

OFFICIAL



## Quarterly Report

October-December 2024

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# 1 Overview

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The Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) received a total of 2,551 complaints during the quarter. This includes 2,480 non-actionable complaints and 71 actionable complaints. Of the 2,480 non-actionable complaints 2,371 were raised by two complainants. The ANO carried forward 22 complaints on 1 October 2024. During this quarter (October-December 2024), the ANO closed 79 actionable complaints, and therefore carried forward 14 complaints to January 2024.

Of the 71 new actionable complaints, 67 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 24 actionable complaints and most non-actionable complaints.

In this quarter, the ANO received 1 new actionable complaint about the Department of Defence (Defence) and closed 1 complaint. 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, went on parental leave in December 2024. A replacement Manager, Alex Dallwitz, commenced in November 2024 and will be acting in the role until January 2026.

ANO expenditure to 31 December 2024 was \$291,829, slightly lower than the ANO's average six-monthly expenditure of \$299,748 over the past five years and below the YTD budget forecast of \$381,746.

## 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 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 the complaint is directed at the responsible Minister or other agencies. This category 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, 2,551 complaints were raised with the ANO office – 2,480 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.

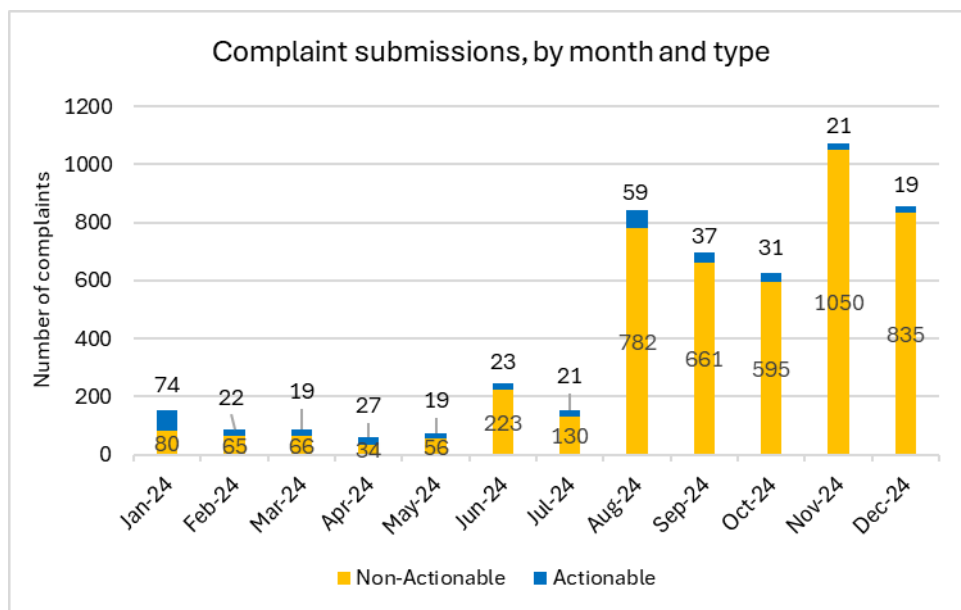


Figure 1 – Complaint submissions by month from January 2024 – December 2024, highlighting actionable and non-actionable complaints.

During this quarter, there has been a significant increase in non-actionable complaints from 1,573 to 2,480 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 2,371 complaints (96%) about operations associated with Brisbane Airport. 1 complainant raised all complaints related to Parafield Airport.

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

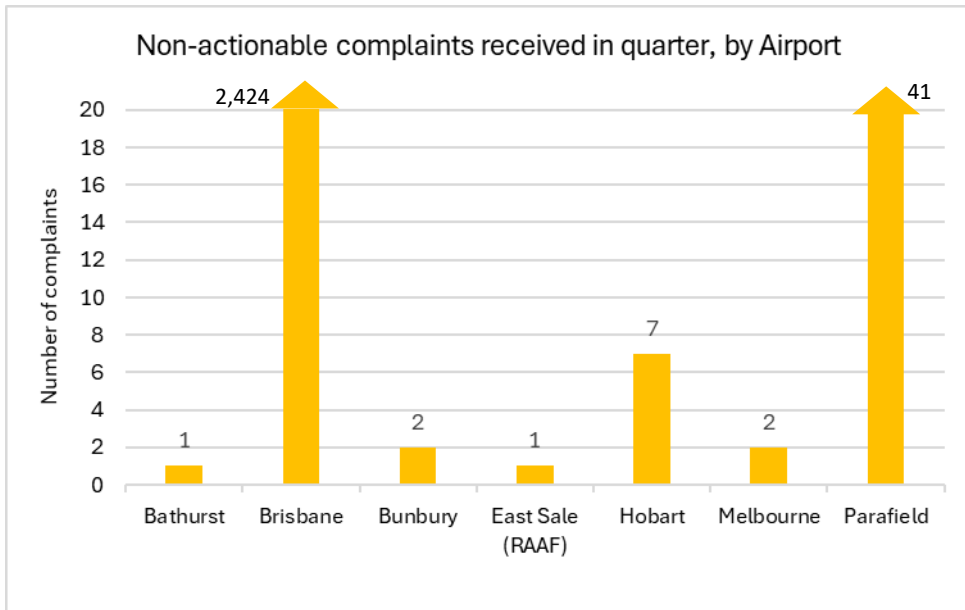


Figure 2 – Non-actionable complaints received by airport of concern, October – December 2024.

Figure 3 below shows the number of complaints made by individual complainants. One complainant submitted 62% of all the non-actionable complaints received during the quarter. This complainant sought action outside of the ANO’s remit.

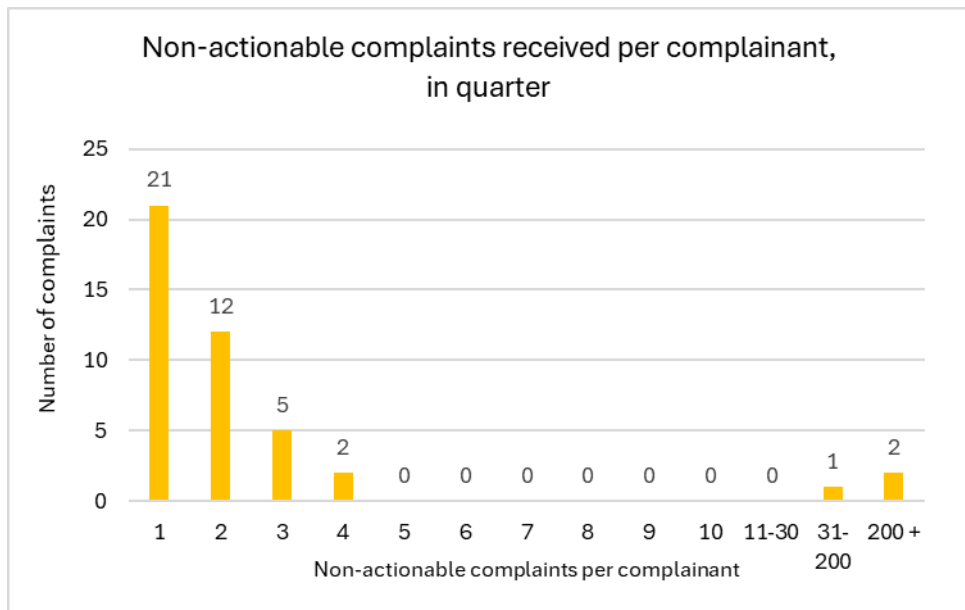


Figure 3 – Non-actionable complaints per complainant, October – December 2024.

## 2.2 Actionable complaints in quarter

During the quarter, the ANO received 71 actionable complaints - 67 relating to Airservices and 1 relating to Defence. A further 3 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<sup>1</sup>.

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

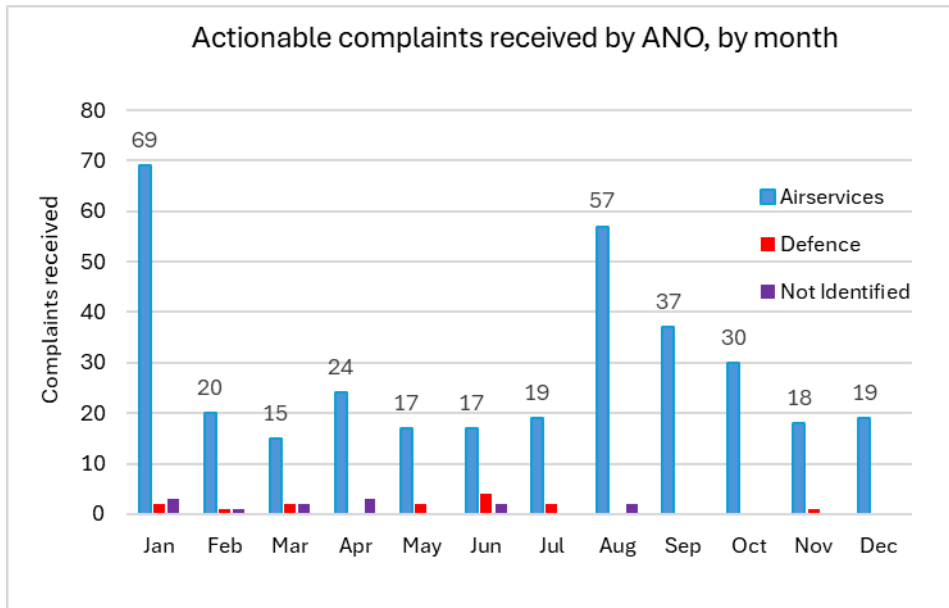


Figure 4 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by month, January 2024 – December 2024.

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.

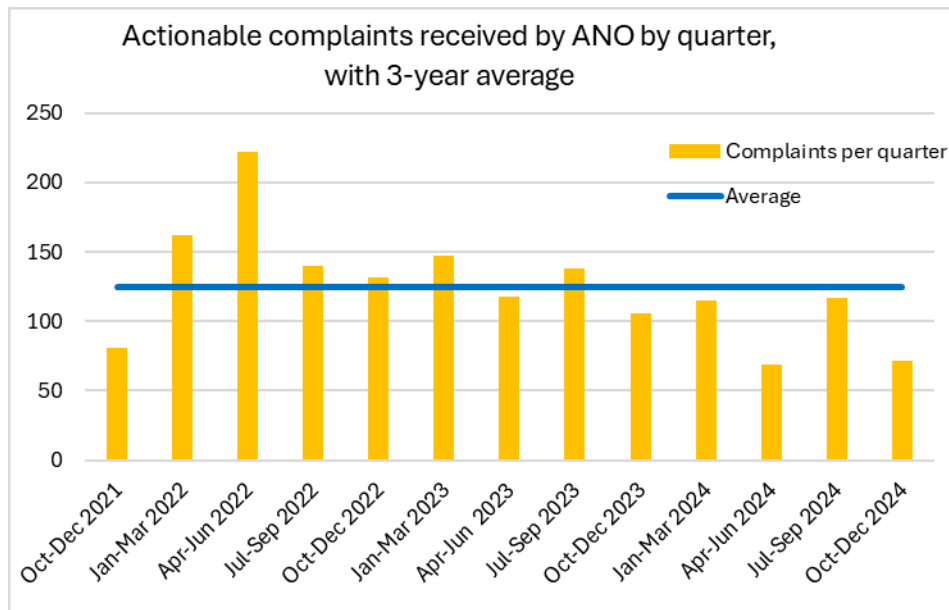


Figure 5 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by quarter, with 3-year average for complaint trends.

Many of the actionable complaints received this quarter continue to be attributed to the opening and operation of the new runway for Brisbane, with 24 complaints (34%). However, this percentage has about halved in comparison to the last quarter.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

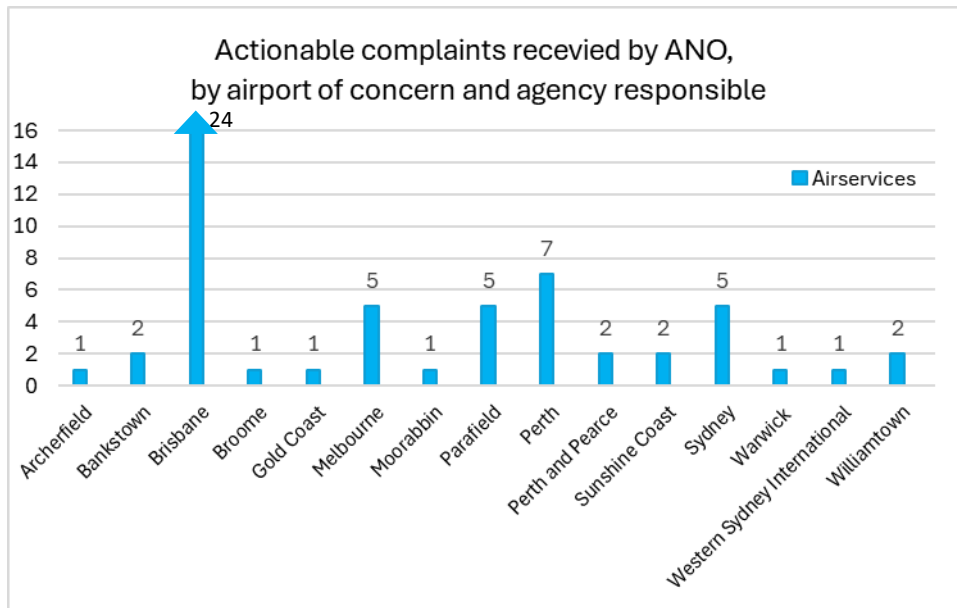


Figure 6 – Actionable complaints received by ANO by airport of concern and agency, October – December 2024.

In addition to the airport specific complaints above, a further 11 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 79 actionable complaints for the quarter, 75 relating to Airservices, 1 relating to Defence and 3 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: 49 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 1 complaint. A further 3 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.

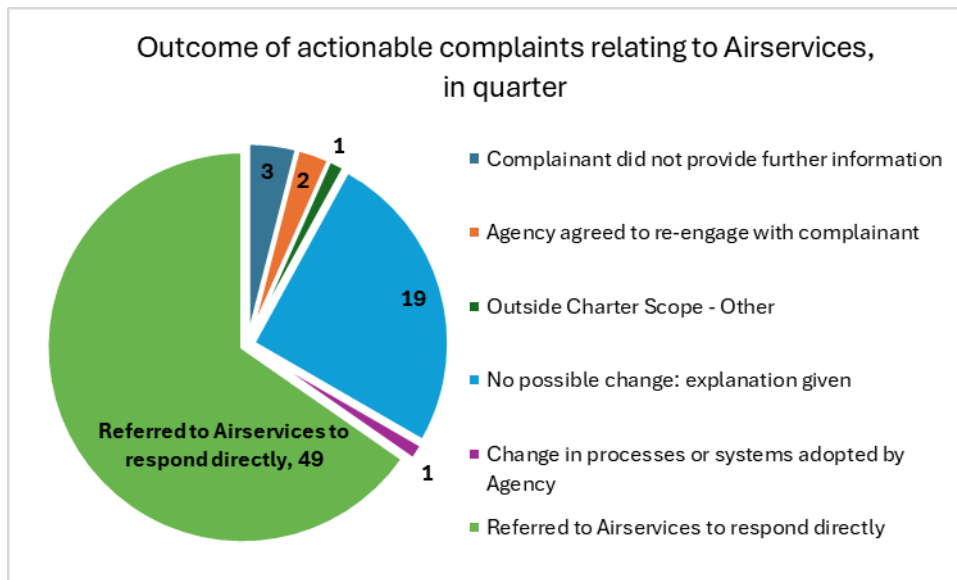


Figure 7 – Outcome of actionable complaints closed in quarter, related to Airservices.

One Defence complaint was closed as Defence agreed to re-engage with the complainant.

As of 1 January 2025, 14 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 complaint was received in October 2024. The remaining 12 complaints were received between November and December 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 several issues.

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, 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.



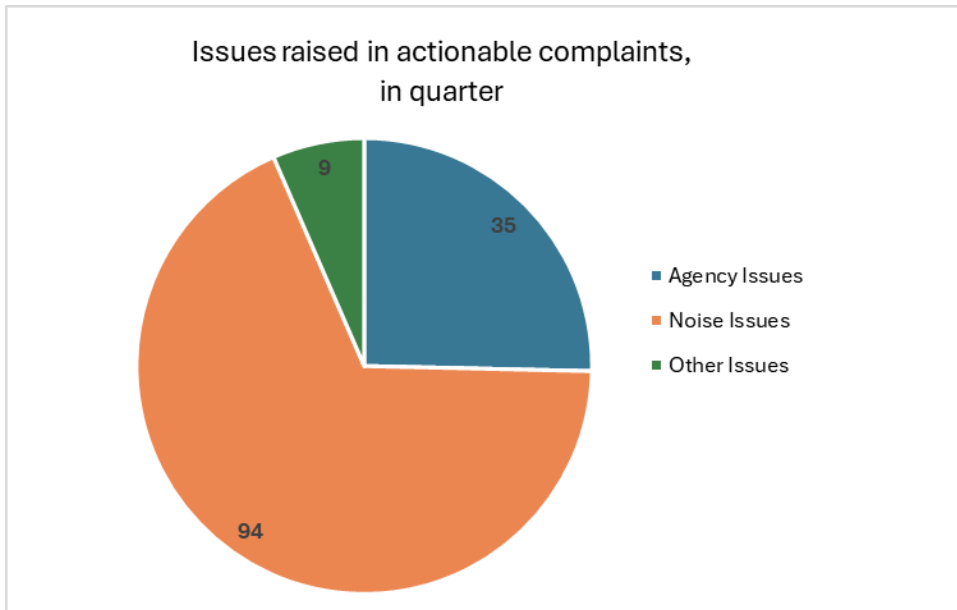


Figure 8 – Issues raised in actionable complaints to the ANO, October – December 2024.

### Issues by agency of concern

As shown in Figure 9 below, complaints about poor explanations were the most common issue raised this quarter for Airservices, being raised 11 times.

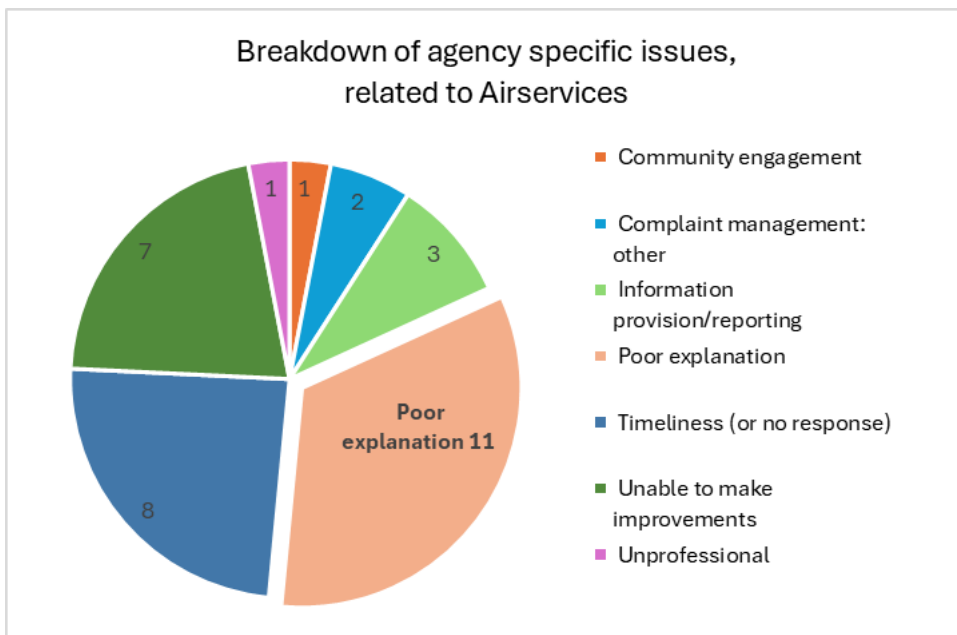


Figure 9 – Agency specific issues raised in actionable complaints related to Airservices, October – December 2024.

In relation to Defence, two Agency-related concerns about a poor explanation and community engagement were raised this quarter.

Figure 10 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 changed flight paths also featured prominently.

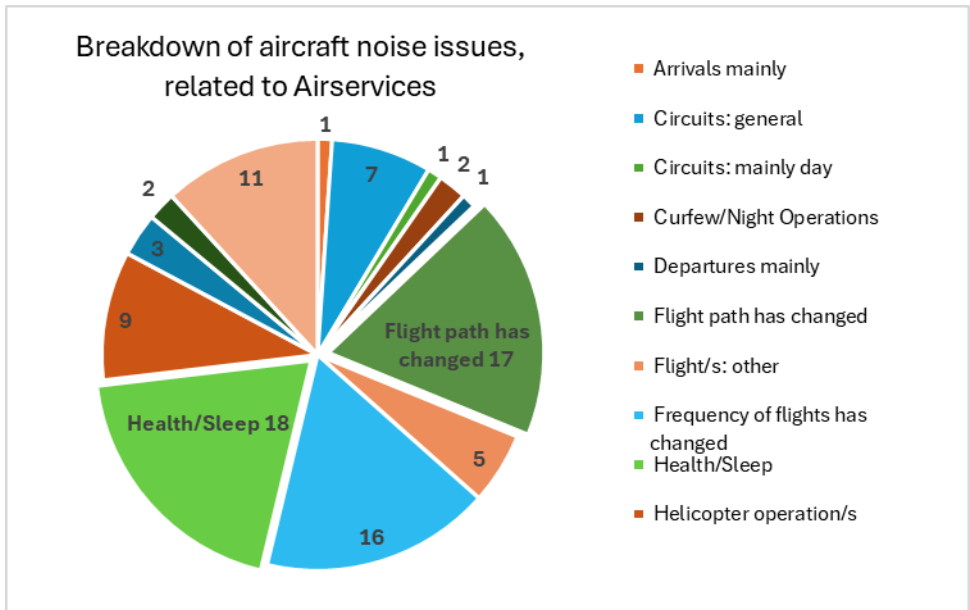


Figure 10 – Aircraft noise related issues raised in actionable complaints related to Airservices, October – December 2024.

Figure 11 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.

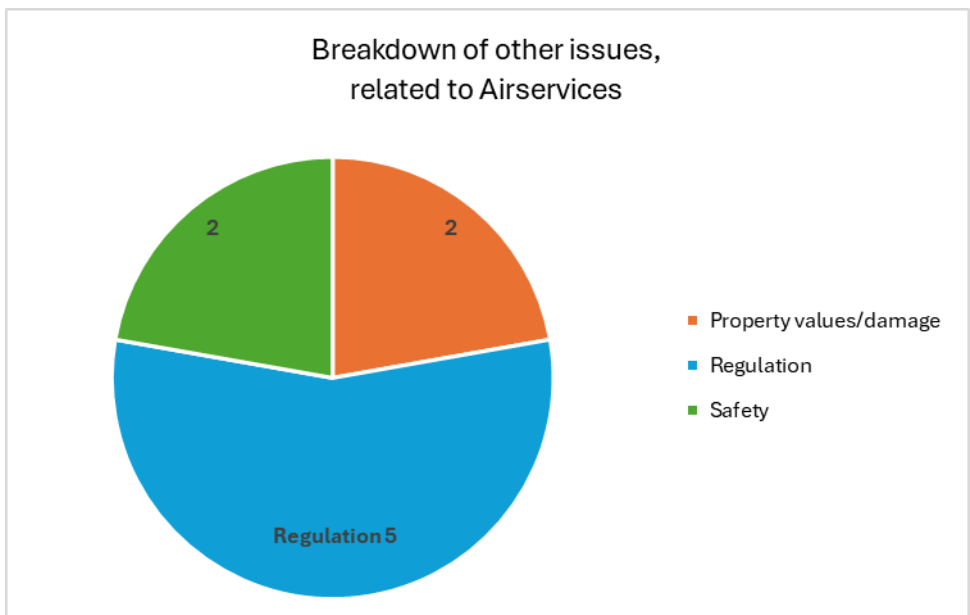


Figure 11 – Issues outside of the ANO’s remit, raised in actionable complaints related to Airservices, October – December 2024.

## 2.4 Community engagement and noise information provision activities

Following complaints about the conduct of previous community engagement sessions in Hobart, the Ombudsman attended and observed Airservices’ community engagement sessions from 12 – 14 December 2024. During that time the complainants and witnesses were also interviewed. The community members spoken during the sessions reported an improved engagement process and the complaints about previous sessions have been resolved.

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 Alice Springs, Brisbane and Adelaide CACGs this quarter.

The ANO office also attended community engagement sessions regarding the introduction of controlled airspace at Ballina/Byron Bay.

## **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 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 Committee received submissions and held hearings across Australia.

The Committee handed down their report on 27 November 2024, making 21 recommendations on a variety of aircraft noise issues with implications for the ANO, Airservices, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, airports and the community.

## 3 Key performance indicators

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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 1 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.

One single complaint failed this KPI during the quarter.

### 3.3 Progress reports to complainants

The ANO has a KPI to report progress to complainants every 28 days, which was met for all complaints in this quarter.

### 3.4 Time taken for final assessment provision to Agency

This new KPI measures 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.

There were not any multi-complaint reviews this quarter.

### 3.5 Time taken to finalise complaints

All 79 actionable complaints closed in this quarter were single complaints.

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 12 below, 56 complaints (71%) achieved this target. A further 21 single complaints were closed within 3 months from receipt and 2 within 6 months.

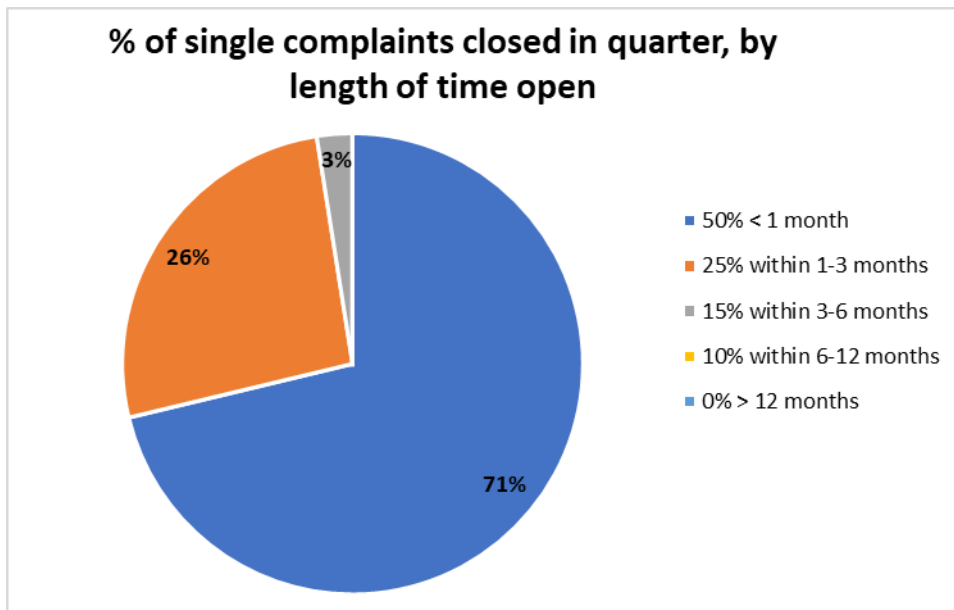


Figure 12 – % of single complaints closed in quarter, by length of time open.

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

### 3.6 Complaints about the ANO

In November 2024, the ANO received a preliminary inquiry from the Commonwealth Ombudsman about the ANO's handling of complaints regarding Airservices and Hobart's flight paths. The ANO has provided relevant documentation to the Commonwealth Ombudsman to inform its inquiry.

Kieran Pehm

Aircraft Noise Ombudsman

14 January 2025

## Appendix 1 Statistics for complaints received in quarter

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

<b>AIRSERVICES - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS</b>	<b>Oct-24</b>	<b>Nov-24</b>	<b>Dec-24</b>	<b>Total for quarter</b>
Complaints received	30	18	19	<b>67</b>
Complaints closed:	35	22	18	<b>75</b>

Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	26	16	11	<b>53</b>
Complainant did not provide further information	2	1	0	<b>3</b>
Outside Charter Scope - CASA	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Outside Charter Scope – Department of Infrastructure	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Outside Charter Scope - Minister	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Outside Charter Scope - Other	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	23	15	11	<b>49</b>

Total complaints closed - reviewed:	9	6	7	<b>22</b>
No change possible - explanation provided	7	5	7	<b>19</b>
Agency agreed to reengage with complainant	1	1	0	<b>2</b>
Change in processes or systems adopted by Agency	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
Not resolved - Action taken by Agency to encourage change by others	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

<b>DEFENCE - ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS</b>	<b>Oct-24</b>	<b>Nov-24</b>	<b>Dec-24</b>	<b>Total for quarter</b>
Complaints received:	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
Complaints closed:	1	0	0	<b>1</b>

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

Total complaints closed - reviewed:	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
No change possible - explanation provided	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Agency agreed to reengage with complainant	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
Change in processes or systems adopted by Agency	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Not resolved - Action taken by Agency to encourage change by others	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

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<b>SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS HANDLED</b>	<b>Airservices</b>	<b>Defence</b>	<b>No agency assigned*</b>	<b>Total for quarter</b>
Actionable complaints open at 1 October 2024 (first day of quarter):	20	2	0	<b>22</b>
Non-actionable complaints received:	2,480	1	0	<b>2,481</b>
Actionable complaints received:	67	1	3	<b>71</b>
Actionable complaints closed:	75	1	3	<b>79</b>
Actionable complaints open at 1 January 2025 (first day of next quarter):	12	2	0	<b>14</b>

\*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><b>Recommendation 1</b> – 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><b>In progress:</b> 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><b>Recommendation 1</b> – 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><b>In progress:</b> 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 was shared with the ANO office in November 2024, with the procedures to be implemented in 2025.</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 October-December 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 (Oct-Dec 2024)
Single complaint	Acknowledgement of complaint	Within 2 business days	100%
	Decision on whether complaint is within jurisdiction	Within 7 days	99%
	Update to complainant on progress of complaint	Every 28 days	100%
		1 update failed	0%
		2 updates failed	0%
		3 updates failed	0%
	Time from complaint received to closed	50% < 1 month	71%
		25% within 1-3 months	26%
		15% within 3-6 months	3%
		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	10%
		1 update failed	0%
		2 updates failed	0%
		3 updates failed	0%
	Time from complaint received to final assessment provision to Agency	25% < 3 months	0%
		50% within 3-6 months	0%
		25% within 6-12 months	0%
		0% > 12 months	0%
	Time from complaint received to closed	50% < 6 months	0%
		50% within 6-12 months	0%
		0% > 12 months	0%