



***Complaints and Compliments***  
***National Quarterly Report***  
***January to March 2006***

- This report is provided to senior managers within Customs and is published on the Customs website.
- For further details on any of the information contained in this report please contact National Coordinator (46 6499) or Director Corporate Planning (46 5706).

## Introduction

This report provides statistical data for complaints and compliments received during the period January to March 2006. All statistical data included in this report was extracted on 10 April 2006. Where appropriate, comparative tables and graphs are provided for previous reporting periods.

## Executive summary

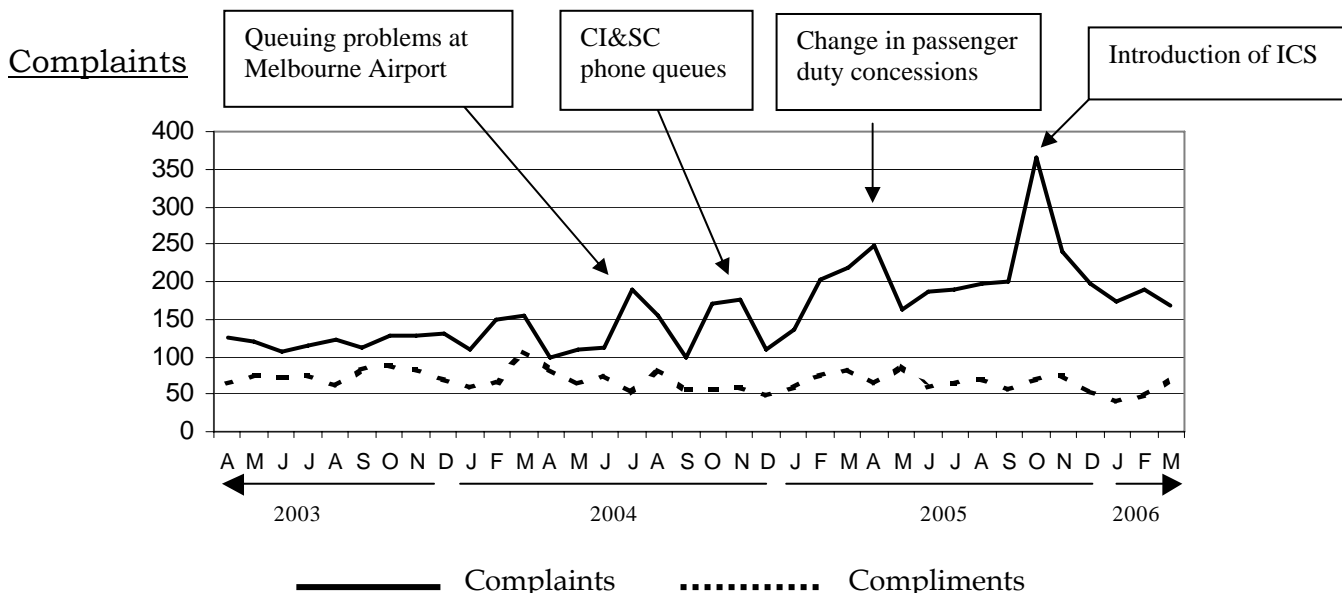


Figure 1. National trends for complaints and compliments from April 2003 to March 2006 by month

A total number of **530** complaints, excluding referrals, were reported compared with **743** in the previous quarter. The top four complaint issues were:

- **Didn't expect duty or tax (100):** These complaints occurred primarily in Passengers (**85**) and mainly related to the new passenger concessions (see Annex B).
- **Officer was rude (48):** This occurred **42** times in Passengers, **19** of which were at Sydney Airport and **11** at Melbourne Airport (see Annex E).
- **Didn't expect fees (47):** The majority of these complaints (**28**) related to fees accruing due to the time that containers were held on wharves as a result of ICS related issues (see Annex A). Another **15** complaints about containers accruing fees were not related to ICS.
- **Process took too long (42):** Of these complaints, only **6** were related to ICS (see Annex A), while **24** related to Container Examination Facilities (see Annex C) and **8** related to Postal Operations.

In addition to the above, Customs referred **59** complaints to other agencies.

## Compliments

A total number of **162** compliments were reported about Customs compared with **197** in the previous quarter. The top three compliments were:

- “Appreciated assistance” (**52**),
- “Officer/s was helpful” (**50**), and
- “Officer/s was professional” (**22**).

## **Significant variations in the March Quarter**

### General

The following issues are highlighted as areas where a significant variation, increase or decrease, has occurred compared to the previous quarter.

### **Type of Complaint**

#### ***‘Didn’t Expect Fees’***

The complaint ‘Didn’t expect fees’ decreased nationally from **99** to **47**. This is mainly due to a reduction in ICS complaints from **87** to **28** (see Annex A).

#### ***‘Process took too long’***

The complaint ‘Process took too long’ decreased nationally from **98** to **42**. This is mainly due to a reduction in ICS complaints from **65** to **6** (see Annex A). **22** of these complaints related to Container Examination Facilities (see Annex C).

#### ***‘System too slow’***

The complaint ‘System too slow’ decreased nationally from **37** to **1**. This is mainly due to a reduction in ICS complaints from **36** to **1** (see Annex A).

#### ***‘Didn’t expect duty/tax’***

The complaint ‘Didn’t expect duty/tax’ increased nationally from **74** to **100**. These complaints mainly relate to the passenger concessions (see Annex B).

#### ***‘On hold too long’***

The complaint ‘On hold too long’ decreased nationally from **37** to **11**. This reduction related to the Help Desks regarding ICS complaints (**11**) (see Annex A).

#### ***‘Phone / email not answered’***

The complaint ‘Phone/email not answered’ decreased nationally from **37** to **19**. Complaints mainly related to:

- ICS (from **15** to **1**) (see Annex A),
- lack of response to enquiries about the status of compensation claims by Financial Services Division (FSD) (**11**), and
- CI&SC (**6**) (see Annex D).

# 1. National Trends

## 1.1 National Trends by Region

### Complaints

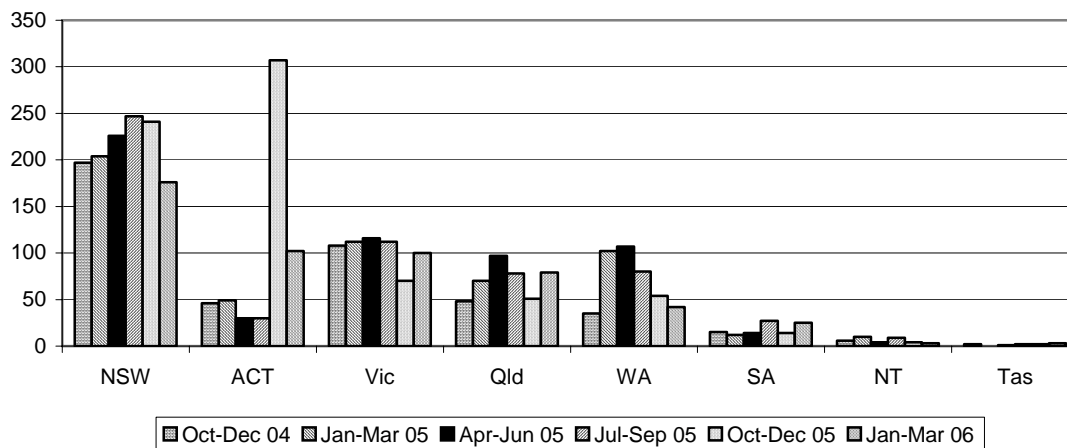


Figure 2. Total number of complaints by region comparing each quarter from October-December 2004 to January-March 2006

Comparing against the previous quarterly figures (excluding referrals), an increase in complaints occurred in Victoria (+30), Queensland (+28), South Australia (+11), and Tasmania (+1). A reduction in complaints occurred in the Australian Capital Territory (-205), New South Wales (-65), Western Australia (-12) and the Northern Territory (-1).

### Compliments

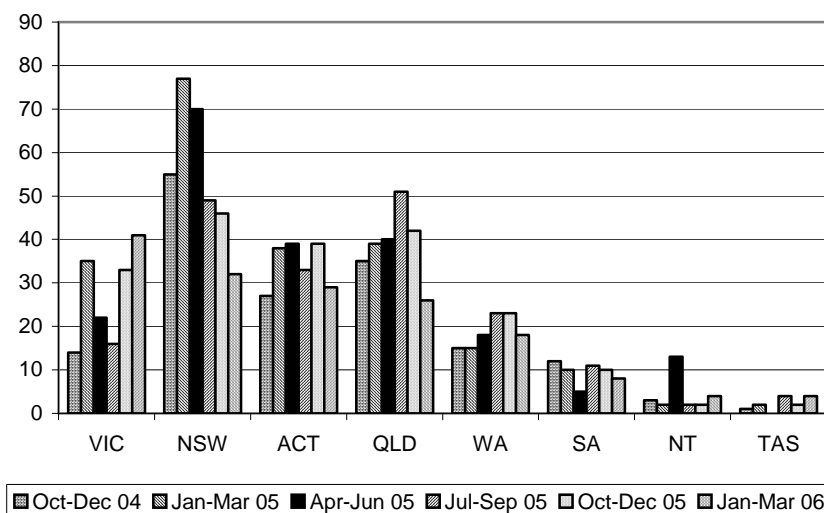


Figure 3. Total number of compliments by region comparing each quarter from October-December 2004 to January-March 2006

A comparison of national trends for compliments between this quarter and the previous quarter (excluding referrals) revealed increases in Victoria (+8) (largely relating to the Commonwealth Games), the Northern Territory (+2) and Tasmania (+2). Queensland (-16), New South Wales (-14), the Australian Capital Territory (-10), Western Australia (-5) and South Australia (-2) experienced reductions.

## National Trends by Function

### Complaints

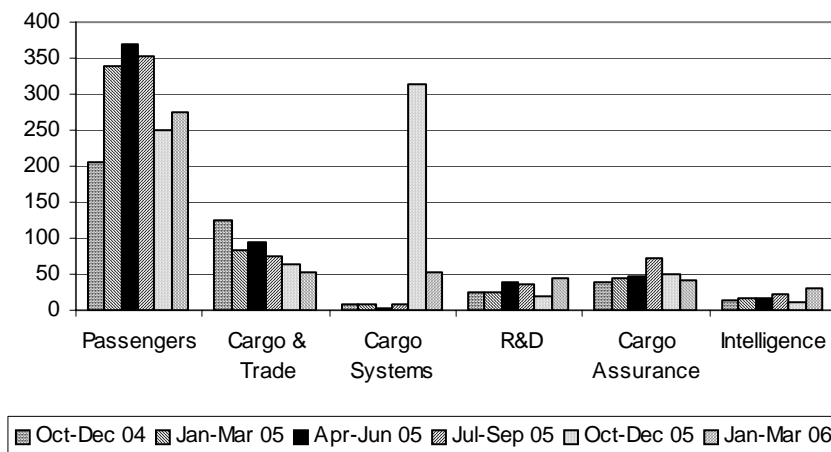


Figure 4. Total number of complaints for the six larger branches or divisions comparing the last six quarters

**Note:** 1. Cargo and Trade includes the broker licensing, cargo systems, CI&SC, entry processing, import clearance, sea cargo, temporary imports and valuation. Cargo Assurance mainly includes air cargo and postal operations.

2. CEF complaints are recorded under R&D.

A comparison of figures against the previous quarter (excluding referrals) reveals an increase in complaint numbers for R&D (+25), Passengers (+23) and Intelligence (+20). A decrease in complaint numbers was experienced in Cargo Systems (-261), Cargo Assurance (-7) and Cargo and Trade (-9).

The largest decrease in complaints in Cargo Systems was attributed to the reduction in ICS complaints (see Annex A).

### Compliments

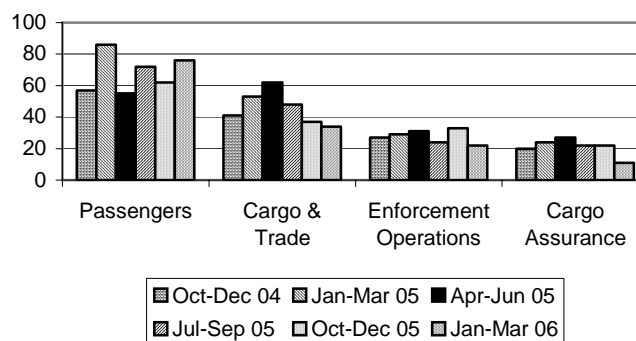


Figure 5. The trend in compliments for the four larger divisions comparing the last six quarters

Compliment figures compared to the previous quarter (excluding referrals) indicate an increase was experienced in Passengers (+14). A decrease was experienced for Cargo Assurance (-11), Enforcement Operations (-11) and Cargo & Trade (-3).

The increase in compliments for Passengers occurred largely in Enforcement (+14).

A more detailed analysis of complaints and compliments for Cargo Systems, Passengers, the Container Examination Facility (CEF), the Customs Information and Support Centre (CI&SC) and Rude Officers are provided in Annexes A-E.

## 2. Type of Complaint

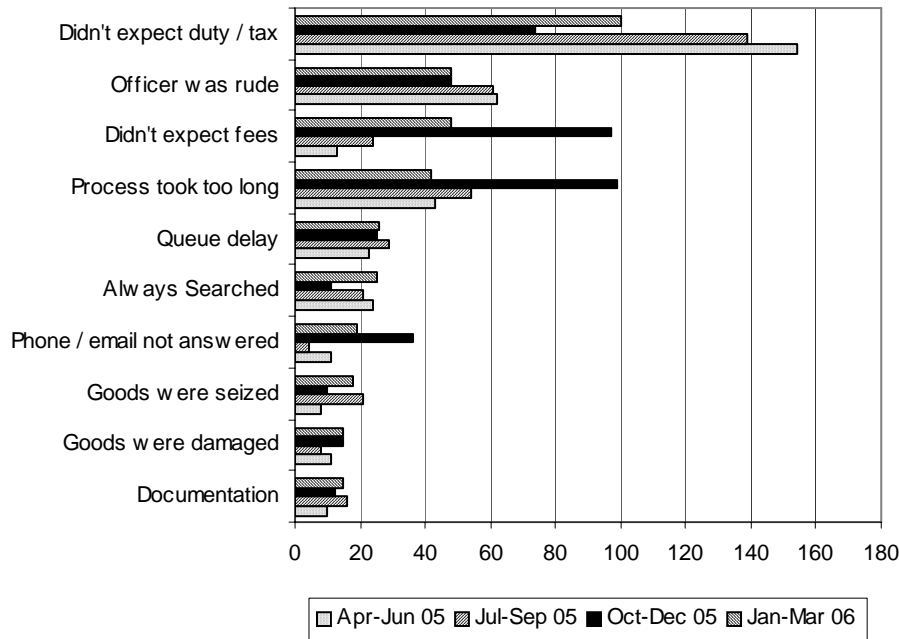


Figure 6. National Top 10 Complaints (excluding referrals) for the last four quarters

A total number of **530** complaints were made for this quarter (excluding referrals). This compares to **743** for the previous quarter and represents a **28.80% decrease**.

Details of the top four complaint issues are shown on page 2 of this report.

## 3. Type of Compliment

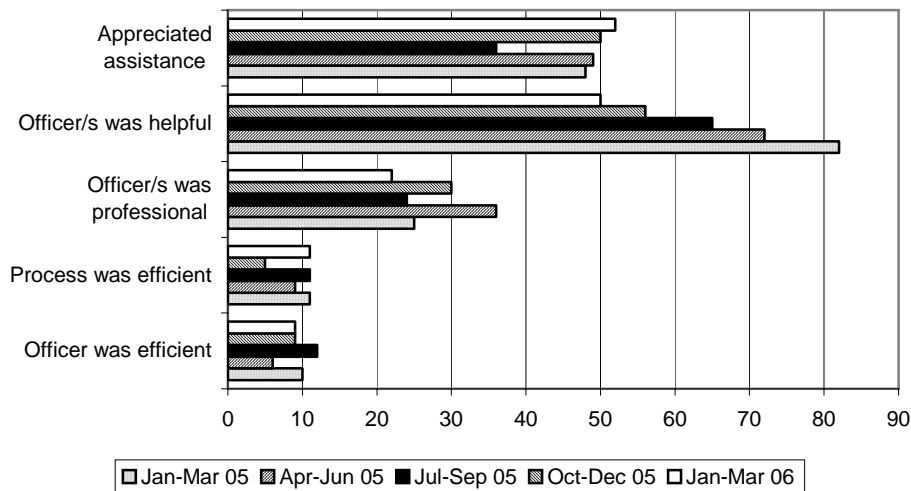


Figure 7. National top 5 compliments (excluding referrals) for the last five quarters

A total of **162** compliments were registered for this quarter (excluding referrals). This compares to **197** for the previous quarter and represents a **17.77% decrease**.

The top three compliment issues were:

- **Appreciated assistance (52):** Passengers received this compliment most frequently **(21)** due to facilitation at Melbourne Airport during the Commonwealth Games. The National Marine Unit (NMU) also received this compliment frequently **(20)**. This is due to high levels of operational interaction with client groups.
- **Officer/s was helpful (50):** Cargo & Trade received this compliment most frequently with **23**. **11** of these compliments were for the CI&SC and **8** were for staff at the counter.
- **Officer was professional (22):** This compliment occurred **14** times in Passengers (**6** times in WA and **5** times in Sydney).

#### 4. Referrals to other agencies

Where complaints or compliments are not related to Customs operations or procedures, they are referred to the relevant agencies by the Complaints and Compliments Network. During this quarter Customs referred **59** complaints and **0** compliments. The main agencies receiving referrals were AQIS **(26)** and Australia Post **(12)**.

#### 5. Performance Against Service Standards

The Complaints and Compliments Network monitors performance against the Customs Client Service Charter. The Client Service Charter states:

**If you write to us or email us**

We aim to acknowledge your communication within 5 working days and to respond within 15 working days of receipt of your email or written correspondence. If we cannot fully answer your query in that time, we will give you an interim response and advise as to when a final response can be expected.

##### Service Standards

The average complaint resolution time of **12.85** working days reported in the previous quarter has *decreased* to **10.28** working days.

The average compliment resolution time of **1.54** working days reported in the previous quarter has *increased* to **1.76** working days.

These resolution times are within the 15 working day service standard.

Out of a total of **751** cases received, **28** cases opened during the March quarter did not meet the 15 working day benchmark (**3.72%**). Last quarter **9.37%** of cases did not meet this criteria.

## 6. How People Contact Us

The main methods for contacting Customs during this quarter were by email (**316**), phone (including the 1800 number) (**163**), brochure (**100**), letter/fax (**83**) and remote entry (**81**).

*Note: 'Remote' entries are originally made by phone or email direct to a Customs work area. A Customs officer then forwards the complaint or compliment to their regional coordinator via a remote entry icon on their desktop.*

The number of complaints or compliments received has increased this quarter by:

- phone (from **154** to **163**), and
- brochure (from **78** to **100**).

Whereas the number of complaints or compliments received has decreased by:

- email (from **474** to **316**),
- remote from **182** to **81**), and
- letter or fax (from **105** to **83**).

The purpose of the CCMS is to provide:

- National coordination of complaints and compliments,
- Analysis of data,
- Reporting of results, and
- Identification of opportunities for continuous improvement of our processes and practices based on client feedback.

The CCMS is committed to recording and reporting all comments provided by clients about their experience with Customs.

Feedback on any information contained in this report should be directed to the following Complaints and Compliments staff:

Name: Ben Hickey, Director, Corporate Planning, 02 6275 5706

Email: [ben.hickey@customs.gov.au](mailto:ben.hickey@customs.gov.au)

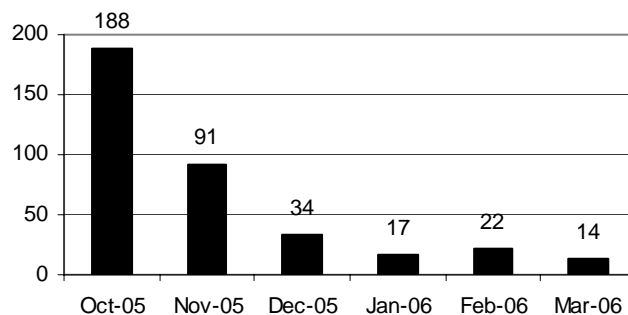
Name: Roni Giacobetti, National Coordinator, Complaints and Compliments Network, 02 6275 6499

Email: [roni.giacobetti@customs.gov.au](mailto:roni.giacobetti@customs.gov.au)

## Cargo Systems

In early October 2005 Customs new Cargo Integrated System (ICS) went live. The rate of complaints has decreased markedly since October 2005:

### ICS Complaints



*Figure 1. Number of ICS complaints received during October 2005 to March 2006*

The reason for complaints in the March quarter were:

Issue	No of Complaints
Didn't expect fees	28
Poor Design	9
Process took too long	6
System Down	4
Self Assessed Clearance	2
Implementation	1
Phone/email not answered	1
System Too Slow	1
Other (Officers not trained)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>

*Table 1. Number of complaints received during January to March 2005 by complaint issue*

Typical explanations of the main complaints are:

**Didn't expect fees** – related to complaints about demurrage fees charged by the Stevedores because containers were stored on the wharf in excess of the three storage-free days.

**Poor Design** – related to complaints about the system being badly structured and very complicated in its layout as well as the number of ICS screens.

**Process took too long** – related to complaints about the complainant's need to obtain the cargo where the container was held up due to computer problems when it may otherwise have been released.

**System Down** – related to complaints about entries not being able to be put through for whatever reason.

**Self Assessed Clearance** – related to the need to obtain a broker where goods are valued at less than \$1,000.

## Passengers

### Complaints

The number of complaints received nationally was **274** (excluding referrals) during this quarter (compared to **251** in the previous quarter) which is equivalent to 1 complaint for every **10,237** passengers arriving in Australia. This compares with one complaint for every 11,116 passengers in the October to December quarter.

During the period 1 January to 31 March 2006 **2,829,547** passengers arrived through international airports nationally. Numbers of passengers arriving through each major airport are shown in Table 1 below.

Major Airports	Number of Airport Complaints	Passenger Arrival Numbers	Number of Passengers for Every Complaint
Sydney	102	1,272,007	12,471
Melbourne	61	609,681	9,995
Brisbane	41	468,096	11,417
Perth	35	272,639	7,790
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>2,622,423</b>	<b>10,972</b>

Table 1. Number of complaints lodged at the **four major airports** compared to the number of passengers arriving during January to March 2006

Figure 1 below compares the number of Customs complaints received by each of Australia's major airports:

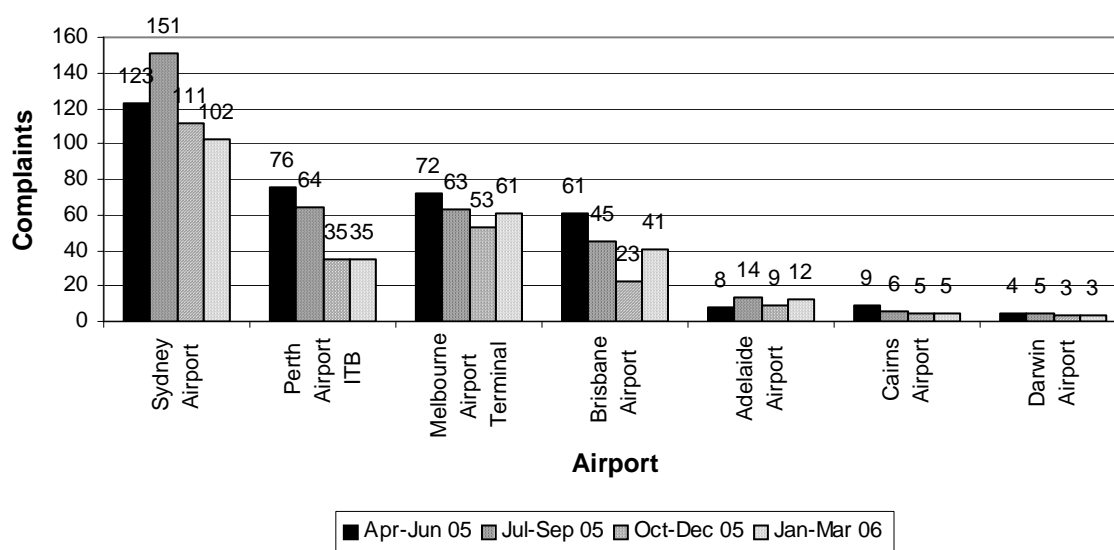


Figure 1. Passenger Complaints at each Airport for April - June 2005, July - September 2005, October - December 2005 and January - March 2006

Of the **102** complaints received at Sydney Airport:

- **27** related to paying duty,
- **24** related to TRS,
- **19** related to rude officers (see Annex E),
- **18** related to being selected, searched, examined or questioned, and
- **14** related to queues.

A comparison of all Passengers complaints for the last two quarters is shown in Table 2 below.

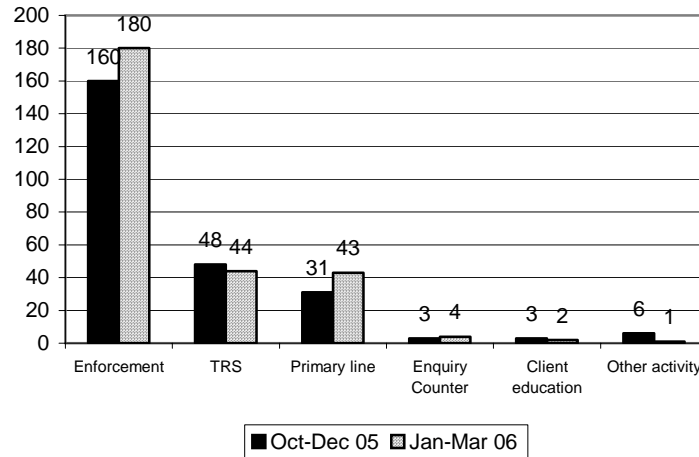


Figure 2. Passengers complaints - comparative assessment by work area October to December 2005 and January to March 2006

*Note:* All Baggage complaints have been reclassified under Enforcement. "Baggage" is no longer a classification used by the CCMS.

The increase in complaints occurred largely in Enforcement. They were mainly concerning:

Issue: 'Didn't expect duty/tax' (**85**, up **21**). These related to a change in the passenger duty free concessions introduced on 1 February 2005 (see details below).

Changes in passenger concessions for incoming passengers became effective from 1 February 2005. A total of **85** complaints (**64** in the previous quarter) were received relating specifically to this issue. The majority of complainants continue to state that they were not aware of the change in the passenger concessions legislation. They also often state that having to pay duty for the entire amount of alcohol or tobacco brought into the country is unfair and state that they should only have to pay duty on the amount of the excess.

Regions where the passenger concessions complaints occurred were:

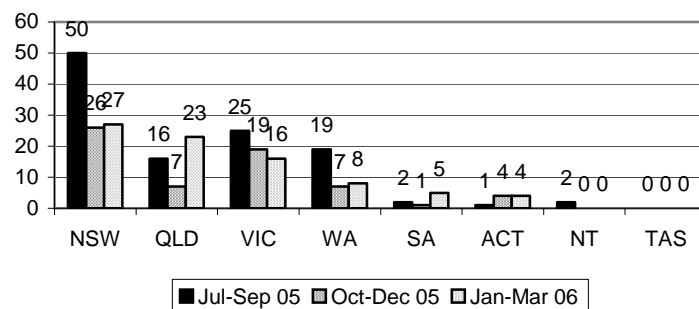


Figure 3. Passenger concessions complaints - comparative assessment by region for July to September 2005, October to December 2005 and January to March 2006

Complaints allocated to the ACT were general complaints about the new passenger concession policy.

A total of **44** complaints were received about the Tourist Refund Scheme (TRS) compared to **48** last quarter. A comparison of the top five TRS complaints is shown in Table 4 below.

Symptom	Oct-Dec 05	Jan-Mar 06
Claim not made	6	6
Queue delay	12	11
Lack of Information	4	5
Unhappy about 30 minute rule	8	5
Misinformed by Customs	6	4

Table 2. Top 5 TRS complaints - comparative assessment  
October to December 2005 and January to March 2006

### Compliments

There were **76** compliments for Passengers during this quarter, representing an increase of **22.58%**.

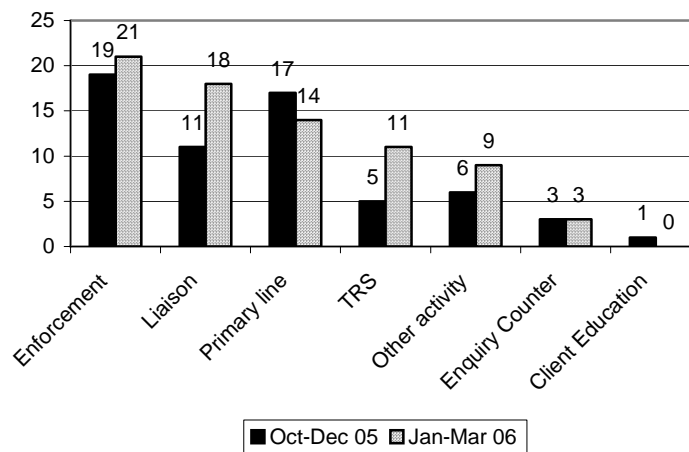


Figure 4. Passenger compliments - comparative assessment  
July to September 2005 and October to December 2005

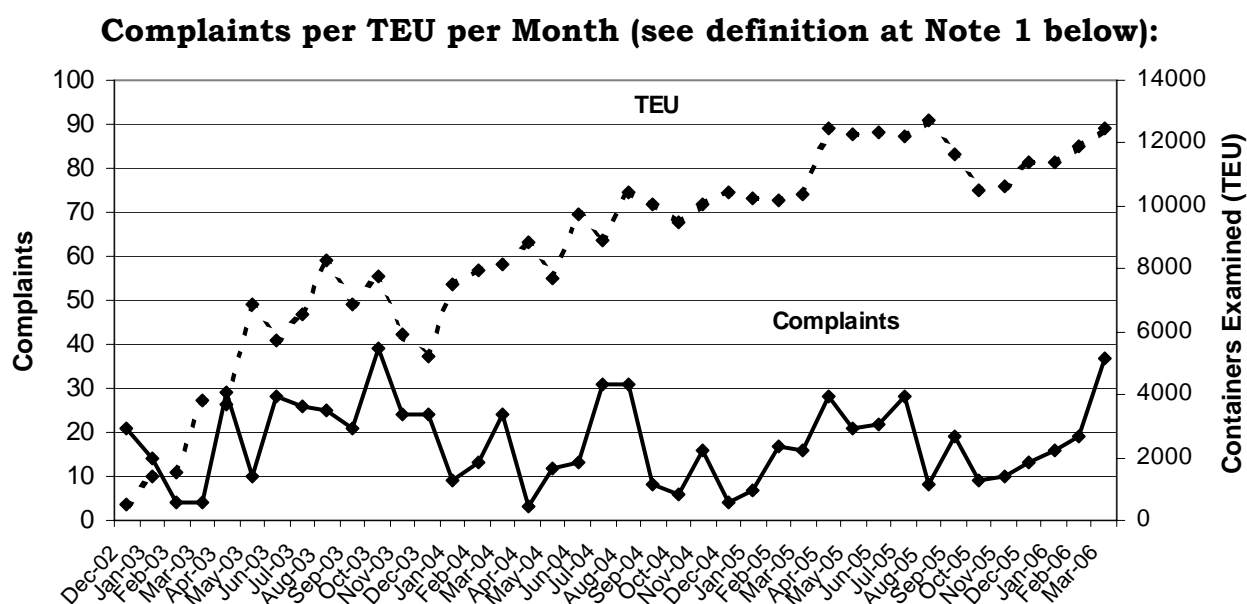
The **9** 'Other activity' cases refer to compliments for Customs Officers largely related to expressions of appreciation for assistance from various sporting organisations & the OECD Global Forum.

**Research & Development Branch (R&D)**  
**Container Examination Facility (CEF)**

Figure 1 below shows that complaints against CEFs per number of twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU)<sup>1</sup> examined have increased from **34** to **72** during the quarter.

In January to March 2006, Customs inspected **35,794 TEU** and received **72** complaints (including complaints to Profiling and Alerts and CTO/Wharf/Stevedores and Brokers]. **9** of these complaints were responded to in the ACT.

This is equivalent to **1** complaint for every **497.14 TEU**. This compares with **1** complaint for every **1,016 TEU** in the previous quarter.



*Figure 1. Trend of complaints against TEU x-rayed by Customs since CEFs opened in December 2002*

The increase in complaints during March 06 largely occurred in Victoria with 29 complaints – these related to:

- 9 – process took too long,
- 8 – didn't expect fees,
- 5 – always searched,
- 5 – late barrier hold put in place, and
- 2 – goods were damaged.

Of the total **72** complaints, the three main complaint issues were:

Issue: “Process took too long” (**23**) - an increase from **10** during the last quarter.

Issues: “Always searched” (**19**) - an increase from **7** during the last quarter.

Issues: “Didn't expect fees” (**15**) - an increase from **3** during the last quarter.

Excluding complaints recorded against CTO/Wharf/Stevedores, Brokers, Profiling and Alerts and Canberra, the number of operationally based complaints received nationally for the CEFs were **38**.

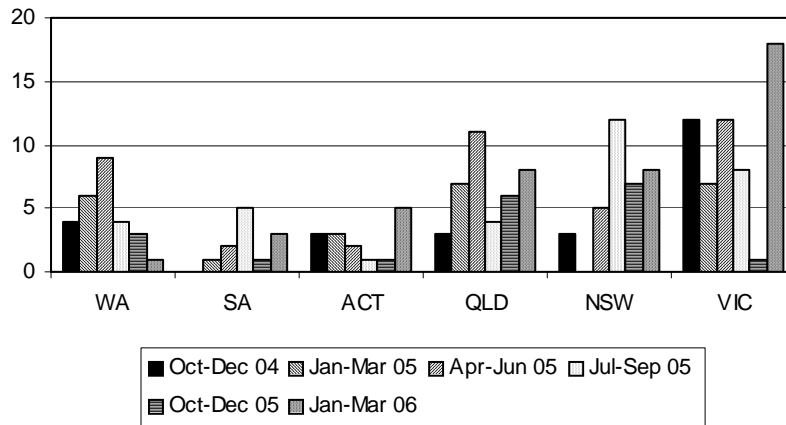


Figure 2. Comparison of CEF operations by region for the previous six quarters

### Compliments

From Dec 2002 to 31 March 2006, since the first CEF was established, **15** compliments have been received for CEF operations, **8** of which have been for Victoria. These largely relate to seizures made. During this time Customs has examined 346,442 TEU.

A detailed breakdown of complaints (excluding the 9 policy related complaints responded to by Central Office) is:

### CEF Operations Complaints Only

CEF Location	Number of Complaints	TEUs Inspected	Number of TEUs for Every Complaint
Melbourne	18	9,577	532.06
Sydney	8	10,852	1,356.50
Brisbane	8	10,072	1,259
Fremantle	3	4,950	1,650
Adelaide	1	331	331
Darwin	-	12	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>35,794</b>	<b>941.95</b>

Table 2. Number of complaints lodged compared to the number of TEUs<sup>2</sup> inspected for January to March 2006

### Profiling & Alerts and Wharf Related Complaints

In Addition: Number of 'CEF related' complaints classified to Profiling and Alerts	In Addition: Number of 'CEF related' complaints classified to CTO/Wharf/ Stevedores and Brokers
11	-
4	-
5	2
1	-
2	-
-	-
<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>

Table 3: Number of CEF related complaints for January to March 2006

### Total of All CEF Operations / Profiling & Alerts / Wharf Related Complaints (A Summary of Tables 2 and 3)

CEF Location	Total Number of Complaints	TEUs Inspected	Number of TEUs for Every Complaint
Melbourne	29	9,577	330.24
Sydney	12	10,852	904.33
Brisbane	15	10,072	671.47
Fremantle	4	4,950	1,237.50
Adelaide	3	331	110.33
Darwin	-	12	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>35,794</b>	<b>568.16</b>

Table 4. Number of complaints lodged compared to the number of TEUs<sup>2</sup> inspected for January to March 2006 (excluding Canberra)

Note:

1. The industry standard is to record container statistics in twenty foot equivalent (TEU) unit terms rather than the actual number of containers. Most international containers are either 20 ft (1 TEU) or 40 ft (2 TEUs). On average, the number of containers is equivalent to 75 per cent of the number of TEUs, e.g. 750 containers is equivalent to 1000 TEU.
2. The above TEU figures include import and export containers.
3. The official CEF complaints are shown in Table 2 and relate to specific CEF sites. We have also attached related complaints that are recorded elsewhere as the responsibility of different work areas or organizations, e.g. Intelligence (Profiling and Alerts). These are included because, from the complainants perspective, their complaints are about the CEF process in general, regardless of the specific area of Customs which has responsibility to respond.

## Customs Information and Support Centre

### Complaints

During this quarter **27** complaints were recorded about the CI&SC, compared with **31** for the previous quarter. The most common complaint related to the phone (**21**) where it was either not answered, the calls were not returned, clients didn't like the recorded message, or clients felt that they were on hold for too long. This compares to **19** during the previous quarter.

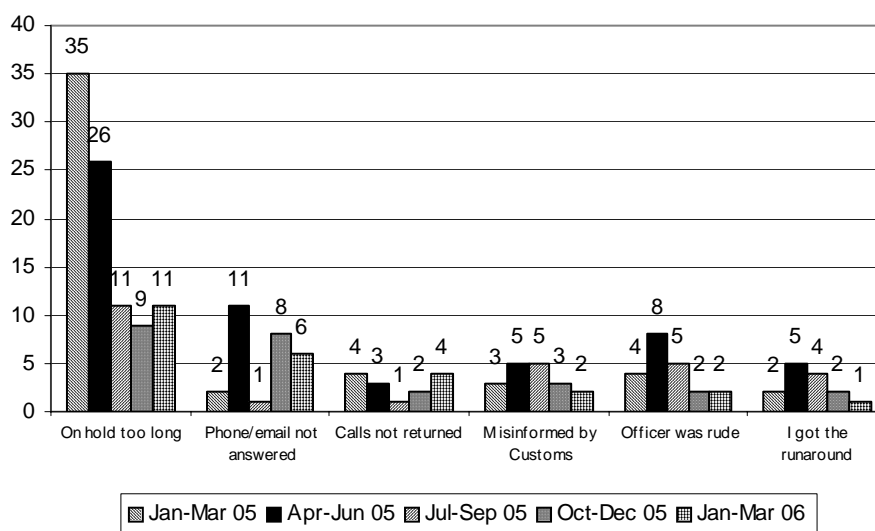


Figure 1. Comparison of the main CI&SC complaints for the previous five quarters

During the period January to March **133,274** enquiries were dealt with by the CI&SC.

The number of complaints received was **27** during this quarter which is **1** complaint for every **4,936** enquiries. See Table 2 below.

Month	Number of Complaints Received	Number of Phone Enquiries Received	Number of Email Enquiries Received	Number of Fax Enquiries Received	Total Number of Enquiries Received	Number of Enquiries for Every Complaint
January	11	40,311	4,244	286	44,841	4,076
February	11	37,954	4,749	356	43,059	3,914
March	5	40,169	4,882	323	45,374	9,075

Table 1. Number of complaints lodged at the CI&SC compared to the number of calls received for January to March 2006

### Compliments

The CI&SC received **12** compliments this quarter (compared to **16** which were received last quarter). **11** of the compliments related to officers being helpful.

**Issue – “Officer was rude”**

“Officer was rude” was the second highest complaint in the quarter with **48** complaints nationally (which was the same number for the previous quarter).

Work Area	Oct-Dec 05	Jan-Mar 06
Enforcement	27	18
Primary line	9	15
TRS	4	6
Counter/Enquiry Counter	3	3
CI&SC	2	1
Client Services	-	1
Postal Operations	1	1
Compliance Audit Team	1	-
ICS	1	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>48</b>

Table 1. Number of complaints received nationally for ‘Officer was rude’ by work area comparative assessment: October – December 2005 and January – March 2006

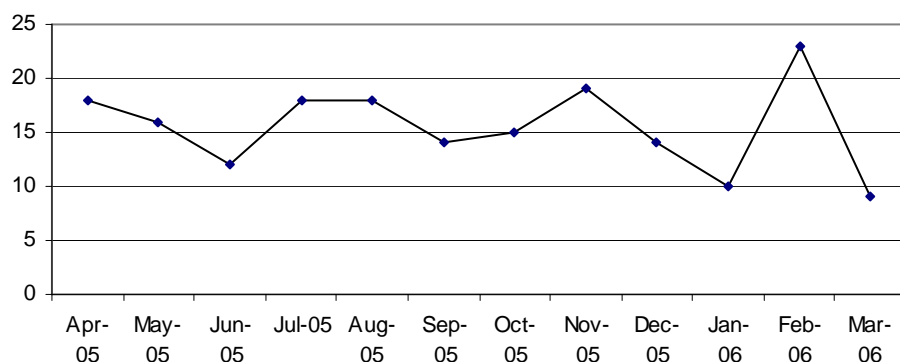
**Officer was rude**

Chart 1. Line graph of complaints received for ‘Officer was rude’ in Passengers by month from April 2005 to March 2006

The peak in February 06 largely occurred in NSW with **11** (a total of **19** during the January to March quarter compared to **15** during the October to December 2005 quarter).

The **11** Sydney Airport complaints included passengers who were:

- told to turn off mobile phones,
- charged duty on excess passenger concessions, and
- undergoing major baggage examinations.

Passengers Work Area – 12 months	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	VIC	WA	Total
Enforcement	36	-	18	6	12	27	99
Enquiry Counter	12	-	3	-	4	3	22
Primary line	23	1	6	1	11	9	51
TRS	3	-	1	-	1	2	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>179</b>

Table 2. Number of complaints received for ‘Officer was rude’ in Passengers by region from April 2005 to March 2006

# CCMS Quarterly Report Feedback Form

If you have any comments on this report please fill out the form below (replace the appropriate box with an X) and email it to either the CCMS National Coordinator (Roni Giacobetti) or to [ACS Complaints & Compliments] or forward it by facsimile on 02 6275 8099.

## Layout

- The current layout is easy to read      Yes       Average       No
- The graphs are easy to understand      Yes       Average       No
- The tables are easy to understand      Yes       Average       No

## Content

The content:

- Contains valuable information      Yes       Average       No
- Tells me what I need to know      Yes       Average       No

## Statistics

- There are too many numbers      Yes       Average       No
- More analytical text is required      Yes       Average       No

If yes, please provide an example of what you would like to have included in the next report:

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## Other Comments

I would like to see the following alterations made to the next report:

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