



# *Complaints & Compliments*



## **National Report**

**July to September 2001**

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## Executive Summary

This is the second national report for the Complaints and Compliments Handling System (CCHS) covering the period July to September 2001.

- Total number of complaint issues for the period = 433
- Total number of compliments offered = 244
- This report includes tables which contain information from the April-June quarter for comparative purposes.
- TRS complaints have declined this quarter– a reduction of 34.1%
  - A business improvement activity, conducted by the Tourist Refund Office, would appear to be the reason for the reduction in TRS complaints (see page 6).
- Comments about ‘Staff Attitude’ continue to be the second highest complaint issue.
- ‘Referral to other agencies’ is the third top complaint for this quarter. It illustrates that clients are uncertain as to which agency they are dealing with in certain work environments (e.g. airport).
- The majority of compliments received highlighted clients’ appreciation of “helpful” and “informative” staff.
- Average resolution time for complaints is 6.50 days.
- Average response time to compliments is less than 1 day.

## Background

This is the second national report for the Complaints and Compliments Handling System (CCHS) covering the period July to September 2001.

The purpose of the CCHS is to provide national coordination of complaints and compliments, analysis and reporting, and identification of opportunities for continuous improvement of our processes and services, based on client feedback. The CCHS is committed to recording and reporting all comments provided by clients about their experience with Customs.

Responding to clients' comments in a timely manner is fundamental to an effective CCHS. Our time standard of 5 working days to acknowledge clients and 15 working days to provide a full response to clients is consistent with similar systems in other agencies / organisations. Complaints that are not swiftly resolved can generate significant additional workload for Customs.

Even though all complaints may not be 'justified' in the eyes of Customs, complaints may represent the experiences and feelings of others who have chosen not to complain. Additionally, when investigating complaints, it is sometimes difficult to determine the 'validity' of a complaint due to a lack of facts and/or witnesses. Subjectivity may also play a part particularly for complaints resulting in 'someone's word against another'. For this reason, focusing on trend data and identifying systemic issues is a priority for the CCHS. Business improvement opportunities result from analysis of issues over time, not from trying to establish the validity of each individual case.

The national database for the CCHS, *Satisfy2000*, has been designed to log all complaints in a systematic way and provide statistical information as detailed in this report. The database also has the capacity to provide customized reports to meet specific needs of managers, on request.

### **NOTE**

To ensure we meet your reporting needs, we would appreciate any comments you may have about this report and welcome any input you may wish to contribute to the content and layout.

Please direct your comments to either:

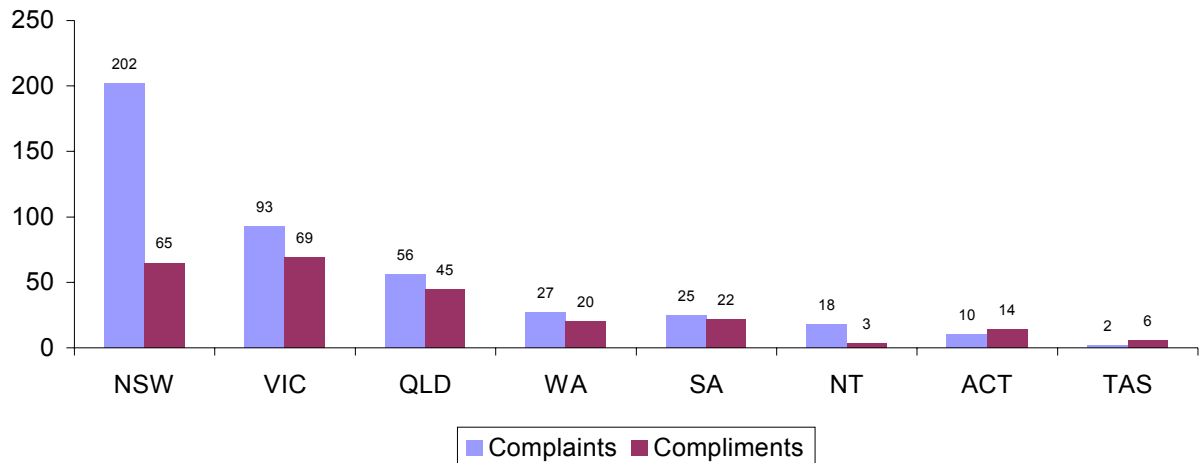
- Kaye Barron 42 5450 (Manager Client Service Policy) or
- Linda Pellew 42 2022 (National Co-ordinator CCHS).

### **Regional Coordinators**

More detailed information about a particular region can be obtained from contacting dedicated Complaints and Compliments Coordinators in each region – refer to Attachment A.

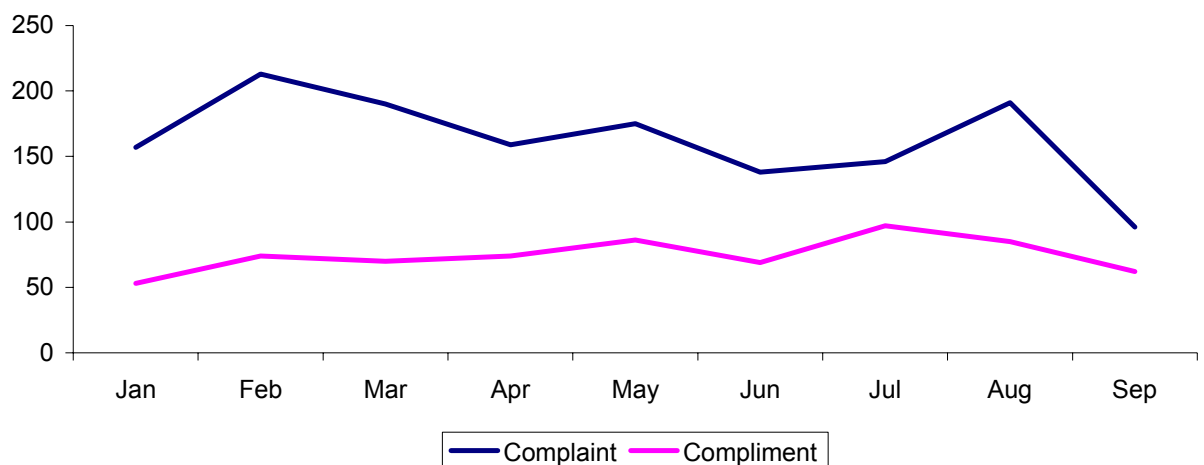
## Complaint and Compliment Issues

### Issues by Region

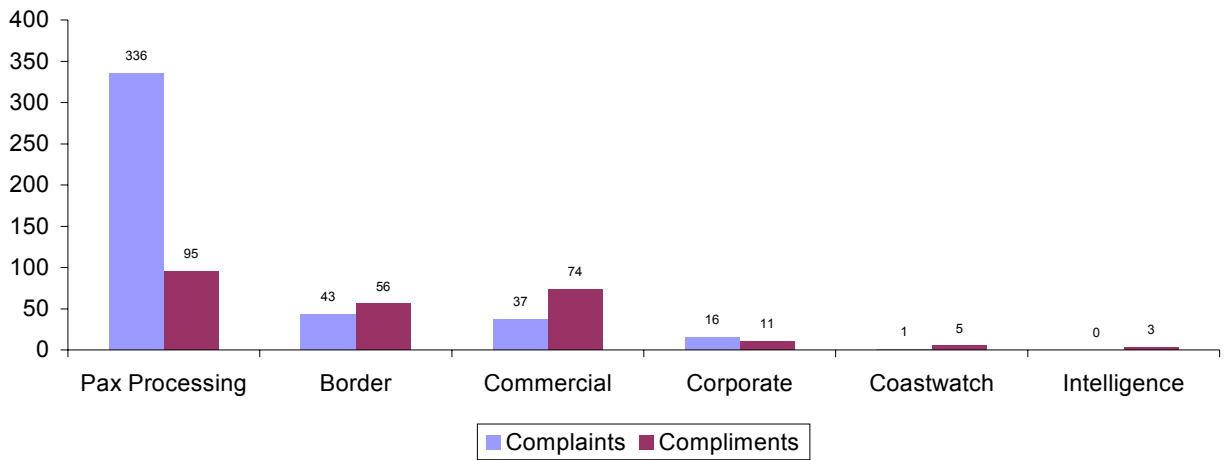


Total complaint issues received for this quarter is 433, compared to 472 for the previous quarter. Total compliments offered for this quarter is 244, compared to 229 for the previous quarter.

### Trend by Issues

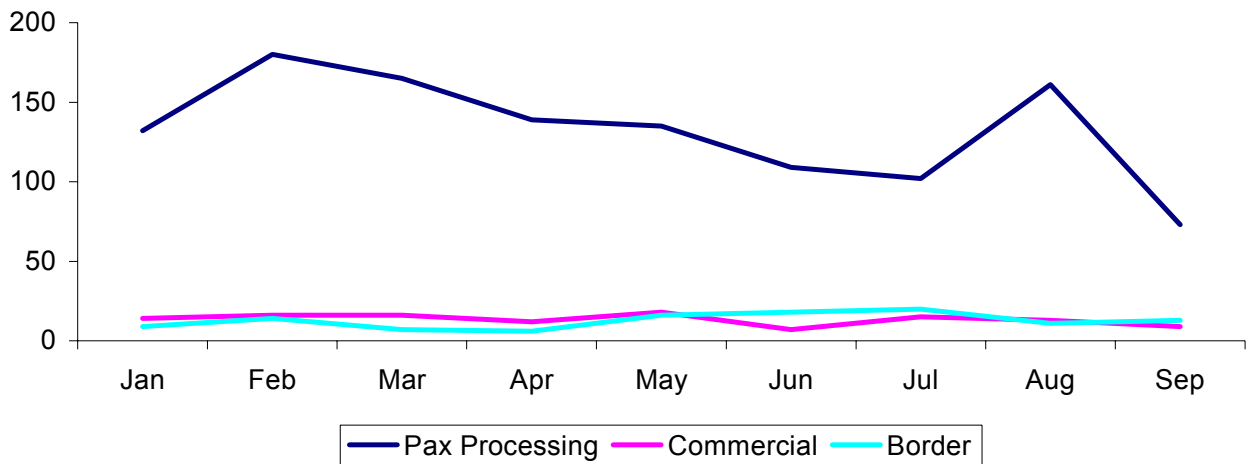


## Issues by Division

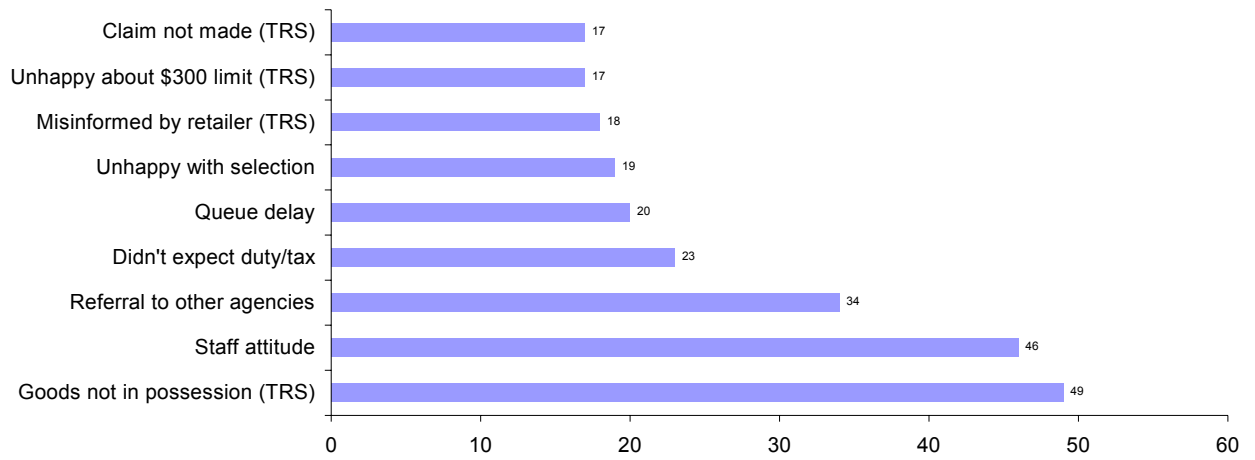


## Complaints

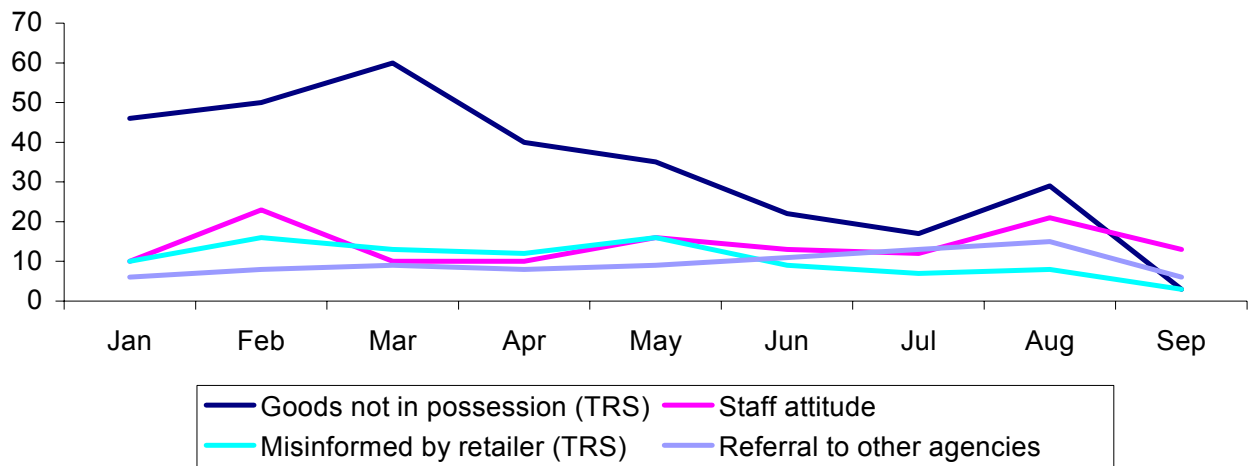
### Trend by Division



## Main Complaint Issues



## Trend by Complaint Issues



## **Tourist Refund Scheme**

Last quarter, TRS complaints (249) accounted for 52.8% of total complaints. This compares to only 37.9% for this quarter (164). This represents a reduction in TRS complaints of 34.1%. Note, the previous report indicated 55% for a full six month period.

'Goods not in possession' remains the main complaint for which clients contact Customs. Complaints about this issue, however, have decreased significantly this quarter with a total of 49 received, compared to 97 last quarter. This represents a reduction of 49.5%. (Refer Trend graph p5)

This drop in complaints corresponds to the TRS initiative in implementing a risk-based approach to the physical verification of goods, especially high volume, low value goods such as clothes, shoes, manchester and souvenirs. Staff from the TRO have conducted extensive training to skill officers in risk assessing claims for refund.

The table below illustrates all complaint issues about TRS.

<b>TRS Complaint Issues</b>		<b>TRS Complaint Issues</b>	
Goods not in possession	49	Lack of information	3
Misinformed by retailer	18	Signage	3
Unhappy about \$300 limit	17	Misinformed by Customs	3
Claim not made	17	No refund for services	3
Unhappy about 30 day limit	12	Goods exported unaccompanied	3
* Staff attitude	11 *	Queue delay	2
Did not have tax invoice	8	Misinformed by airline	2
Unhappy about 30 minute rule	6	Crew not entitled	2
Unhappy about refund	4	Process not explained	1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>

\* Refer to note on page 8.

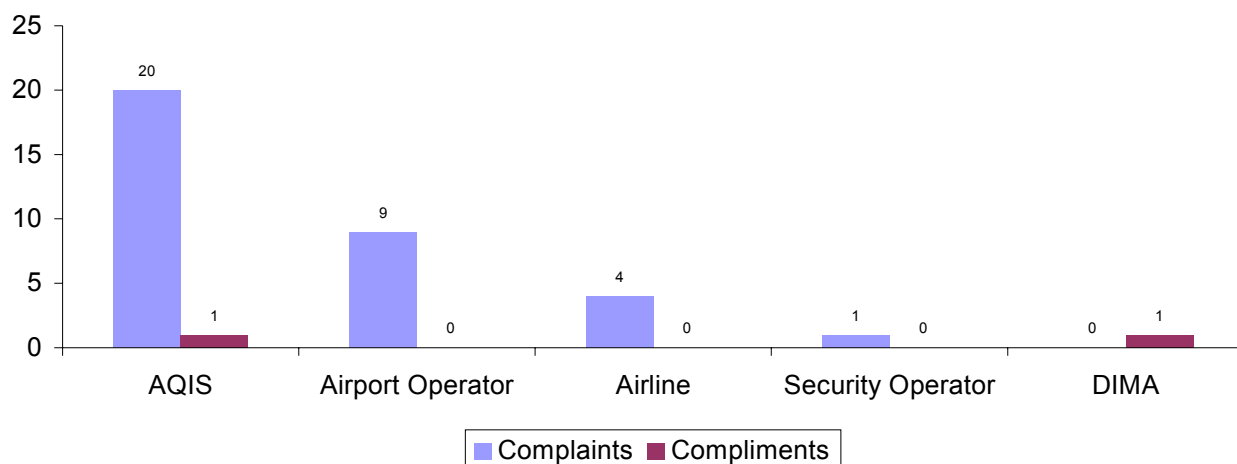
## Staff attitude

The second top complaint was 'Staff attitude', with a total of 46 complaints (10.6%). Of these, 42 related to various process areas in Passenger Processing. As illustrated in the Trend graph on page 5, complaints about 'Staff attitude' are a recurring theme.

Customs needs to determine the quality of the current level of client service against the desired level. The planned client surveys should provide valuable information to assist in determining this.

<b>Staff Attitude</b>	<b>Apr to Jun</b>	<b>Jul to Sep</b>
Baggage	12	20
* TRS booth	9	11
Primary line	9	8
Targeting (Sierra)	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>42</b>

## Referrals to other agencies



The third top complaint was 'Referrals to other agencies', with a total of 34 complaints (7.9%), compared to 28 last quarter. This refers to complaints made to Customs which actually relate to clients' experience with another agency / organisation. When Customs receives these complaints, the client is notified of the correct authority, and the matter is then referred to the appropriate agency / organisation.

### ***Didn't expect duty / tax***

A total of 23 complaints, (5.3%), were received about 'Didn't expect duty / tax' and is the fourth top complaint for this period.

<b>Didn't expect duty / tax</b>	<b>Apr to Jun</b>	<b>Jul to Sep</b>
Postal Operations	7	9
Baggage	2	7
Entry processing	1	3
Personal Effects	2	3
CIC	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>

### ***Queue delay***

A total of 20 complaints, (4.6%), were received about 'Queue delay' and is the fifth top complaint for this period.

<b>Queue delay</b>	<b>Apr to Jun</b>	<b>Jul to Sep</b>
Primary Line	15	17
Baggage	3	1
* TRS booth	0	2
Postal Operations	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>

### ***Unhappy with selection***

A total of 19 complaints, (4.4%), were received about 'Unhappy with selection' and is the sixth top complaint for this period.

<b>Unhappy with selection</b>	<b>Apr to Jun</b>	<b>Jul to Sep</b>
Baggage	11	14
Targeting	1	4
District Office	0	1
DDDU	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>

\* These figures are included in the totals shown in the table on page 6.

## Other Complaint Issues

The remaining 140 complaints are spread over 21 separate issues. When combined, these issues cover a number of Customs processes that include:

- **Search / Examination**

Comments from clients were about why they were selected for baggage examination (refer “Unhappy with selection” p8); why they were repeatedly selected for examination; or that the examination was too thorough (eg examining personal documents).

- **Processing of Goods**

This related to clients expressing dissatisfaction about goods missing, or being damaged, withheld or seized. Other complaints were about goods not being repacked properly, or clients having to repack them, themselves.

- **Payment Issues**

Complaints from clients included the unexpected requirement to pay duty / GST (refer “Didn’t expect duty / tax” p8) or having to pay more duty / GST than they thought. It also included having to pay fees / charges for entry requirements.

- **Queuing Systems**

This included clients stating that they disliked aspects of the Express queue, snake queue and ‘Australians only’ queue. Refer also “Queue delay” p8.

- **Customs Questions**

Officers’ attempts to risk assess individuals through questioning resulted in clients perceiving the questions as being too intrusive or irrelevant.

Other issues of note, which are not necessarily specific to any one area, include comments about “Process took too long”; “I got the run around” and “Documentation issues”.

One item of particular interest this quarter is in regard to the comment “Unhappy about process” which received 13 complaints this quarter. All 13 were clients complaining about the selection process for recruitment into the ACS. This compares to 3 for the previous quarter and can be attributed to a high recruitment intake.

More specific information is available from the Complaints and Compliments Unit or from dedicated coordinators in each region (Refer Attachment A).

## **Selected Client Comments – Complaints**

### **Goods Not in Possession (TRS)**

#### **Case 103947**

*"I am refused a credit for GST paid in Australia. I have all correct documentation but my \$1000 article weighs more than the 5kg I am allowed to carry on to the airline. I will not buy anything else in Australia. You are wasting your money advertising to attract tourists and their dollars."*

#### **Case 103862**

*"I just love coming and visiting Australia. I spent A\$3000 and when I showed the receipts I was told that I should be carrying the goods with me. How can I carry the goods worth so much."*

#### **Case 103810**

*"We had to check the goods in at the ticket counter as they were bulky and we were travelling with a 1year old baby. When we presented claim to Customs, they rejected our claim, as they could not sight checked-in goods."*

### **Staff Attitude**

#### **Case 104060**

*"My welcome home was marred by a very rude lady customs officer who interrogated me as if I was a criminal."*

#### **Case 103934**

*"The attitude of the staff was unhelpful and we found this frustrating and disappointing ... we also urge a rethink and think that the staff at the TRS desk be given some additional training in at least appearing empathetic with its client base."*

#### **Case 103932**

*"I feel that the Customs Staff require training on how to deal with people in a professional manner, they are arrogant, overbearing - a disgrace to Australia."*

### **Didn't Expect Duty/Tax**

#### **Case104023**

*"I was charged \$53.10 customs duty when I picked it (goods) up from the post office. Why am I charged such a fee for a second hand present???"*

### **Queue Delay**

#### **Case 104190**

*"I was appalled at the queuing to depart Australia at the airport. Australians pay for this "service" and do not expect to queue for 30 minutes in conditions that would put a batch chicken farm to shame."*

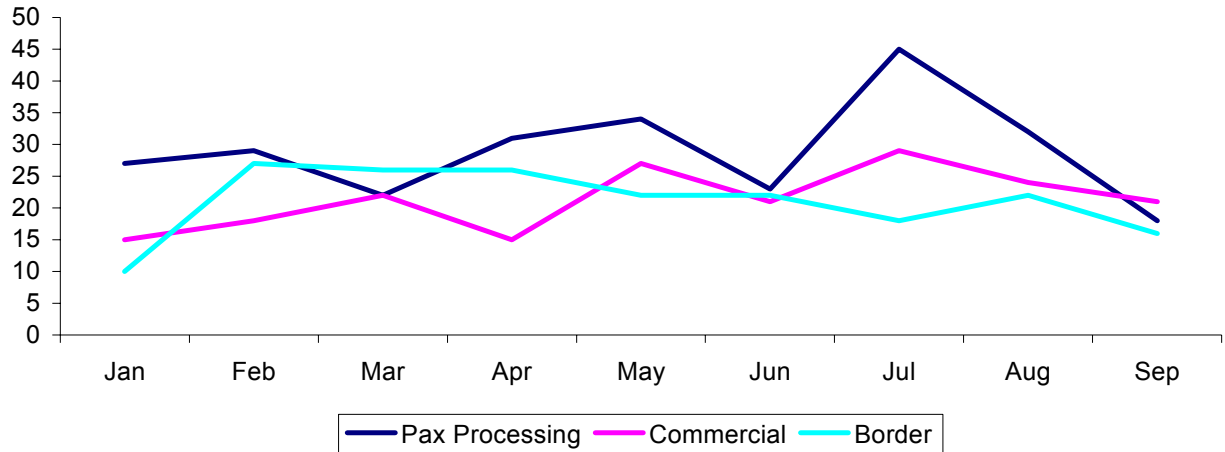
### **Unhappy With Selection**

#### **Case 103781**

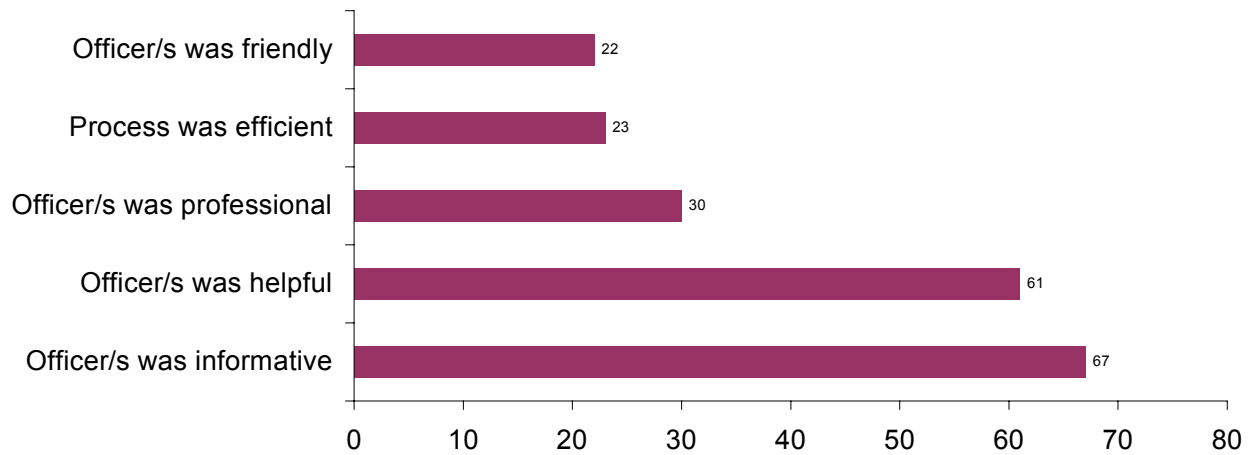
*"Green lane is for nothing to declare. Customs officers did a thorough check and found nothing on me. The system doesn't trust itself. It's better not to have a green lane."*

## Compliments

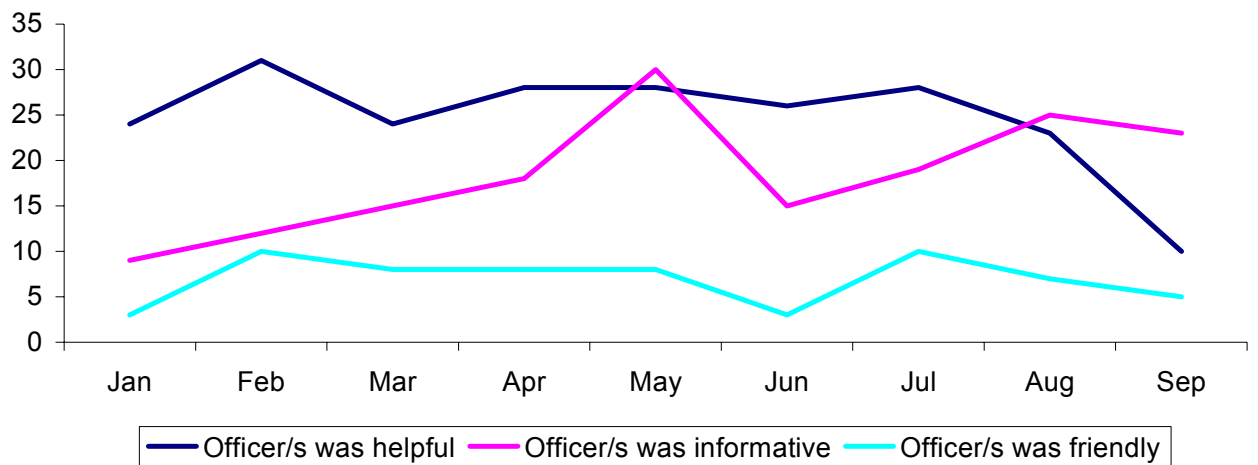
### Trend by Division



### Main Compliments Offered



## Trend by Compliment Offered



### ***Officer was informative***

The main compliment offered this quarter was 'Officer was informative', with a total of 67 (27.5%).

<b>Officer was informative</b>	<b>Apr to Jun</b>	<b>Jul to Sep</b>
Commercial	25	31
Border	26	17
Pax Processing	9	10
Corporate	3	6
Intelligence	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>67</b>

### ***Officer was helpful***

The second top compliment was 'Officer was helpful', with a total of 61 (25.0%).

<b>Staff Attitude</b>	<b>Apr to Jun</b>	<b>Jul to Sep</b>
Commercial	24	23
Border	31	21
Pax Processing	27	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>61</b>

A total of 244 compliments were received, with Passenger Processing being the main recipient of the compliments.

<b>Division</b>	<b>Apr to Jun</b>	<b>Jul to Sep (%)</b>
Pax Processing	88 (38.4)	95 (39)
Commercial	63 (27.5)	74 (30.3)
Border	70 (30.6)	56 (23)
Corporate	7 (3.1)	11 (4.5)
Coastwatch	0	5 (2)
Intelligence	1 (0.4)	3 (1.2)
<b>Total</b>	<b>229 (100)</b>	<b>244 (100)</b>

When we receive a compliment from a client, the Complaints and Compliments Co-ordinator, in the relevant region:

1. enters the case into the database;
2. acknowledges the client and thanks them for their comments; and
3. acknowledges the officer/s for a job well done and ensures the relevant managers are notified.

## **Selected Client Comments - Compliments**

### **Case 103869**

*"I was satisfied with the service as the officers were very informative and helpful. They were willing to listen and advise instead of laying down the law on how things should be done without any consideration for our needs."*

### **Case 104039**

*"Thank you so much for your quick reply and information. I was surprised and delighted to get your email, expecting rather a link to a web site or no reply at all. Thanks again for your help in this matter."*

### **Case 104080**

*"Fantastic - the exact helpful response I was after. You've identified clearly what needs to be done and who to contact. I'm grateful! Yours is an unusual level of service."*

### **Case 104119**

*"I had two officers do a site visit and their information and presentation was excellent. It is not very often that you deal with people that are passionate about the goings on involved in Customs exit formalities. I was extremely impressed with their knowledge."*

### **Case 103594**

*"I called the 1300 number about a query I had regarding my mother sending goods to Australia. The staff member was very helpful. I wish I could get this service from some of the private sector help lines!"*

### **Case 103683**

*"We enjoyed your talk very much. We all agreed it was the most innovative and entertaining morning we had spent for a long time. Thank you too for all the trinkets you gave us. If we have anything to report, now we will know what to do."*

### **Case 103679**

*"My officers and I truly appreciate the help and assistance given by your officers. Without the full participation and backing of the Australian Customs Service, I am sure that these operation(s) would not have been as successful as they have been."*

### **Case 104027**

*"He is always very knowledgeable and helpful. In dealing with an under bond query he went to major efforts to help us, and even guide us with our systems problem. Such helpful staff are a pleasure to deal with and a credit to your sector."*

## Performance Against Service Standards

The Complaints & Compliments Unit monitors performance against the following two timeliness measures :-

- We will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within five working days; and
- We will issue a full response to you within 15 working days of receipt and, if we cannot, we will tell you why and when we will reply in full.

In acknowledging complaints, the CCU met the time standard in every case during the quarter.

For the second performance criterion, the CCHS currently lacks the capacity to extract this data from the database. However, we have a high degree of confidence that the CCHS has met the required standards during the quarter.

The CCHS will have the capacity to extract this data on performance with the next release to upgrade *Satisfy2000*, which is currently under user acceptance testing.

Resolution time averages (in days) during quarter were as follows:

	July	August	September	Average
Complaints	8.06	4.22	8.96	6.50
Compliments	< 1	< 1	< 1	< 1

## How our Clients Contact Us

