints.

During this quarter, there has been a reduction in non-actionable complaints from 251 to 213 complaints when compared to the previous quarter. The majority of non-actionable complaints this quarter continued to concern the operation of the new runway for Brisbane. Of these, 63 complainants raised a total of 173 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, January – March 2024.

Figure 3 below shows the number of complaints made by individual complainants. Four complainants submitted 40% of all the non-actionable complaints received during the quarter. These complainants sought action outside of the ANO’s remit.

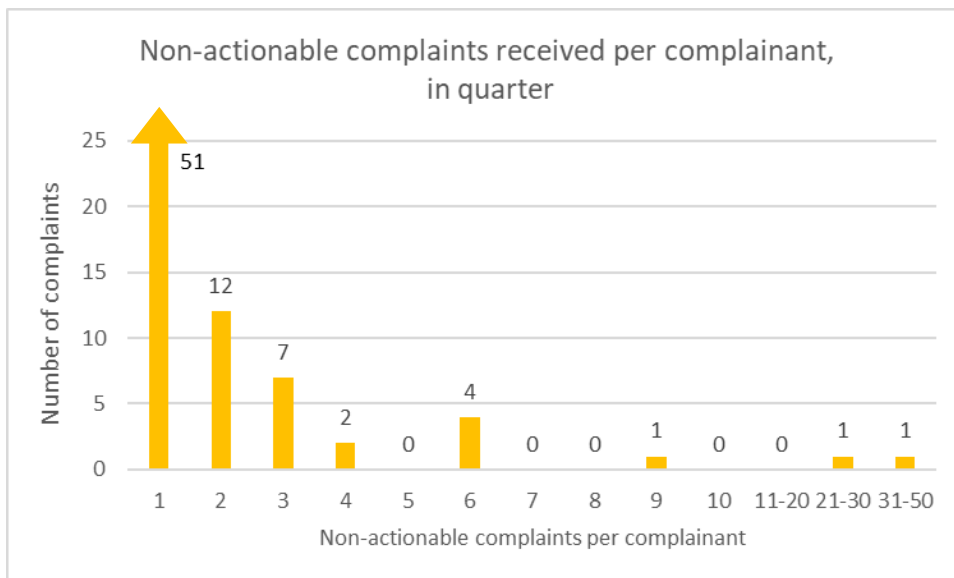


Figure 3 – Non-actionable complaints per complainant, January – March 2024.

2.2 Actionable complaints in quarter

During the quarter, the ANO received 115 actionable complaints - 104 relating to Airservices and 5 relating to Defence. A further 6 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 Defence.¹

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

Figures 4 and 5 below show the number of actionable complaints by agency. Complaints in relation to Airservices were higher compared to last quarter.

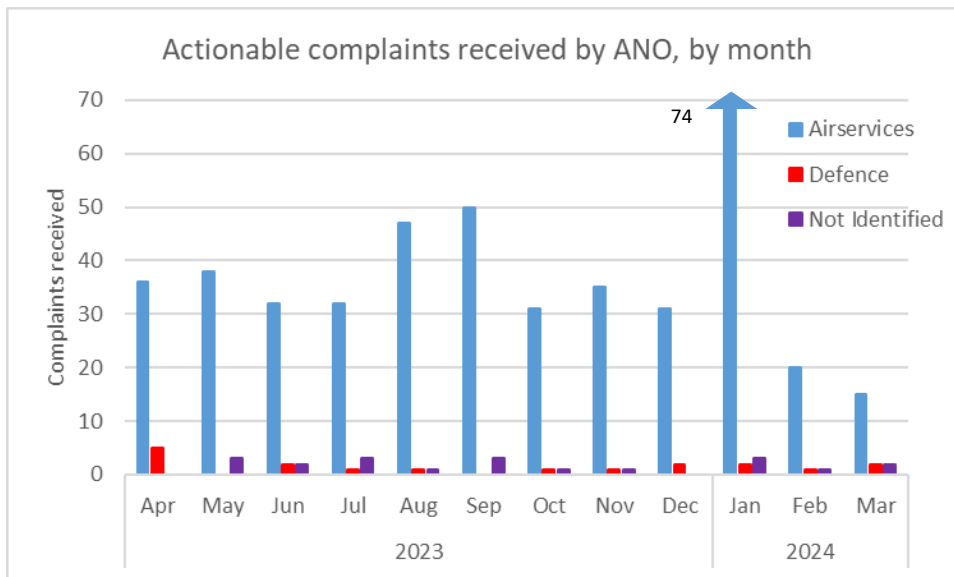


Figure 4 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by month, April 2023 – March 2024.

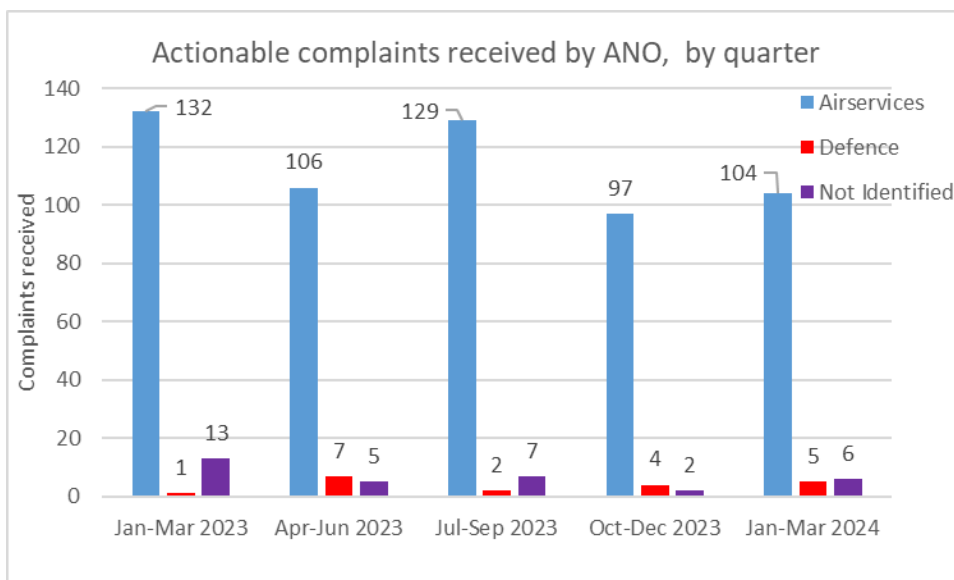


Figure 5 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by quarter, January 2023 – March 2024.

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.

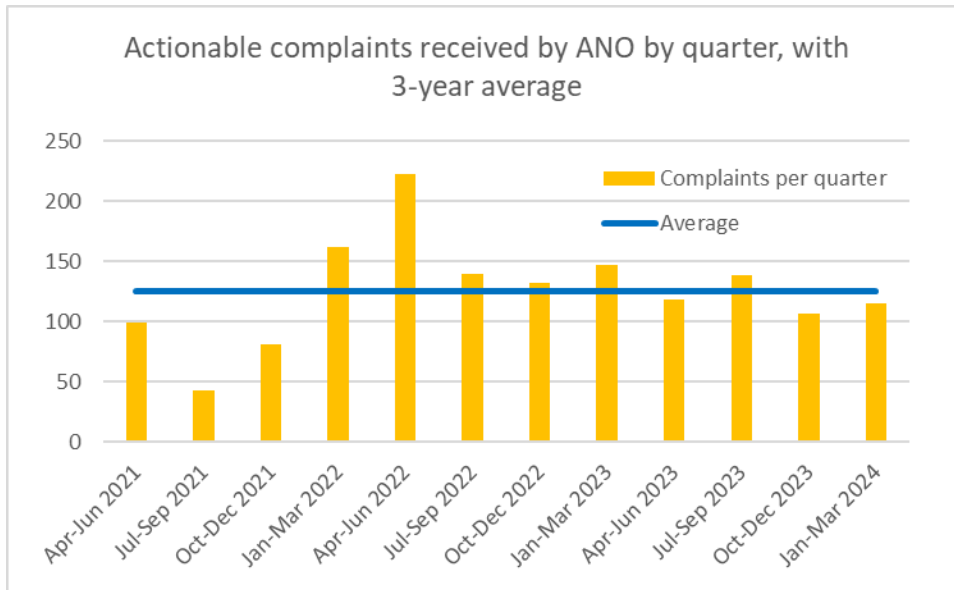


Figure 6 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by quarter, with 3-year average for complaint trends.

The majority of actionable complaints received this quarter continue to be attributed to the opening and operation of the new runway for Brisbane, with 71 complaints (62%).

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

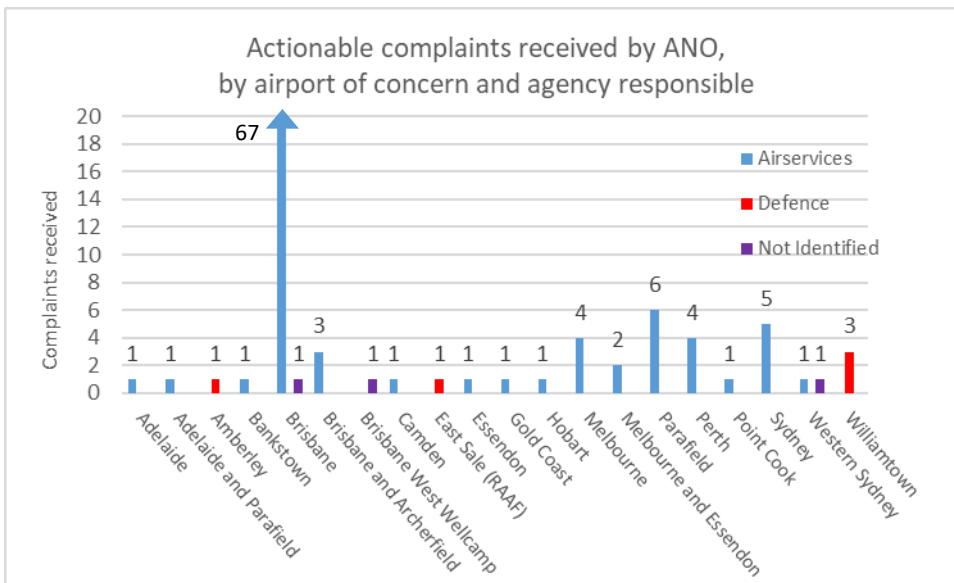


Figure 7 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by airport of concern and agency, January – March 2024.

In addition to the airport specific complaints above, a further 7 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 on the outcomes of closed complaints has been enhanced. The ANO closed 131 actionable complaints for the quarter, 120 relating to Airservices, 6 relating to Defence and 5 without an agency identified. In addition, all non-actionable complaints were closed, as noted in Section 2.1.

Figure 8 below, shows the outcomes of the complaints relating to Airservices: 94 were closed as the complainants had either not yet complained to or finalised their complaint with Airservices. One complaint resulted in a change in process or systems being adopted by Airservices. The remainder were closed as they provided no basis for proceeding further under the Charter or were referred to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the Department) as they raised issues relating to regulation.

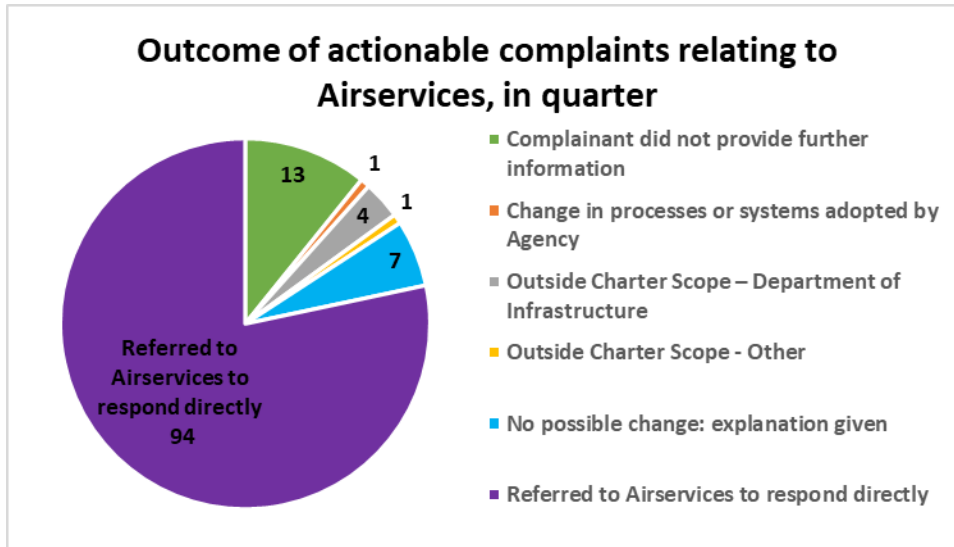


Figure 8 – Outcome of actionable complaints closed in quarter, related to Airservices.

The outcomes for the 6 complaints about Defence closed in this quarter are shown in Figure 9 below. Two complaints resulted in a change in process or systems being adopted by Defence, and Defence agreed to re-engage with the complainant regarding one complaint. The remaining 3 complaints were closed as the complainant had either not yet complained to, or finalised their complaint with, Defence.

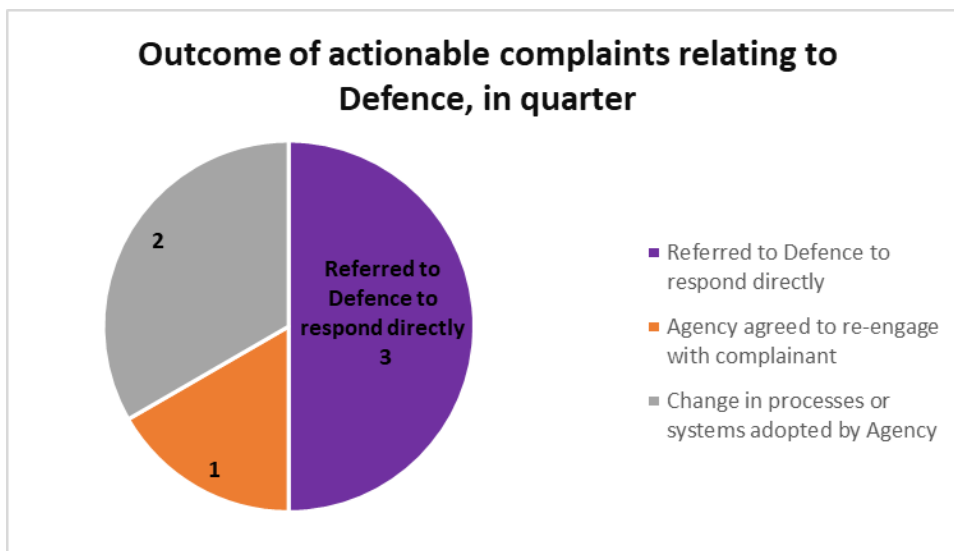


Figure 9 – Outcome of actionable complaints closed in quarter, related to Defence.

As of 1 January 2024, 12 actionable complaints remain open. The oldest complaint was received in June 2023 and contained a large number of concerns, with the review ongoing. A further 8 complaints are associated to the Hobart NAP trial review. One of the remaining 3 open complaints was received in late February 2024, with the final two complaints having been submitted in late March 2024.

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 in their complaint.

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 10 shows the distribution of the issues raised during the quarter, for complaints related to Defence and Airservices. As would be expected, the most common issues raised with the ANO office are aircraft noise related concerns.

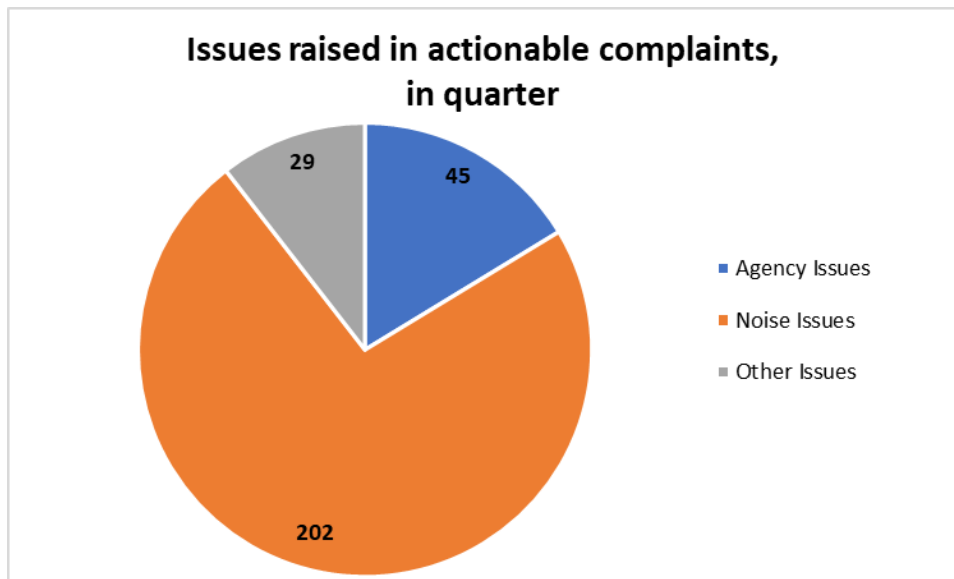


Figure 10 – Issues raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, January – March 2024

Issues by agency of concern

As shown in Figure 11 and 12 below, complaints about community engagement were the most common agency-related issue raised this quarter for Airservices, being raised 13 times. For actionable complaints associated with Defence, the agency specific issues raised included two related to a poor explanation.

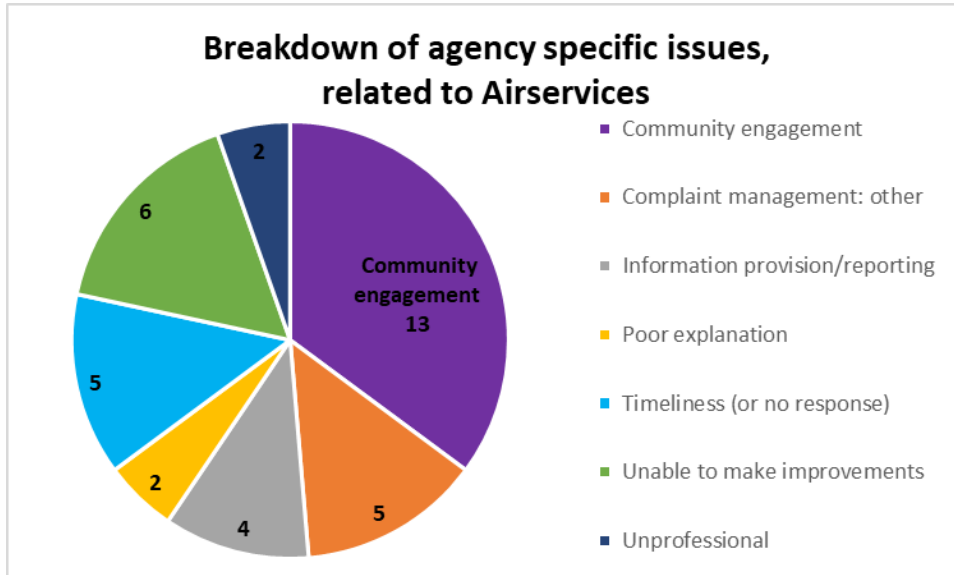


Figure 11 – Agency specific issues raised in actionable complaints related to Airservices, January – March 2024.

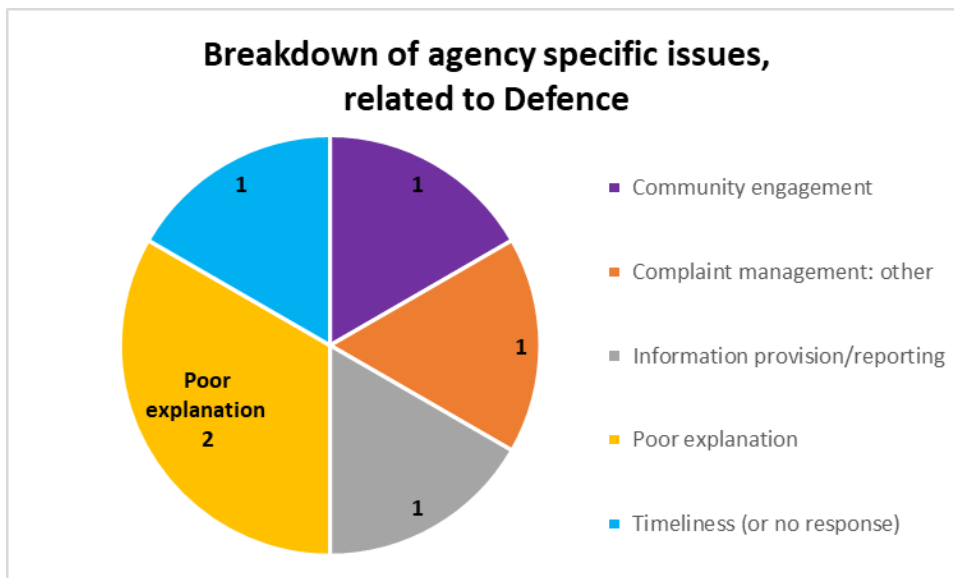


Figure 12 – Agency specific issues raised in actionable complaints related to Defence, January – March 2024.

Figures 13 and 14 break down noise complaints by the most common issues raised, associated with Airservices and Defence respectively. Flight path changes and their impacts on health continue to be dominant issues in relation to civilian aircraft operations. Concerns about health include impacts upon sleep, mental health, and stress. Concerns about night operations was the most common noise issue associated with military flights.

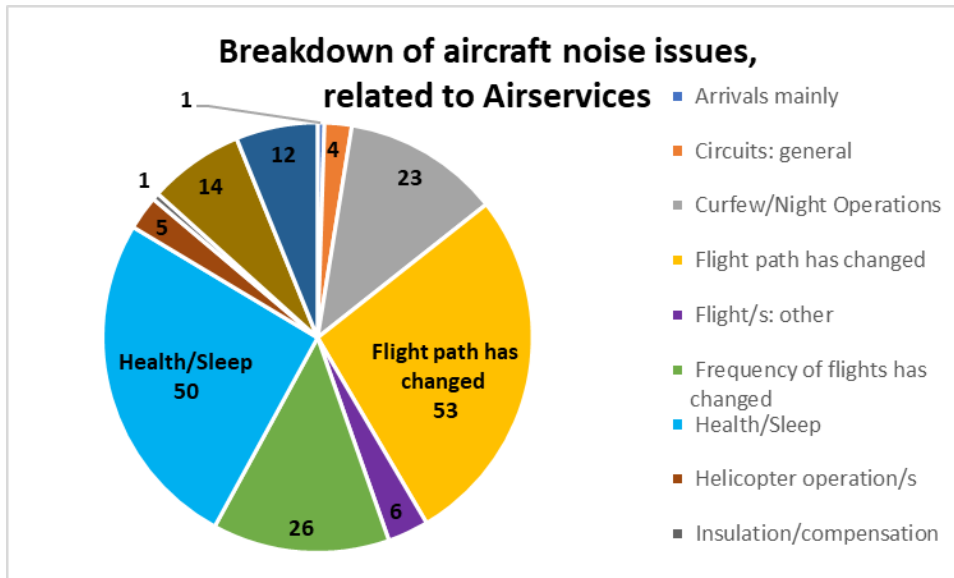


Figure 13 – Aircraft noise related issues raised in actionable complaints related to Airservices, January – March 2024.

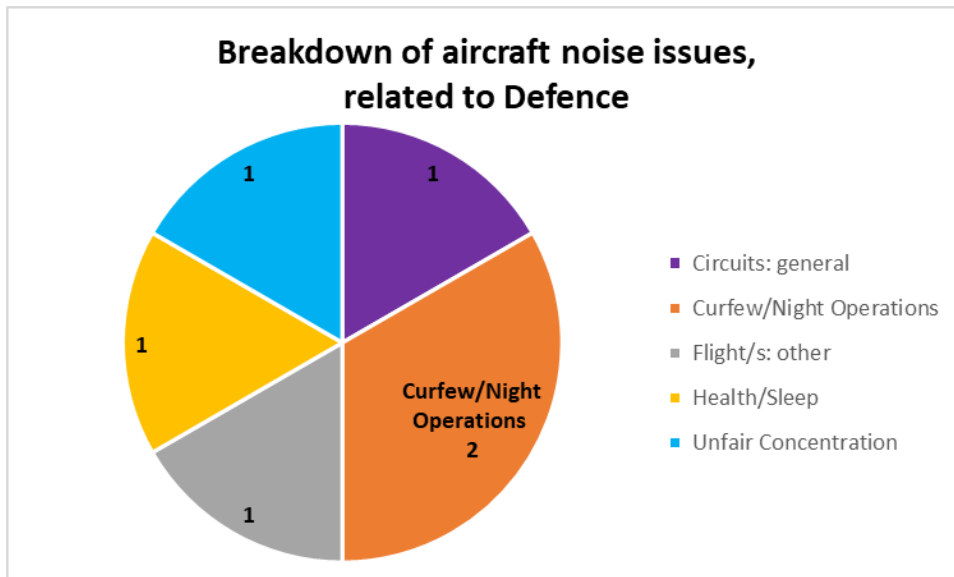


Figure 14 – Aircraft noise related issues raised in actionable complaints related to Defence, January – March 2024.

Figure 15 shows other issues raised by complainants related to civil operations, 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 of civil aircraft operations was the most common of the other issues raised this quarter, with 8 of these complaints requesting a curfew. While curfew requests came predominately from Brisbane, in this quarter one request related to Hobart Airport. One complainant also contacted the ANO office in opposition to potential further regulation of Brisbane Airport.

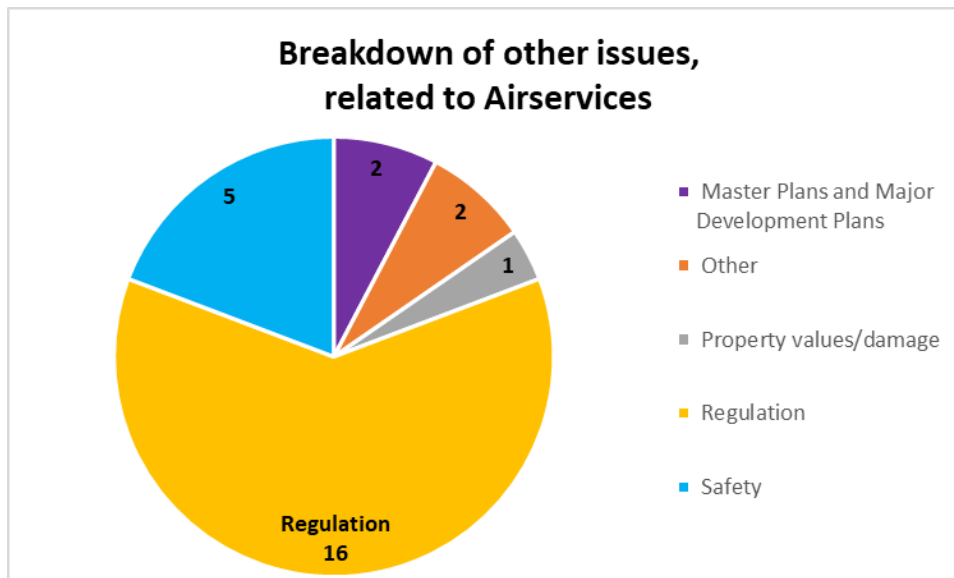


Figure 15 – Issues outside of the ANO’s remit, raised in actionable complaints related to Airservices, January – March 2024.

A further concern was raised in relation to the safety of military operations.

2.4 Hobart Noise Abatement Plan (NAP) trial investigation

In August 2023, the ANO commenced a multi-complaint review as provided for in clause 47 of the ANO Charter and provided its assessment to Airservices. Airservices set aside its original decision and is reviewing its procedures for implementing community suggested flight path changes.

As part of this process, Airservices commenced further consultation with the community and industry during April, related to the Hobart NAP trial. The ANO has also been advised that a report on the procedure review is expected to be finalised in the coming month.

As both the consultation and process review are ongoing, the ANO will continue to monitor these over the coming quarter.

2.5 Community engagement and noise information provision activities

The ANO continued to work with Airservices’ staff on engagement projects as they were delivered.

The ANO office is invited to regularly attend a number of airport Community Aviation Consultation Groups (CACGs), as an observer. Attending CACGs enable the ANO to observe Airservices’ and/or Defence’s engagement and information provision activities to the community, increased awareness of issues for individual airports and communities, and promotion of the ANO function. This quarter, the ANO office has commenced contacting those airports which it is not regularly invited to attend, to request the opportunity to attend and offer to make a presentation to the CACG. As a result of this contact, the ANO was invited to and presented at the Bankstown, Camden, Essendon and Moorabbin airport CACGs this quarter. The ANO office also attended the Sydney Airport Community Forum (SACF).

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.

During this quarter, the ANO has noted an improved turn-around period by the NCIS team in responding to the majority of complaints and specifically that most complaints are now being responded to within the target 21-day timeframe.

2.7 Liaison with Defence

The ANO office held its regular quarterly meeting with the Staff Officer, Aircraft Noise Management for 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.

2.8 Senate inquiry

In February 2024, the impact and mitigation of aircraft noise was referred to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee (the Committee) for inquiry. The Committee has commenced hearings in Brisbane and a number of submissions made questioned the independence of the ANO. The ANO is preparing a submission to the inquiry. The Committee is publishing submissions it receives, on the Committee webpage [here](#).

3 Key performance indicators

The ANO office introduced key performance indicators (KPIs) for its complaint handling processes in July 2021. The KPI targets apply to all actionable complaints received by the ANO office.

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 review. 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.

3.1 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. This quarter, 7 complaints were made by phone during the ANO office shutdown period over Christmas. This results in 6% of single complaints failing the acknowledgement KPI for this quarter. No multi-complaints were received in the quarter.



Figure 16 - % of single complaints acknowledged within 2 days, in quarter.

3.2 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. A single complaint failed this KPI during the quarter due to a technical error resulting in incorrect processing of the complaint. An additional 4 single complaints received early in the ANO shutdown period also failed the target for the determination of complaints, which resulted in 4% of single complaints failing during this quarter as shown in Figure 17 below.

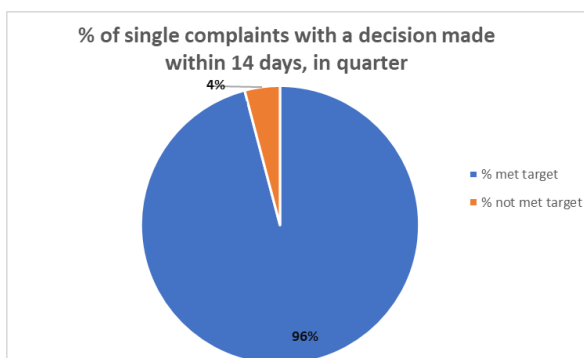


Figure 17 - % of single complaints with a decision made within 14 days, in quarter.

3.3 Progress reports to complainants

The ANO has a KPI to report progress to complainants every 28 days. Of the single complaints, the complaint impacted by the technical error also failed one update during this quarter, as a result which is shown in Figure 18.

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 8 complaints associated with the Hobart multi-complaint review are in this category and remained on hold during the quarter, while Airservices continued to address the matter.



Figure 18 - % of complainants updated every 28 days, in quarter (single complaint).

3.4 Time taken to finalise complaints

Of the 129 actionable complaints closed in this quarter, all were single complaints. The majority (98%) of the single complaints were closed within 3 months of receipt, as shown in Figure 19. A further two complaints, which required extensive investigation, were closed within 6 months of receipt.

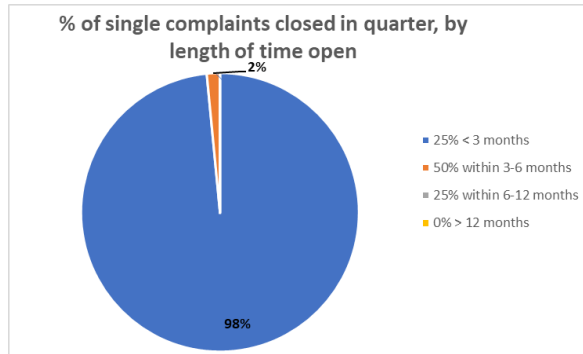


Figure 19 - % of single complaints closed in quarter, by length of time open.

No multi-complaint reviews were closed during the quarter.

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

Kieran Pehm

Aircraft Noise Ombudsman

18 April 2024

Appendix 1 Statistics for complaints received in quarter

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

| AIRSERVICES - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS | Jan-24 | Feb-24 | Mar-24 | Total for quarter |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Complaints received | 69 | 20 | 15 | 104 |
| Complaints closed: | 82 | 21 | 17 | 120 |

| | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|------------|
| Total complaints closed - not reviewed: | 79 | 18 | 15 | 112 |
| Complainant did not provide further information | 7 | 1 | 5 | 13 |
| Outside Charter Scope - CASA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Outside Charter Scope – Department of Infrastructure | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Outside Charter Scope - Minister | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Outside Charter Scope - Other | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Referred to Airservices to respond directly | 69 | 16 | 9 | 94 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----------|
| Total complaints closed - reviewed: | 3 | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| 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 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Not resolved - Action taken by Agency to encourage change by others | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| DEFENCE - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS | Jan-24 | Feb-24 | Mar-24 | Total for quarter |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Complaints received: | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| Complaints closed: | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----------|
| Total complaints closed - not reviewed: | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 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 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----------|
| Total complaints closed - reviewed: | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| No change possible - explanation provided | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Agency agreed to reengage with complainant | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Change in processes or systems adopted by Agency | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| 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 for quarter |
|---|--------------------|----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Actionable complaints open at 1 January 2024 (first day of quarter): | 26 | 2 | 0 | 28 |
| Non-actionable complaints received: | 209 | 0 | 2 | 211 |
| Actionable complaints received: | 104 | 5 | 6 | 115 |
| Actionable complaints closed: | 120 | 6 | 5 | 131 |
| Actionable complaints open at 1 April 2024 (first day of next quarter): | 10 | 1 | 1 | 12 |

*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 2024. 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 2024) | % Met target (2023 24 YTD) |
|--|---|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Single complaint | Acknowledgement of complaint | Within 2 business days | 94% | 98% |
| | Decision on whether complaint is within jurisdiction within 14 days | Within 14 days | 96% | 99% |
| | Update to complainant on progress of complaint | Every 28 days | 99% | 100% |
| | | 1 update failed | 1% | 0% |
| | | 2 updates failed | 0% | 0% |
| | | 3 updates failed | 0% | 0% |
| | Time from complaint received to closed | 25% < 3 months | 98% | 99% |
| | | 50% within 3-6 months | 2% | 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 | 0% | 100% |
| | Decision on whether complaint is within jurisdiction | Within 21 days | 0% | 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% | 100% |
| | | 50% within 6-12 months | 0% | 0% |
| | | 0% > 12 months | 0% | 0% |