

OFFICIAL



Quarterly Report

July-September 2024

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1 Overview

The Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) received a total of 1,690 complaints during the quarter. This includes 1,573 non-actionable complaints and 117 actionable complaints. The ANO carried forward 16 complaints on 1 July 2024. During this quarter (July-September 2024), the ANO closed 111 actionable complaints, and therefore carries forward 22 complaints to October 2024.

Of the 117 new actionable complaints, 113 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 75 actionable complaints and most non-actionable complaints.

In this quarter, the ANO received 2 new actionable complaints about the Department of Defence (Defence) and closed 4 complaints. Two 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.

The ANO Unit Manager, Belinda Fenner, will be taking maternity leave from December 2024. A replacement Manager has been recruited and is scheduled to commence on 18 November. Belinda has made an enormous contribution to the ANO's capacity during her time in the office and I thank her for it.

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, 1,690 complaints were raised with the ANO office – 1,573 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.

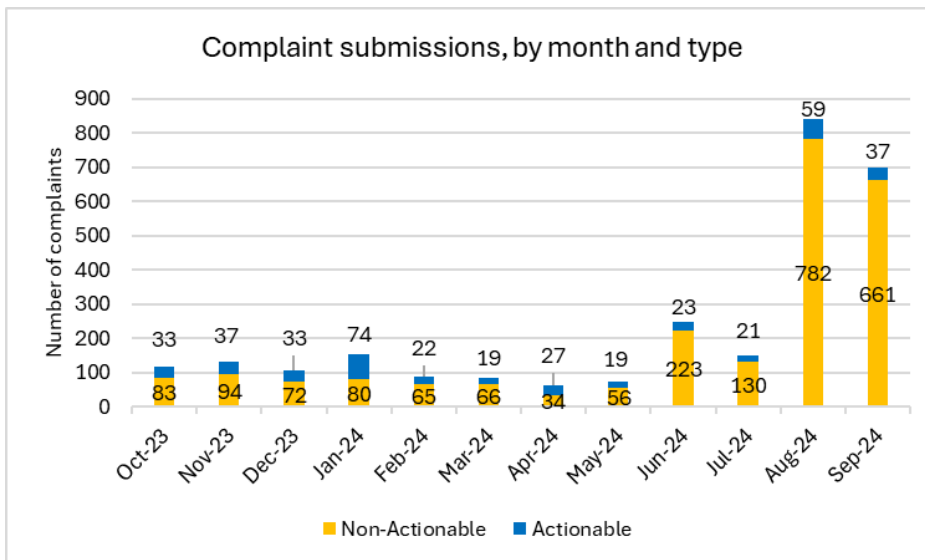


Figure 1 – Complaint submissions by month from October 2023 – September 2024, highlighting actionable and non-actionable complaints.

During this quarter, there has been a significant increase in non-actionable complaints from 316 to 1,573 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, 2 complainants raised a total of 1,388 complaints (88%) about operations associated with Brisbane Airport.

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

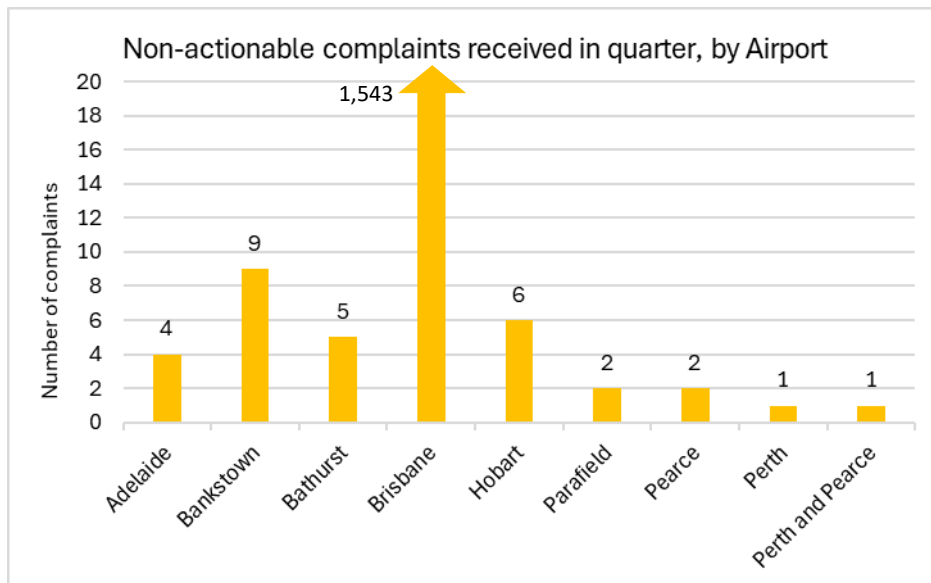


Figure 2 – Non-actionable complaints received by airport of concern, July – September 2024.

Figure 3 below shows the number of complaints made by individual complainants. One complainant submitted 59% of all the non-actionable complaints received during the quarter. This complainant sought action outside of the ANO’s remit.

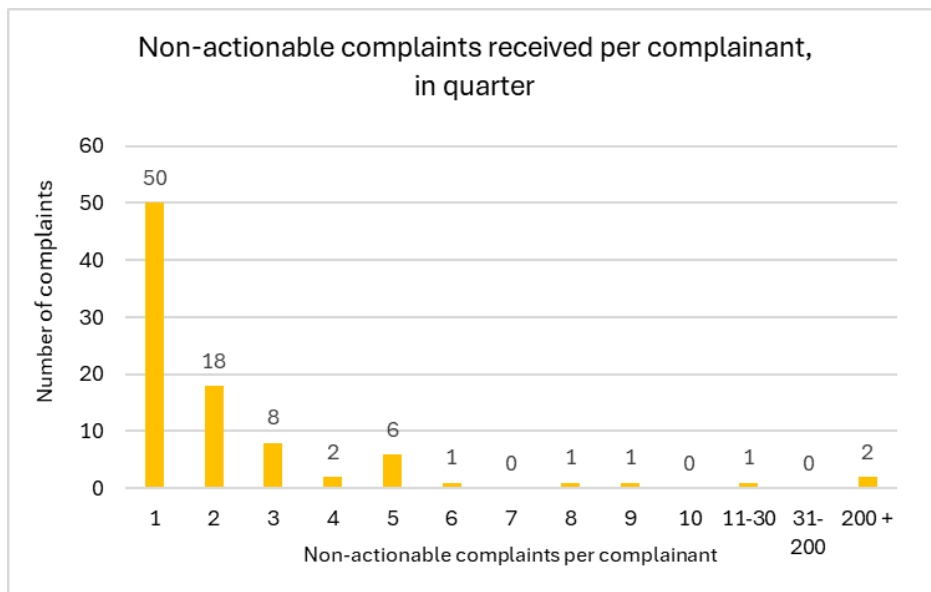


Figure 3 – Non-actionable complaints per complainant, July – September 2024.

2.2 Actionable complaints in quarter

During the quarter, the ANO received 117 actionable complaints - 113 relating to Airservices and 2 relating to Defence. A further 2 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 shows the number of actionable complaints by agency. Complaints in relation to Airservices were higher compared to last quarter.

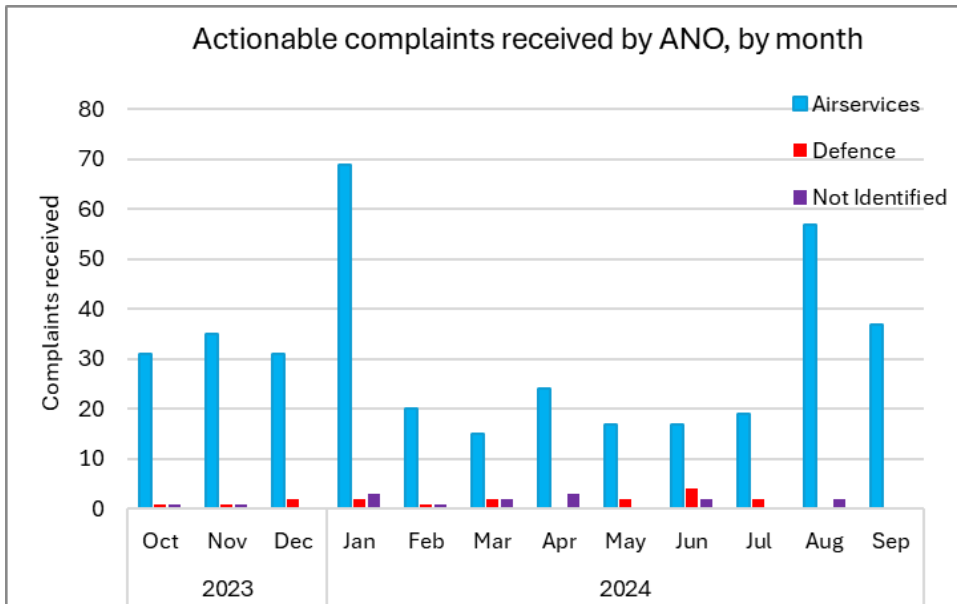


Figure 4 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by month, October 2023 – September 2024.

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.

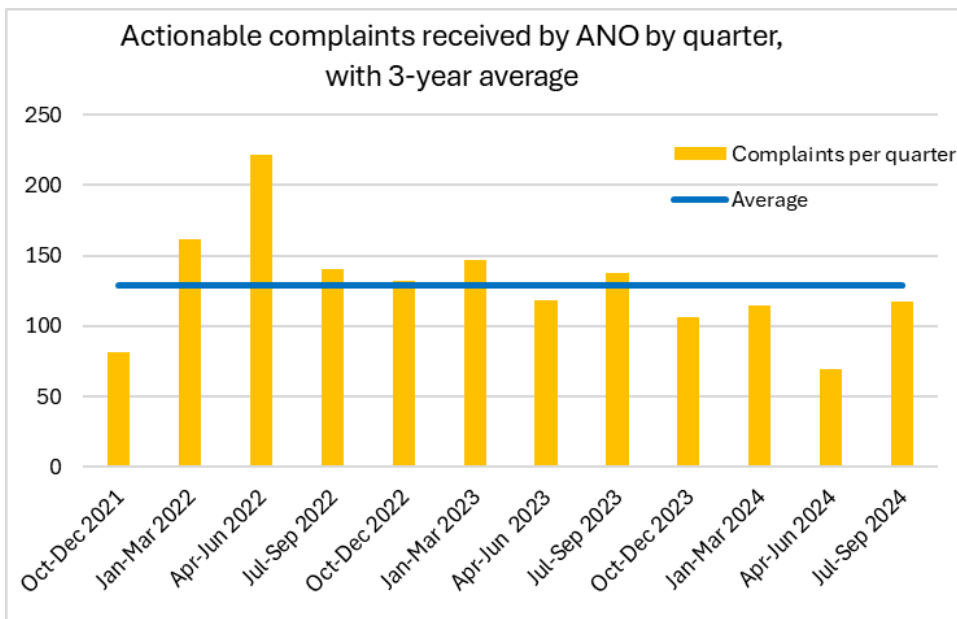


Figure 5 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by quarter, with 3-year average for complaint trends.

Many of the actionable complaints received this quarter continue to be attributed to the opening and operation of the new runway for Brisbane, with 77 complaints (66%). This included one complaint unrelated to Airservices and two raising concerns about both Archerfield and Brisbane airport operations. This quarter has seen the ANO receive a

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

number of complaints related to Ballina/Byron Gateway Airport, associated with a proposed introduction of controlled airspace.

Figure 6 below shows the breakdown of complaints by airport, where it could be identified.

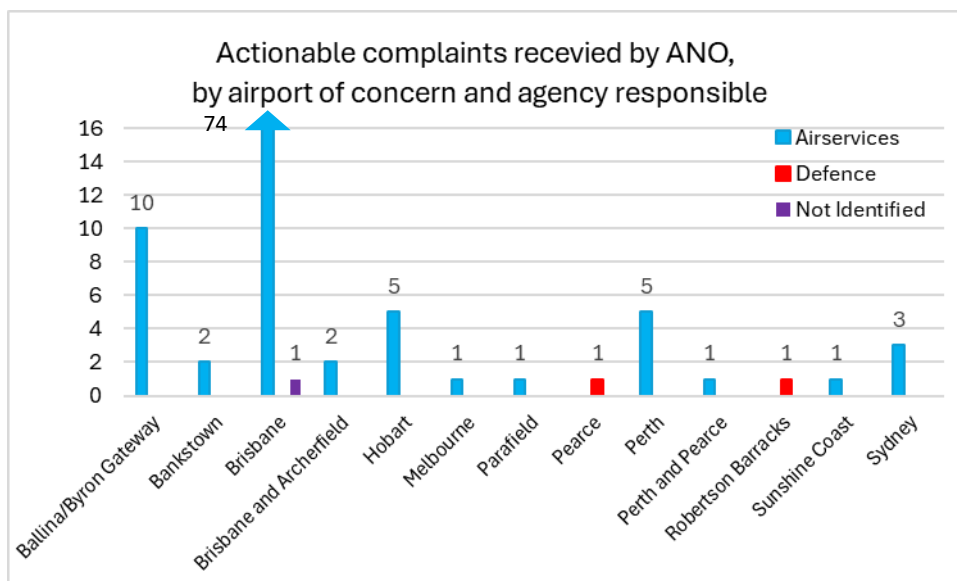


Figure 6 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by airport of concern and agency, July – September 2024.

In addition to the airport specific complaints above, a further 9 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 111 actionable complaints for the quarter, 105 relating to Airservices, 4 relating to Defence and 2 without an agency identified. In addition, all non-actionable complaints were closed, as noted in Section 2.1.

Figure 7 below, shows the outcomes of the complaints relating to Airservices: 81 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 two complaints and made a change in systems or processes, in relation to 9 complaints. A further 4 complaints were closed as the complainant did not provide additional information requested to support the ANO review of their concerns. The remainder were closed as they provided no basis for proceeding further under the Charter or were referred to another government department as they raised issues within the relevant department’s remit.

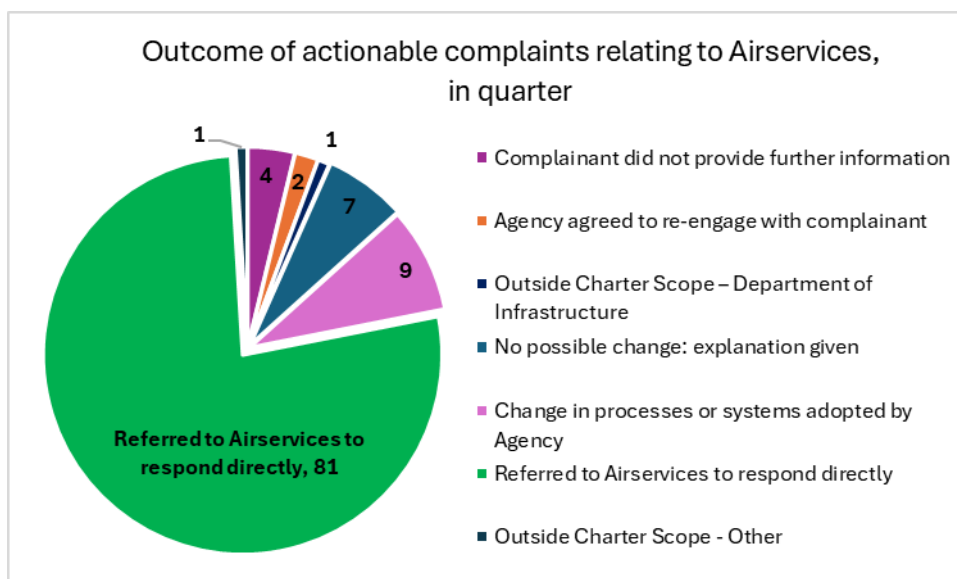


Figure 7 – Outcome of actionable complaints closed in quarter, related to Airservices.

The outcomes for the 4 complaints about Defence closed in this quarter are shown in Figure 8 below. Two complaints were closed as Defence agreed to re-engage with the complainant and made a change in systems or processes, in relation to one complaint. The final complaint was closed as it provided no basis for proceeding further under the Charter.

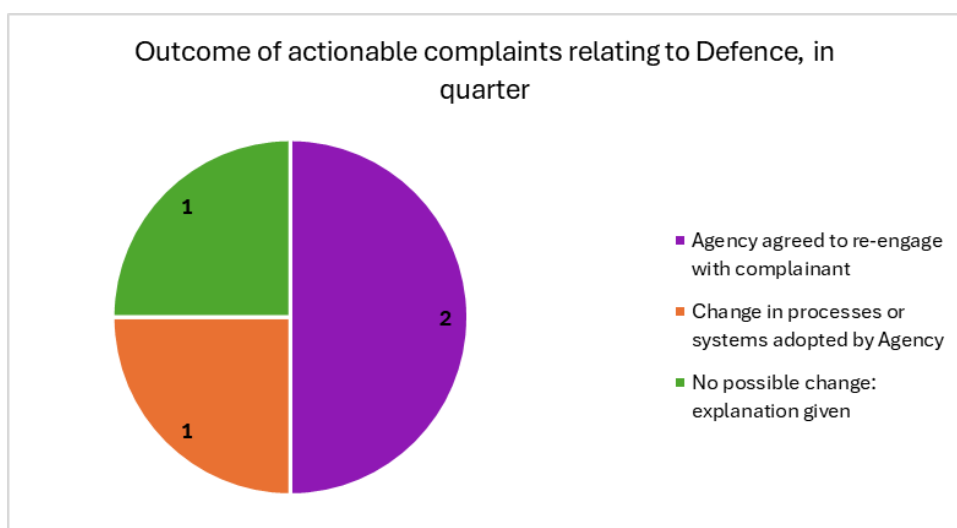


Figure 8 – Outcome of actionable complaints closed in quarter, related to Defence.

As of 1 July 2024, 22 actionable complaints remain open. The oldest complaint was received in June 2023. It is a complex matter involving noise impacts of operations from multiple army and air force bases and is expected to be finalised in the current quarter. The next oldest complaints were received in June 2024 and July 2024 respectively. The remaining 17 complaints were received between late August and September 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.

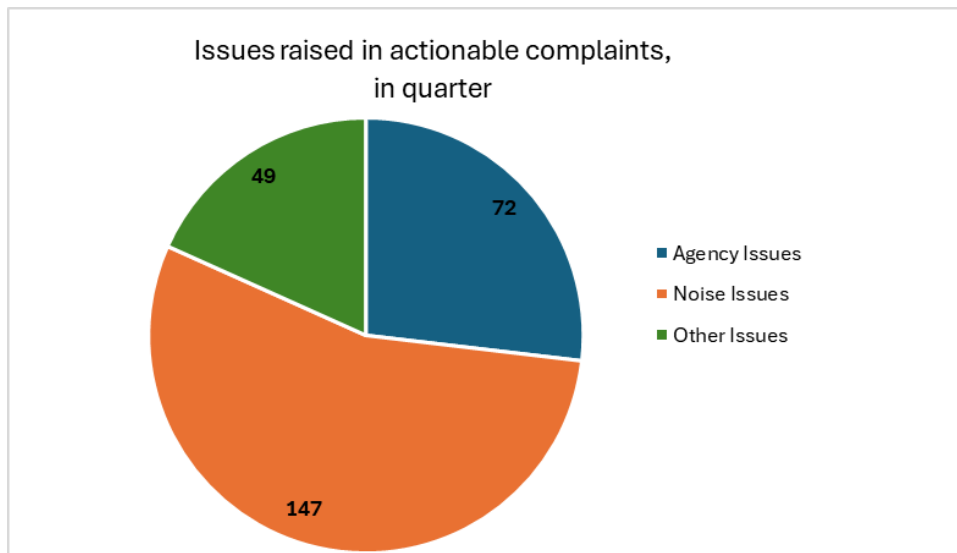


Figure 9 – Issues raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, July – September 2024.

Issues by agency of concern

As shown in Figure 10 below, complaints about community engagement were the most common issue raised this quarter for Airservices, being raised 23 times. Concerns about community engagement were raised 13 times in relation to Brisbane Airport, 9 times related to Ballina Airport, and a few times each for Bankstown and Hobart airports.

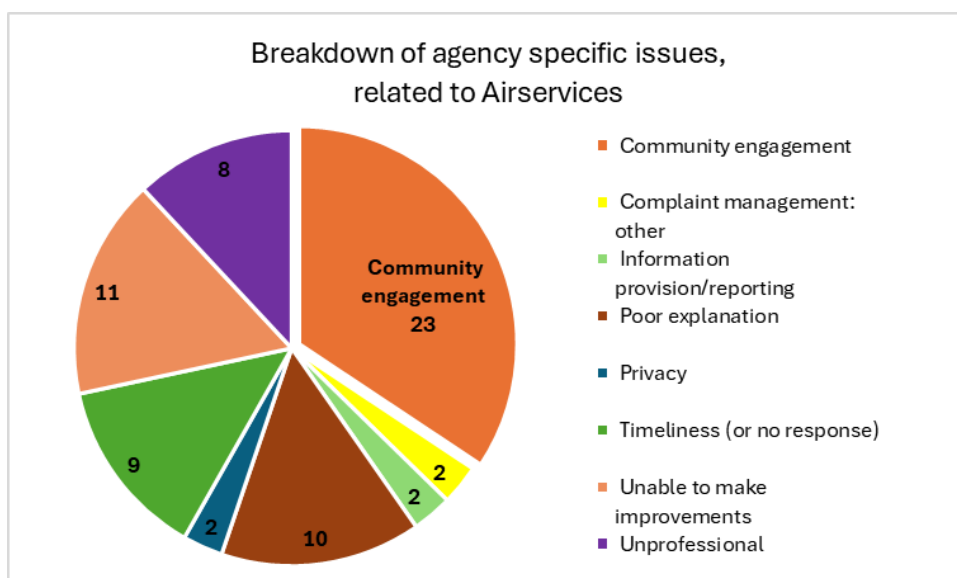


Figure 10 – Agency specific issues raised in actionable complaints related to Airservices, July – September 2024.

In relation to Defence, two Agency-related concerns about unprofessionalism of Defence’s complaint handling were raised this quarter. A further concern was raised in relation to the timeliness (or lack of) of Defence’s response, Defence’s community engagement and the inability to make improvements.

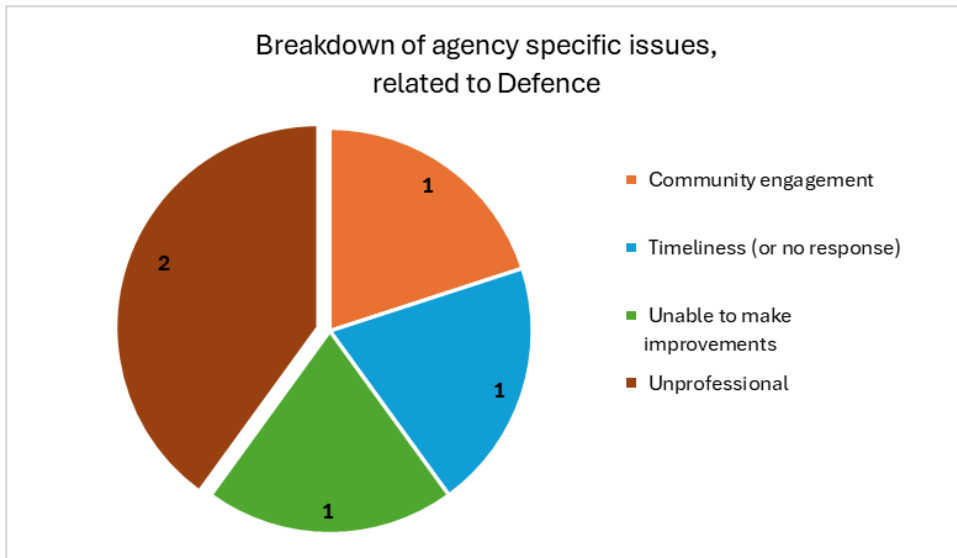


Figure 11 – Agency specific issues raised in actionable complaints related to Defence, July – September 2024.

Figure 12 breaks down noise complaints by the most common issues raised, associated with Airservices. The impacts of aircraft noise on health and sleep continues to be dominant issues in relation to civilian aircraft operations. Concerns about health include impacts upon sleep, mental health, and stress. One issue was raised in relation to Defence and concerns about flight path changes.

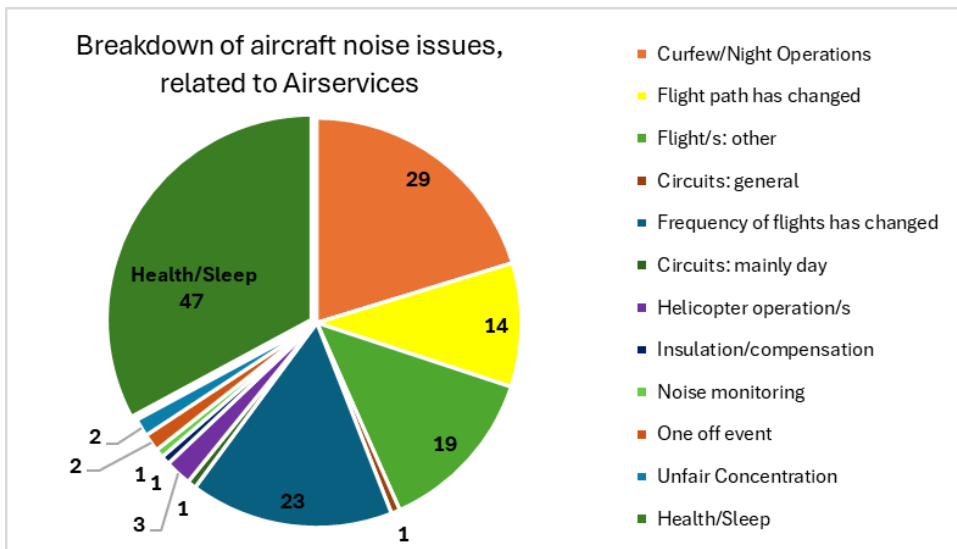


Figure 12 – Aircraft noise related issues raised in actionable complaints related to Airservices, July – September 2024.

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 9 of these complaints requesting a curfew for Brisbane Airport.

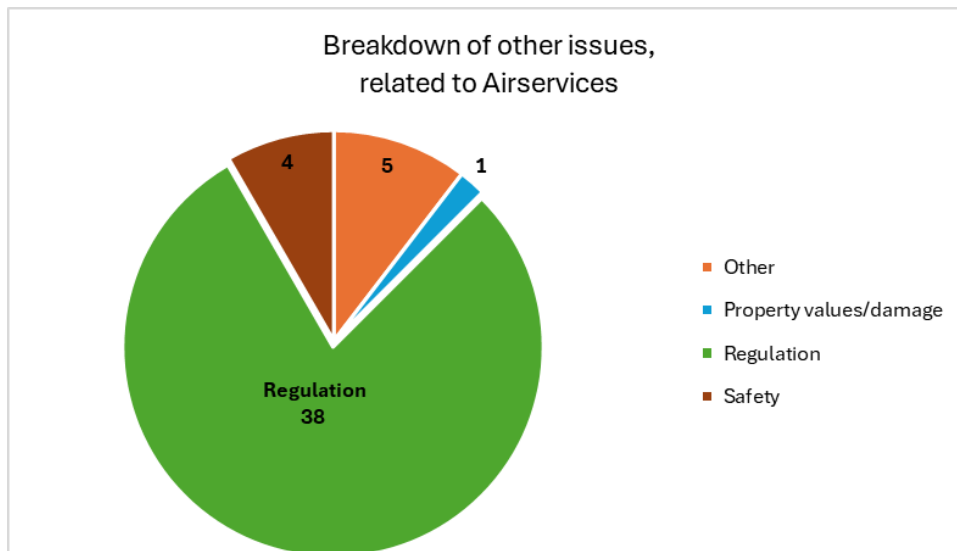


Figure 13 – Issues outside of the ANO’s remit, raised in actionable complaints related to Airservices, July – September 2024.

A single other issue was raised in relation to military operations, specifically concerns about the impact of aircraft noise on flora and fauna, which were outside the remit of the ANO.

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 one drop-in session for the introduction of controlled airspace to Ballina Airport.

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. The ANO office attended the Melbourne and Canberra 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 its regular quarterly meeting as well as 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 Hobart investigation

The ANO's *Investigation of complaints about the proposed Hobart Noise Abatement Procedure trial* report included one recommendation by the ANO, which was accepted by Airservices. The ANO report and Airservices Board response were published on 12 September 2024, available [here](#).

Airservices have provided an update on its progress against the ANO's recommendation, confirming that they are progressing with action to address the recommendation and expect to complete the requirements of this recommendation by the end of this year. A summary of the outstanding ANO recommendation is provided in Appendix 2.

2.8 Senate Committee 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 ANO made a submission to the inquiry in April, with the Committee publishing submissions it received, on the Committee webpage [here](#).

The Committee has held hearings in a number of locations across Australia, with the ANO appearing as a witness at the Canberra hearing on 20 September 2024. The recording of the 20 September 2024 hearing is available [here](#). The Committee is scheduled to report by 31 October 2024.

3 Key performance indicators

The ANO office reviewed and amended the key performance indicators (KPIs) for its complaint handling processes, with the new KPI targets coming into effect from July 2024. 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 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 7 days for single complaints, or 14 days for multi-complaints, to determine whether the complaint is within the scope of the ANO Charter. These targets reflect a reduction of 7 days, from the 2021-2024 KPI targets, both for single and multi-complaints.

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, one complaint had an update provided late in the current quarter.

Under the ANO Charter, where the ANO reviews and provides its final report of a complaint to the responsible Agency, the Agency must be allowed an opportunity to respond to any recommendations made in the report. During this time, the ANO does not provide further progress reports to complainants. The ANO provided its final report for consideration of Airservices' Board in July 2024 and the Board provided its response to the ANO in September 2024. As such, the 8 complaints associated with the Hobart multi-complaint review were in this category and remained on hold during the quarter.

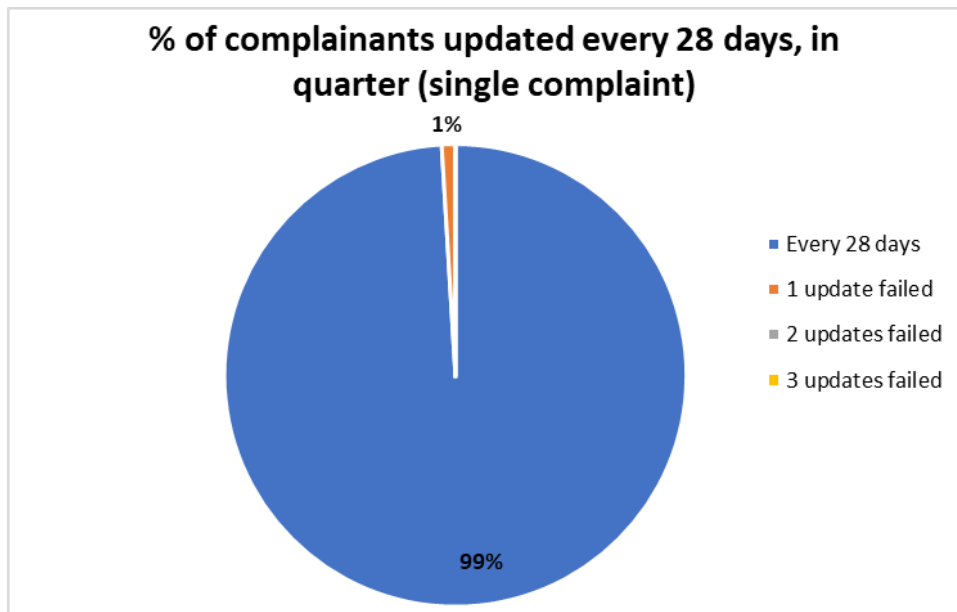


Figure 14 – % of complainants updated every 28 days, in quarter (single complaint).

3.4 Time taken for final assessment provision to Agency

This is a new KPI, introduced on 1 July 2024, to measure the time from commencement of a multi-complaint review to the provision of a critical ANO assessment to Airservices and Defence. This KPI is significant as there can be an extended delay between the time that the ANO assessment is provided to an agency and the review either being closed or progressing to a public report.

3.5 Time taken to finalise complaints

Of the 112 actionable complaints closed in this quarter, 98 were single complaints and 8 were associated with the Hobart multi-complaint review.

Targets for the finalisation of single complaints was one of the KPIs amended, with a new target for 50% of complaints to be closed within a month of receipt. As shown in Figure 15 below, 98 complaints (94%) achieved this target. A further 5 single complaints were closed within 3 months from receipt and one within 6 months.

Eight complaints associated with the Hobart 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.

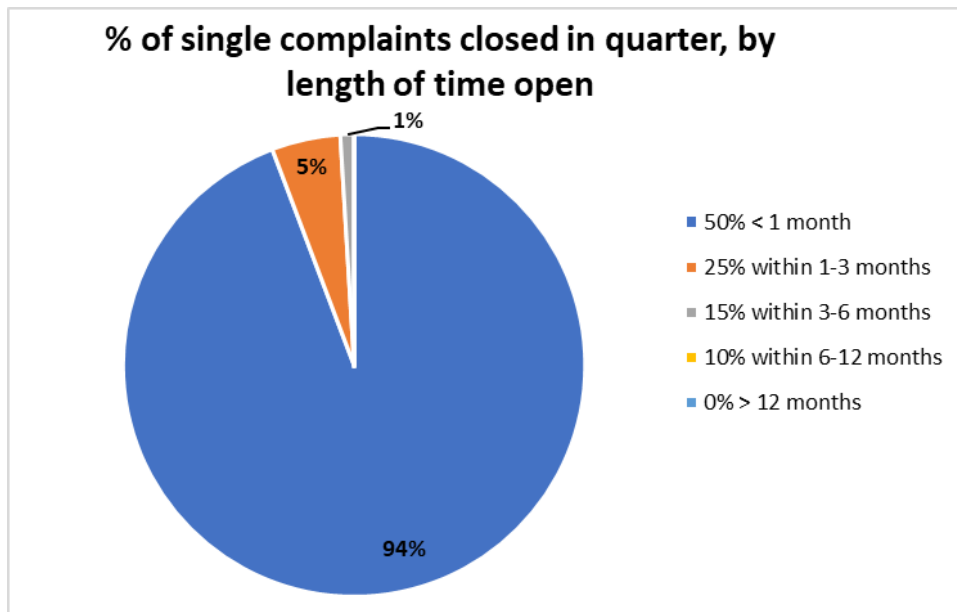


Figure 15 – % of single complaints closed in quarter, by length of time open.

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

3.6 Complaints about the ANO

In September 2024, the ANO also received notification of an investigation 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 support their investigation of the complaints.

Kieran Pehm
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman

23 October 2024

Appendix 1 Statistics for complaints received in quarter

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

| AIRSERVICES - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS | Jul-24 | Aug-24 | Sep-24 | Total for quarter |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Complaints received | 19 | 57 | 37 | 113 |
| Complaints closed: | 14 | 45 | 46 | 105 |

| | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|-----------|
| Total complaints closed - not reviewed: | 11 | 38 | 38 | 87 |
| Complainant did not provide further information | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Outside Charter Scope - CASA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Outside Charter Scope – Department of Infrastructure | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Outside Charter Scope - Minister | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Outside Charter Scope - Other | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Referred to Airservices to respond directly | 9 | 35 | 37 | 81 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| Total complaints closed - reviewed: | 3 | 7 | 8 | 18 |
| No change possible - explanation provided | 3 | 4 | 0 | 7 |
| Agency agreed to reengage with complainant | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Change in processes or systems adopted by Agency | 0 | 1 | 8 | 9 |
| Not resolved - Action taken by Agency to encourage change by others | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| DEFENCE - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS | Jul-24 | Aug-24 | Sep-24 | Total for quarter |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Complaints received: | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Complaints closed: | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----------|
| Total complaints closed - not reviewed: | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 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 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----------|
| Total complaints closed - reviewed: | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| No change possible - explanation provided | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Agency agreed to reengage with complainant | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Change in processes or systems adopted by Agency | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 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 July 2024 (first day of quarter): | 12 | 4 | 0 | 16 |
| Non-actionable complaints received: | 1,570 | 2 | 1 | 1,573 |
| Actionable complaints received: | 113 | 2 | 2 | 117 |
| Actionable complaints closed: | 105 | 4 | 2 | 111 |
| Actionable complaints open at 1 October 2024 (first day of next quarter): | 20 | 2 | 0 | 22 |

*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>In progress: Airservices advised that with the approval of the Melbourne Airport's Major Development Plan (MDP), they have recommenced work in relation to the East Melbourne Group (EMG) suggestions and are currently reviewing how the final approved MDP may impact these suggestions.</p> |

Airservices – Investigation of complaints about the proposed Hobart Noise Abatement Procedure trial (July 2024)

| Ongoing recommendations | ANO assessment of agency response |
|---|---|
| <p>Recommendation 1 – Airservices should prioritise the implementation of recommendations identified through its review of the end-to-end decision-making processes related to flight path changes where related to noise improvement opportunities identified through post-implementation reviews or suggestions made to Airservices by community members. The procedures developed as a result of the review should ensure that the responsibilities of decision makers and relevant considerations are clear to all relevant sections of Airservices. The procedures should also require publication of the outcome and reasons for the final decision. Airservices should also implement appropriate training in the updated processes to ensure understanding and compliance across all sections.</p> | <p>In progress: Airservices advised that they are working on developing procedures to support end-to-end decision-making processes related to flight path changes, where related to noise improvement opportunities identified through post-implementation reviews or suggestions made to Airservices by community members. A draft of these procedures is expected to be shared with the ANO office soon, with the procedures implemented by the end of 2024.</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 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 (Jul-Sep 2024) |
|--|--|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Single complaint | Acknowledgement of complaint | Within 2 business days | 100% |
| | Decision on whether complaint is within jurisdiction | Within 7 days | 100% |
| | Update to complainant on progress of complaint | Every 28 days | 99% |
| | | 1 update failed | 1% |
| | | 2 updates failed | 0% |
| | Time from complaint received to closed | 3 updates failed | 0% |
| | | 50% < 1 month | 94% |
| | | 25% within 1-3 months | 5% |
| | | 15% within 3-6 months | 1% |
| | | 10% 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 14 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 final assessment provision to Agency | 3 updates failed | 0% |
| | | 25% < 3 months | 0% |
| | | 50% within 3-6 months | 0% |
| | | 25% within 6-12 months | 0% |
| | Time from complaint received to closed | 0% > 12 months | 0% |
| | | 50% < 6 months | 100% |
| | | 50% within 6-12 months | 0% |
| | | 0% > 12 months | 0% |