

OFFICIAL



Quarterly Report

April-June 2024

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1 Overview

The Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) received a total of 385 complaints during the quarter. This includes 316 non-actionable complaints and 69 actionable complaints. The ANO carried forward 12 complaints on 1 April 2024. During this quarter (April-June 2024), the ANO closed 65 actionable complaints, and therefore carries forward 16 complaints to July 2024.

Of the 69 new actionable complaints, 58 related to Airservices Australia (Airservices). 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 33 actionable complaints and most non-actionable complaints.

In this quarter, the ANO received 6 new actionable complaints about the Department of Defence (Defence) and closed 3 complaints. Four Defence complaints remained under review at the end of the quarter.

The ANO continued to monitor 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.

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.

During this quarter, in addition to regular contact with the Staff Officer, Aircraft Noise Management for Defence, a member of the ANO team visited RAAF Base Williamtown, meeting key personnel, and attending the RAAF Base Williamtown Working Group, which is an important liaison between Base personnel and the community.

Finally, Jan Goodhew, the ANO's Investigative and Administrative Office will be taking up a position with Airservices as an Aviation Safety Liaison Specialist. I would like to thank her for her enormous contribution to the office, particularly its records management, and wish her all the best.

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, 385 complaints were raised with the ANO office – 316 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.

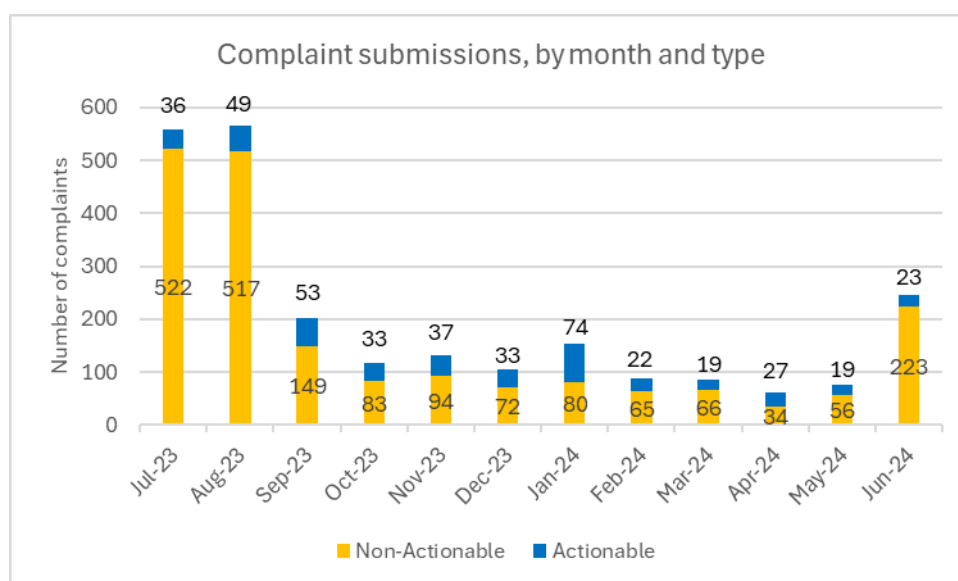


Figure 1 – Complaint submissions by month from July 2023 – June 2024, highlighting actionable and non-actionable complaints.

During this quarter, there has been an increase in non-actionable complaints from 213 to 316 complaints when compared to the previous quarter. Most non-actionable complaints this quarter continued to concern the operation of the new runway for Brisbane. Of these, 37 complainants raised a total of 297 complaints about operations associated with Brisbane Airport.

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

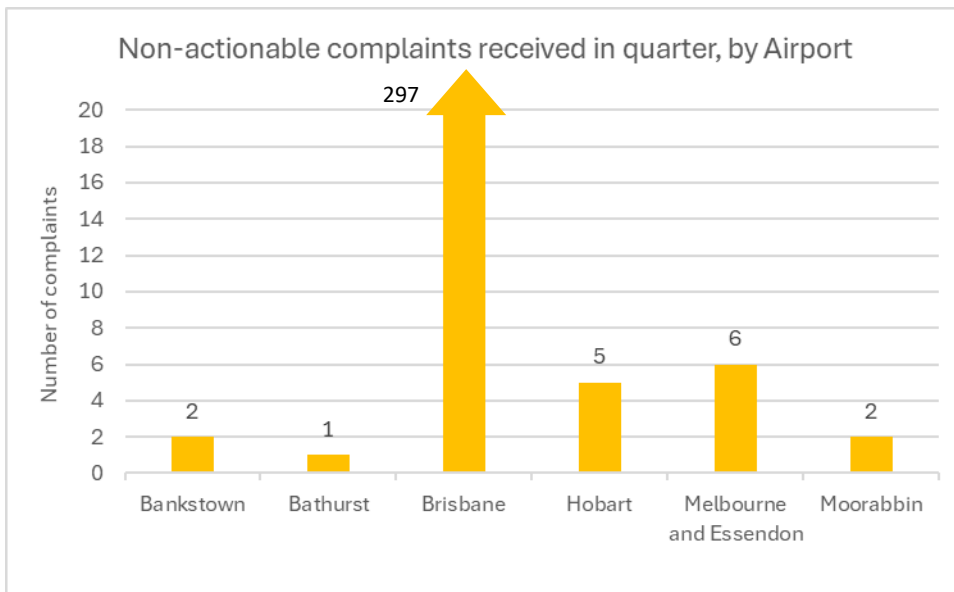


Figure 2 – Non-actionable complaints received by airport of concern, April – June 2024.

Figure 3 below shows the number of complaints made by individual complainants. One complainant submitted 66% of all the non-actionable complaints received during the quarter. This complainant sought action outside of the ANO’s remit.

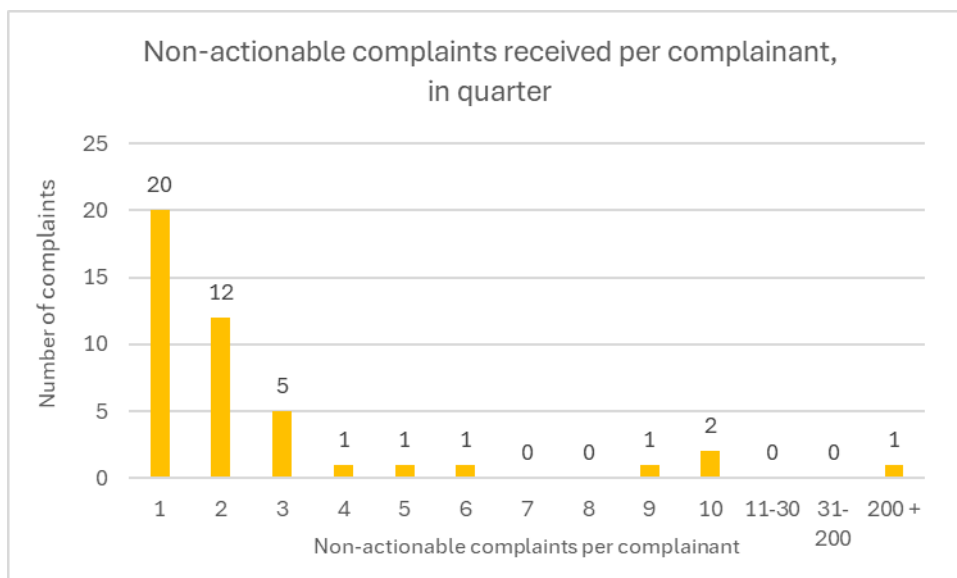


Figure 3 – Non-actionable complaints per complainant, April– June 2024.

2.2 Actionable complaints in quarter

During the quarter, the ANO received 69 actionable complaints - 58 relating to Airservices and 6 relating to Defence. A further 5 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

Figure 4 below show the number of actionable complaints by agency. Complaints in relation to Airservices were lower compared to last quarter.

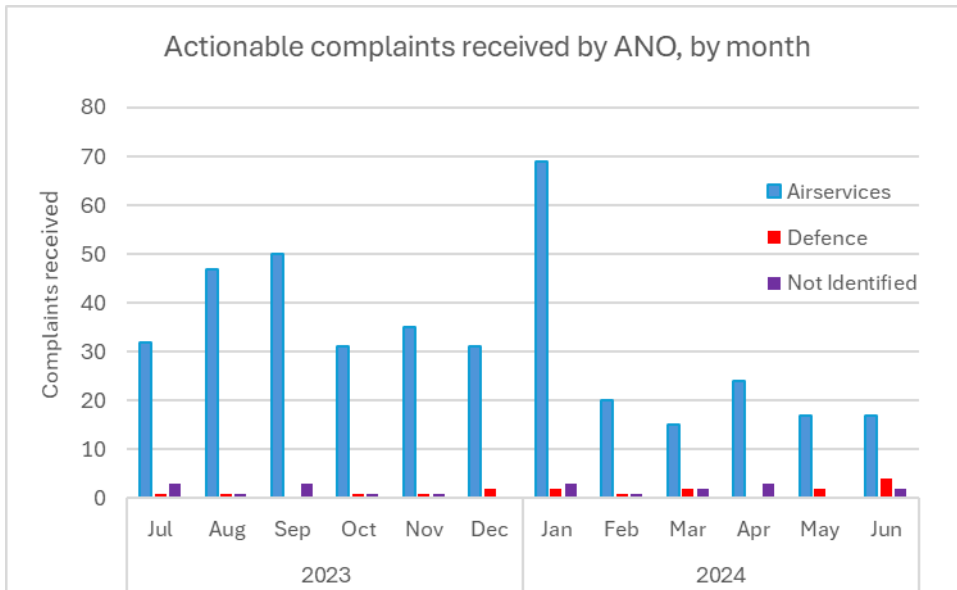


Figure 4 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by month, July 2023 – June 2024.

Figure 5 charts the average number of actionable complaints over the past 3 years. Complaints made during this quarter were lower than the 3-year average.

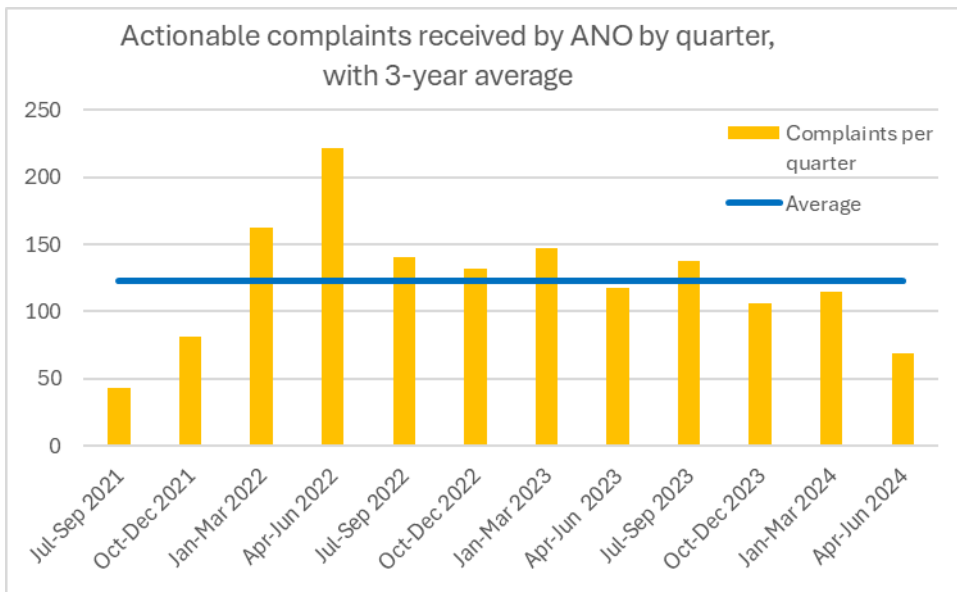


Figure 5 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by quarter, with 3-year average for complaint trends.

Many of the actionable complaints received this quarter continue to be attributed to the opening and operation of the new runway for Brisbane, with 33 complaints (48%). However, this quarter has seen a notable increase in complaints related to Sydney Airport, and for other airports across the country.

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

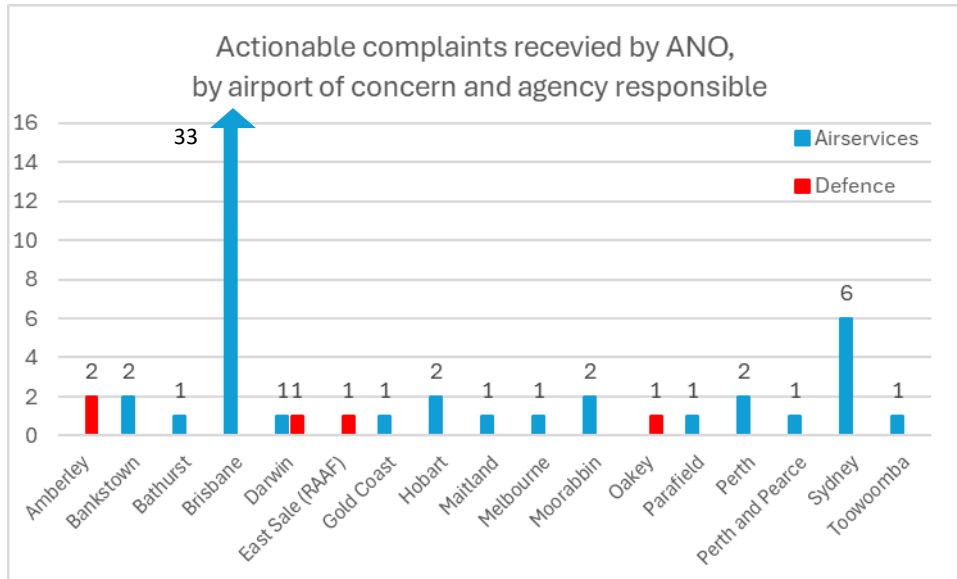


Figure 6 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by airport of concern and agency, April – June 2024.

In addition to the airport specific complaints above, a further 5 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 65 actionable complaints for the quarter, 58 relating to Airservices, 5 relating to Defence and 6 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: 42 were closed as the complainants had either not yet complained to or finalised their complaint with Airservices. Airservices agreed to re-engage with the complainant for one complaint. The remainder were closed as they provided no basis for proceeding further under the Charter or the complainant did not provide additional information requested to support the ANO review of their concerns.

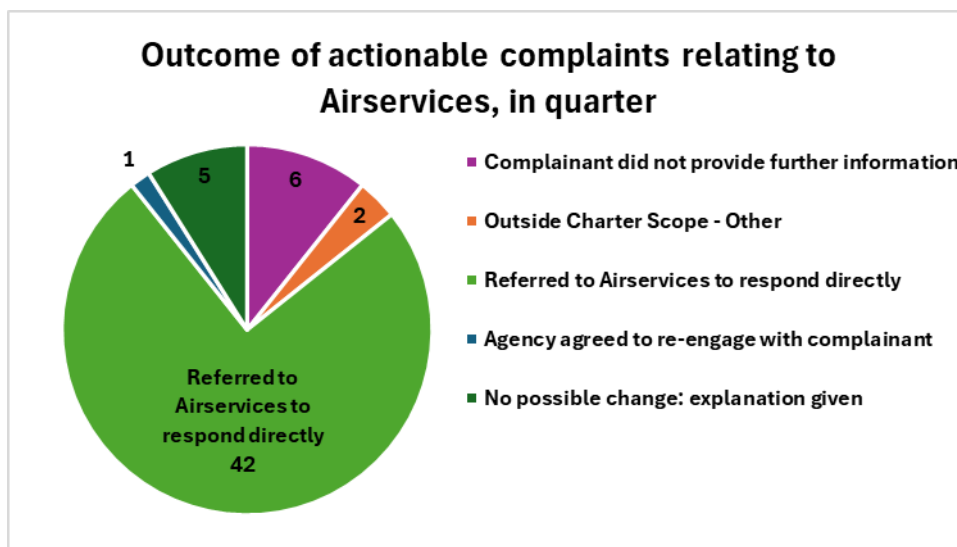


Figure 7 – Outcome of actionable complaints closed in quarter, related to Airservices.

The outcomes for the 3 complaints about Defence closed in this quarter are shown in Figure 9 below. One complaint was closed as the complainant had either not yet complained to, or finalised their complaint with, Defence. One complaint was outside of the ANO's scope and referred to the appropriate agency and the final complaint was closed as the complainant did not provide further information to support the ANO review of their concerns.

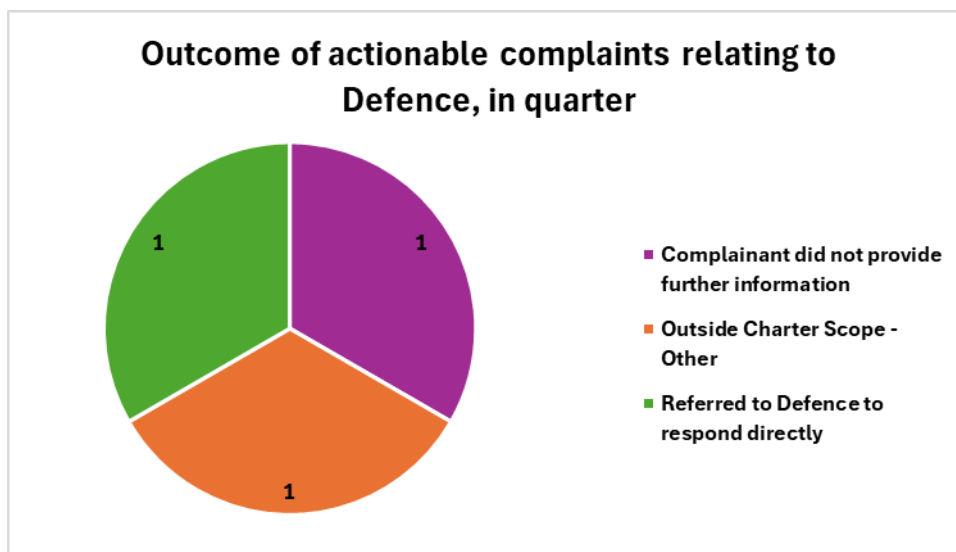


Figure 8 – Outcome of actionable complaints closed in quarter, related to Defence.

As of 1 January 2024, 16 actionable complaints remain open. The oldest complaint was received in June 2023 and contained a large number of concerns with Defence's handling of their complaints, with the review ongoing. A further 8 complaints are associated to the Hobart NAP trial review which will shortly be finalised in a separate report to the Board. The remaining 7 complaints were received between late May and June 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 9 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.

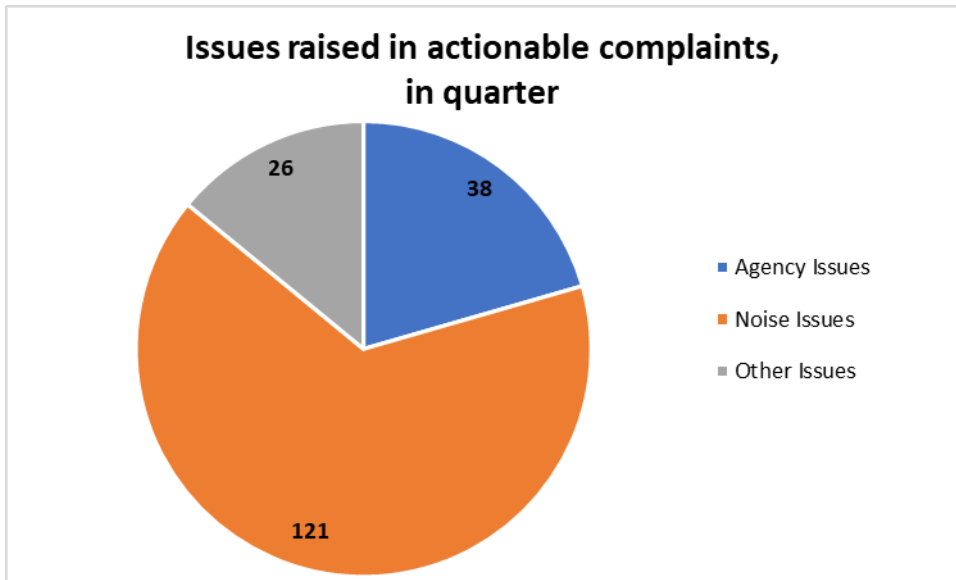


Figure 9 – Issues raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, April-June 2024

Issues by agency of concern

As shown in Figure 10 below, the timeliness of responses or lack of responses was the most common issue raised in relation to Airservices’ complaint handling. Complaints about community engagement were the second most common agency related issue raised this quarter for Airservices, being raised 6 times.

In relation to Defence, two Agency-related concerns were raised this quarter. One concern regarded the timeliness (or lack of) of Defence’s response and a second related to Defence’s information provision and reporting activities.

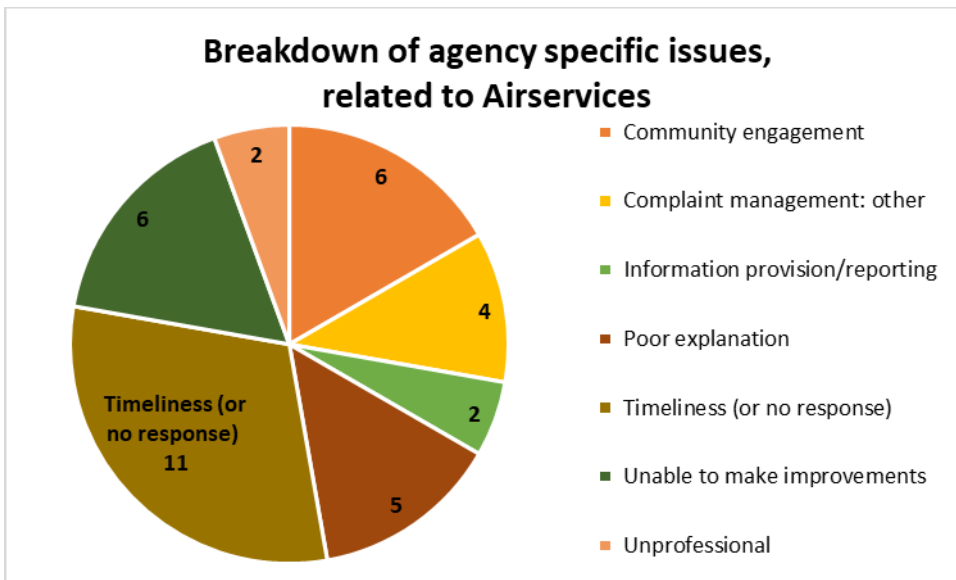


Figure 10 – Agency specific issues raised in actionable complaints related to Airservices, April-June 2024.

Figures 11 and 12 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 the impacts of overflights on health was also the most common noise issue associated with military flights.

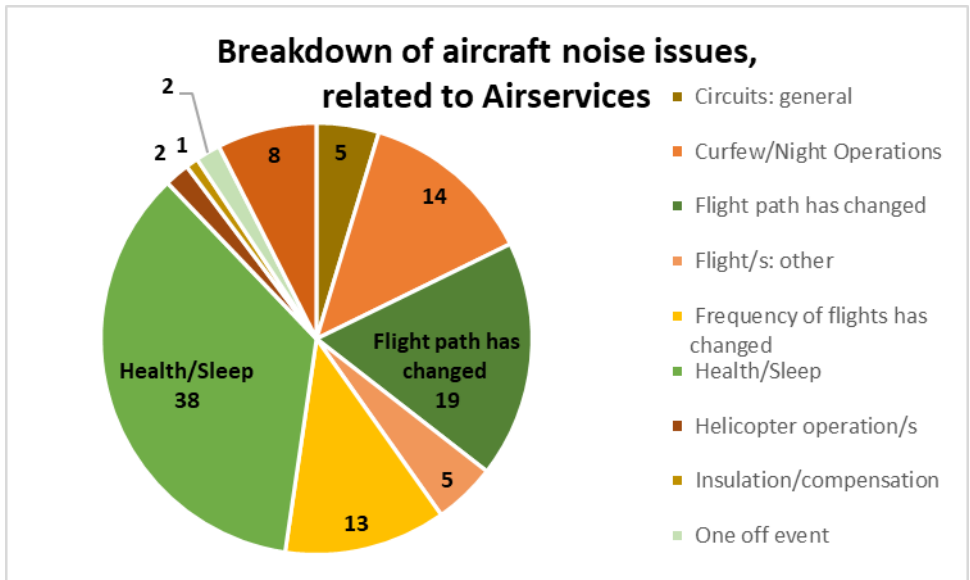


Figure 11 – Aircraft noise related issues raised in actionable complaints related to Airservices, April-June 2024.

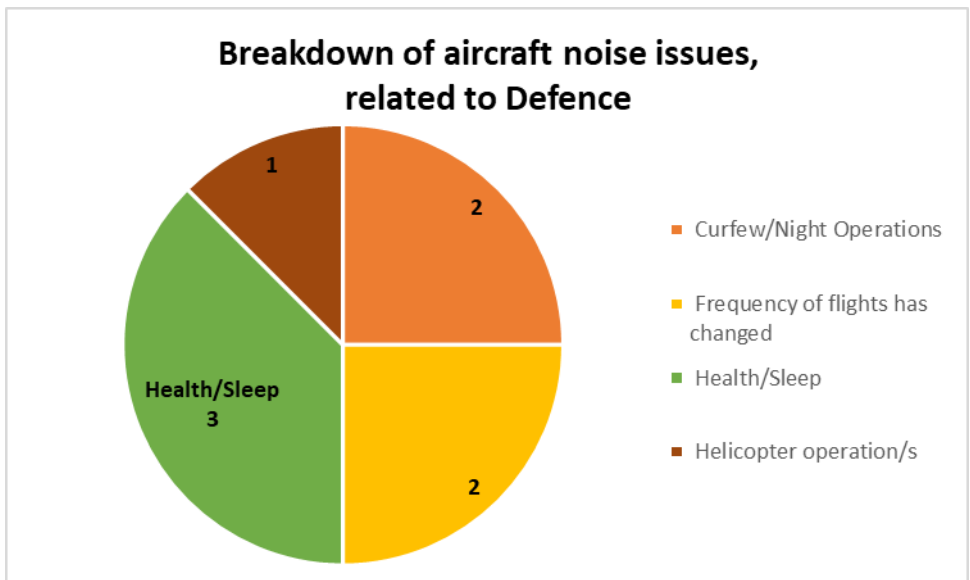


Figure 12 – Aircraft noise related issues raised in actionable complaints related to Defence, April-June 2024.

Figure 13 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 5 of these complaints requesting a curfew for Brisbane Airport.

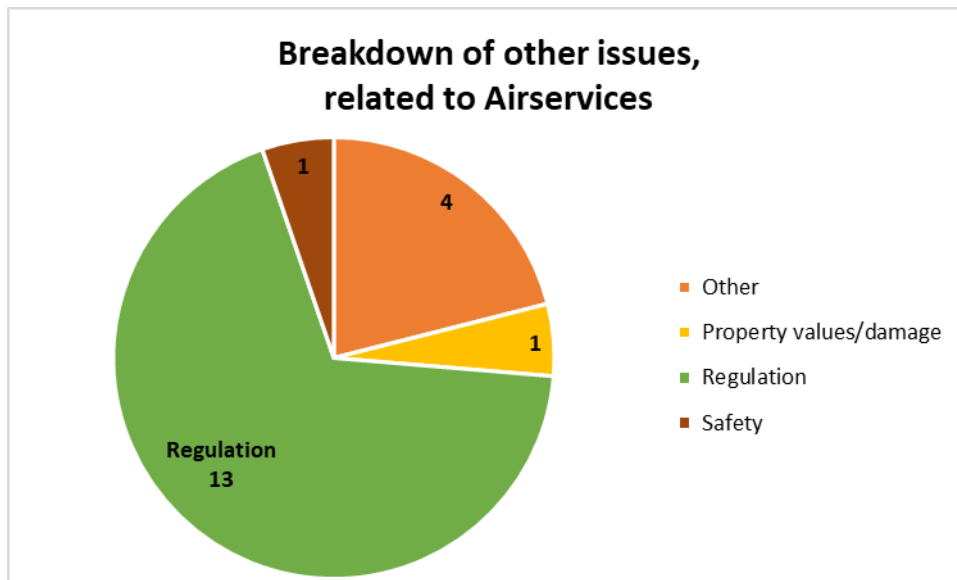


Figure 13 – Issues outside of the ANO’s remit, raised in actionable complaints related to Airservices, April-June 2024.

Figure 14 shows other issues raised by complainants related to military operations, which were outside the remit of the ANO. Similar to civil aviation concerns, concerns about regulation of military aircraft operations were the most common of the other issues raised this quarter, with all three complainants seeking regulation to stop low flying.

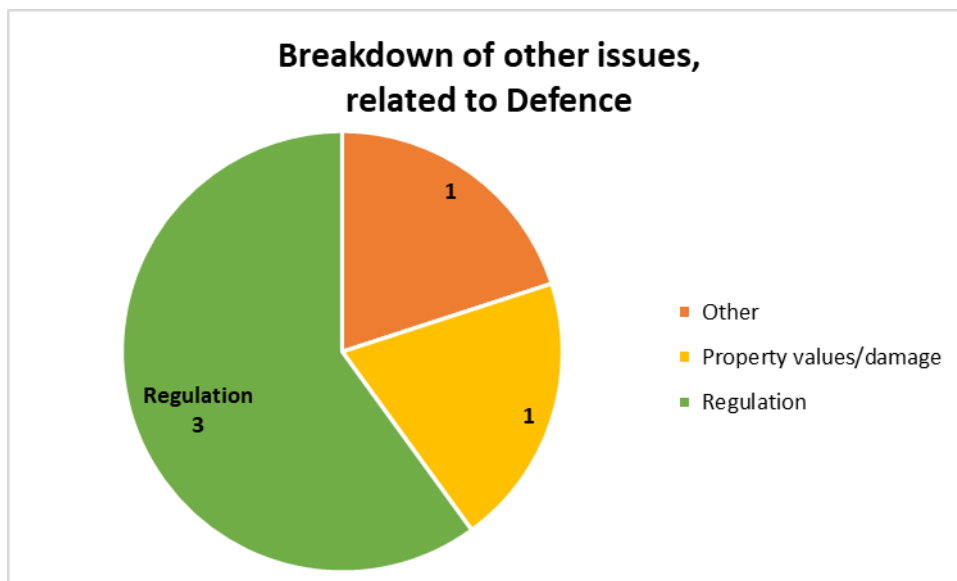


Figure 14 – Issues outside of the ANO’s remit, raised in actionable complaints related to Airservices, April – June 2024.

2.4 Community engagement and noise information provision activities

The ANO continued to work with Airservices’ staff on engagement projects as they were delivered. This included attending a number of online community engagement sessions associated with the Brisbane Noise Action Plan and Hobart Noise Abatement Plan (NAP) trial.

In order to further the ANO office’s understanding of Airservices’ community engagement processes, one of the ANO Senior Advisors spent two days with Airservices’ Community Engagement team as an observer, during the quarter.

The ANO office is invited to regularly attend a number of airport Community Aviation Consultation Groups (CACGs) as an observer. Attending CACGs enables 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's functions. Last quarter, the ANO office commenced contacting those airports which it is not regularly invited to attend the CACGs of, 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 the Archerfield Airport CACG and both the RAAF Base Amberley and Williamtown Working Groups this quarter. The ANO office also attended the Brisbane, Parafield, and Hobart CACGs this quarter.

2.5 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.

2.6 Liaison with Defence

The ANO office held informal meetings with the Staff Officer, Aircraft Noise Management for Defence, as required throughout the quarter. This included discussing the findings of individual reviews and broader aircraft noise management issues and opportunities.

2.7 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 made a submission to the inquiry in April, with the Committee publishing submissions it received, 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. KPI compliance levels are determined based on results throughout the applicable financial year, with performance for the 2023-24 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 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 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, all single complaints received were acknowledged within the KPI target. No multi-complaints were received in the 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. All single complaints passed this KPI during the quarter.

3.3 Progress reports to complainants

The ANO has a KPI to report progress to complainants every 28 days. Of the single complaints, all passed this KPI for the current quarter.

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.

3.4 Time taken to finalise complaints

Of the 65 actionable complaints closed in this quarter, all were single complaints and were closed within 3 months of receipt.

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

3.5 Complaints about the ANO

During this quarter, one person complained about Airservices' change of position on the outcome of the Hobart Noise Abatement Plan, as a result of the ANO's assessment. The complainant was advised of their right to take the matter to Commonwealth Ombudsman.

In May 2024, the ANO also received notification of a preliminary inquiry being undertaken by the Commonwealth Ombudsman into complaints about the conduct of multiple responsible Commonwealth agencies regarding Brisbane flight paths. The ANO has provided relevant documentation to the Commonwealth Ombudsman to inform their consideration of the complaints.

Kieran Pehm

Aircraft Noise Ombudsman

24 July 2024

Appendix 1 Statistics for complaints received in quarter

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

AIRSERVICES - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Total for quarter
Complaints received	24	17	17	58
Complaints closed:	23	18	15	56

Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	21	16	13	50
Complainant did not provide further information	2	1	3	6
Outside Charter Scope - CASA	0	0	0	0
Outside Charter Scope – Department of Infrastructure	0	0	0	0
Outside Charter Scope - Minister	0	0	0	0
Outside Charter Scope - Other	1	1	0	2
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	18	14	10	42

Total complaints closed - reviewed:	2	2	2	6
No change possible - explanation provided	2	2	1	5
Agency agreed to reengage with complainant	0	0	1	1
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

DEFENCE - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	0	2	4	6
Complaints closed:	0	1	2	3

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

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 for quarter
Actionable complaints open at 1 April 2024 (first day of quarter):	10	1	1	12
Non-actionable complaints received:	313	0	3	316
Actionable complaints received:	58	6	5	69
Actionable complaints closed:	56	3	6	65
Actionable complaints open at 1 July 2024 (first day of next quarter):	12	4	0	16

*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 2024. 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 (Apr Jun 2024)
Single complaint	Acknowledgement of complaint	Within 2 business days	100%
	Decision on whether complaint is within jurisdiction within 14 days	Within 14 days	100%
	Update to complainant on progress of complaint	Every 28 days	100%
		1 update failed	0%
		2 updates failed	0%
	Time from complaint received to closed	3 updates failed	0%
		25% < 3 months	100%
		50% within 3-6 months	0%
		25% within 6-12 months	0%
	0% > 12 months	0%	
Complaints in a multi-complaint review	Acknowledgement of complaint	Within 3 business days	0%
	Decision on whether complaint is within jurisdiction	Within 21 days	0%
	Update to complainant on progress of complaint	Every 28 days or less	100%
		1 update failed	0%
		2 updates failed	0%
	Time from complaint received to closed	3 updates failed	0%
		50% < 6 months	0%
		50% within 6-12 months	0%
	0% > 12 months	0%	