



Complaints and Compliments
National Quarterly Report
October to December 2004

- 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 (42 6499) or Director Corporate Planning (42 5706).

Introduction

This report provides statistical data for complaints and compliments received during the period October to December 2004. All statistical data included in this report was extracted on 17 January 2005. Where appropriate, comparative tables and graphs are provided for previous reporting periods.

Executive summary

Complaints

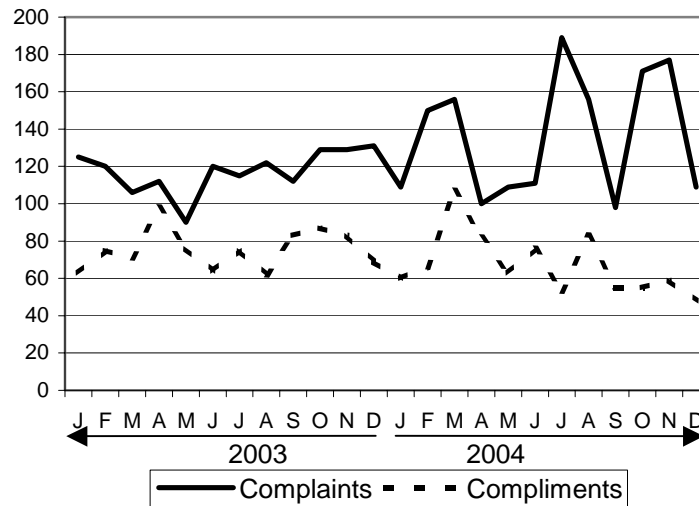


Figure 1. National trends for complaints and compliments from January 2003- December 2004 by month

A total number of **524** complaints, including referrals, were reported compared with **515** in the previous quarter. This is the largest number of quarterly complaints since March 2001. The top three complaints were:

- “On hold too long” (**70**),
- “Queue delay” (**52**), and
- “Officer was rude” (**35**).

Included in the total of 524 complaints were **69** complaints that subsequently were referred to other agencies.

Compliments

A total number of **162** compliments were reported about Customs compared with **194** in the previous quarter. The top three compliments were:

- “Officer/s was helpful” (**68**),
- “Appreciated assistance” (**42**) and
- “Officer/s was professional” (**21**).

There were no referrals to other agencies.

Significant variations in the December 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

'On hold too long'

The complaint 'On hold too long' increased nationally from **16** to **70**. This increase occurred mainly within the Customs Information and Support Centre (Cargo and Trade Division)(from **15** to **68**] (see Annex C).

'Didn't expect duty/tax / Didn't expect fees'

The complaint 'Didn't expect duty/tax' and 'Didn't expect fees' increased nationally from **29** to **43** and relates largely to items imported via post and air cargo and the CEF in R&D (see Annex B).

'Process took too long'

The complaint 'Process took too long' decreased nationally from **64** to **25**. This decrease occurred mainly within the Container Examination Facility (CEF) (from **50** to **10**] (see Annex B).

'Queue system'

The complaint 'Queue system' decreased nationally from **43** to **17** in Passengers (see Annex A).

1. National Trends

1.1 National Trends by Region

Complaints

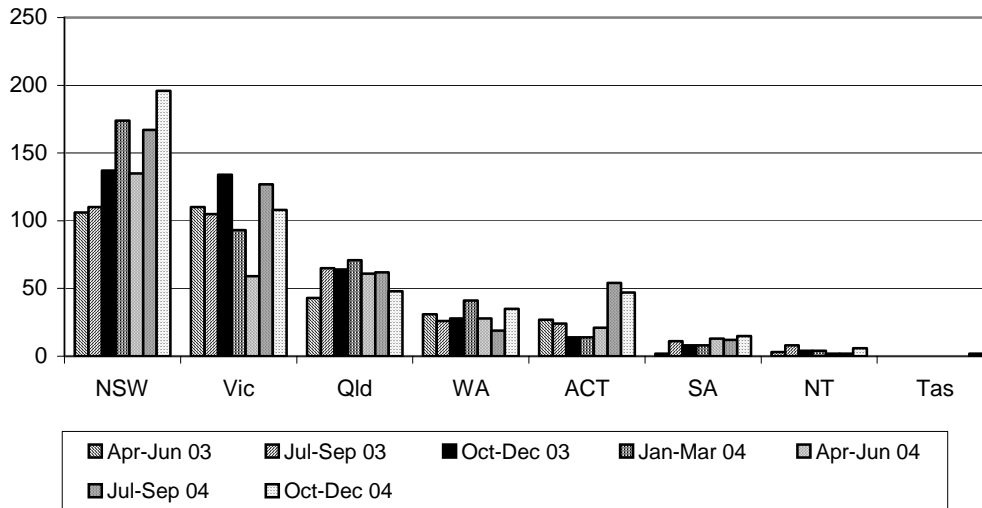


Figure 2. Total number of complaints by region comparing each quarter from April - June 2003 to October -December 2004

Comparing against the previous quarterly figures (excluding referrals), an increase in complaints occurred in New South Wales (+30), Western Australia (+16), Northern Territory (+4), South Australia (+3) and Tasmania (+2). A reduction in complaints occurred in Victoria (-19), Queensland (-14) and the Australian Capital Territory (-8).

Compliments

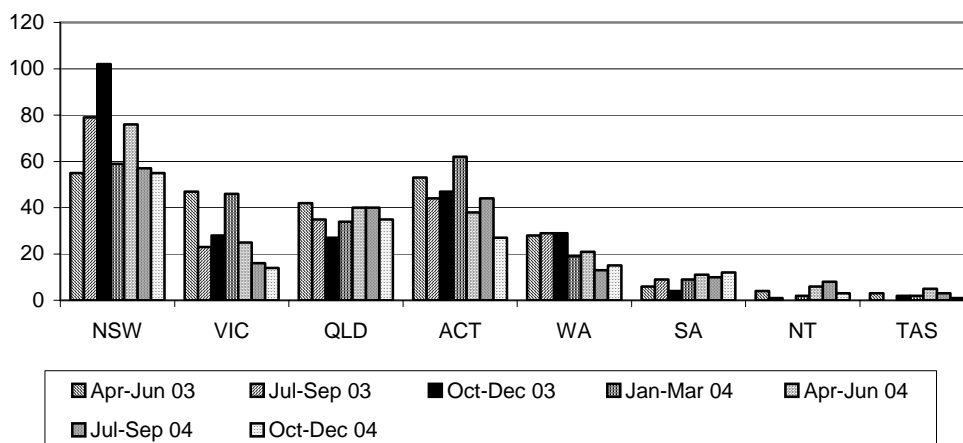


Figure 3. Total number of compliments by region comparing each quarter from April - June 2003 to October -December 2004

A comparison of national trends for compliments between this quarter and the previous quarter (excluding referrals) revealed increases in South Australia (+2) and Western Australia (+2). The Australian Capital Territory (-17), Northern Territory (-5), Queensland (-5), New South Wales (-2), Tasmania (-2) and Victoria (-2) experienced reductions.

1.2 National Trends by Division

Complaints

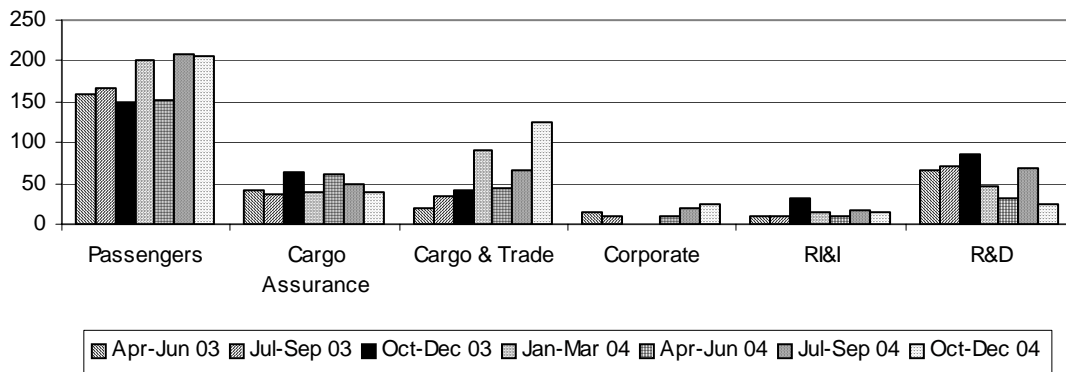


Figure 4. Total number of complaints for the six larger branches or divisions comparing the last 7 quarters

Note:

1. In line with regional structures, Cargo and Trade mainly 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 have been removed from Enforcement Operations and placed under R&D

A comparison of figures against the previous quarter reveals an increase in complaint numbers for Cargo and Trade (+66), Enforcement Operations (+5), Corporate (+3), Coastwatch (+2) and Investigations (+1). A decrease in complaint numbers was experienced in R&D (-44), Cargo Assurance (-8), Passengers (-4), Compliance Assurance (-3), RI&I (-3), District Offices (-1) and Trade Measures (-1).

The largest increase in complaints in Cargo and Trade was attributed largely to people being on hold too long on the CI&SC phone. The CI&SC had **97** complaints compared to **37** complaints last quarter (see Annex C).

Cargo Systems complaints (**9**) related to ICS (lack of staff assistance, time waiting on hold, being cut off and incompatibility with McIntosh computers).

Compliments

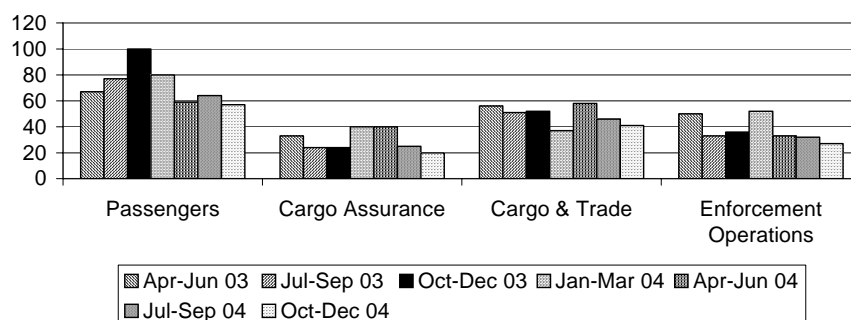


Figure 5. The trend in compliments for the four larger divisions comparing the last seven quarters

Compliment figures compared to the previous quarter indicate a decrease for Passengers (-7), Cargo Assurance (-5), Cargo & Trade (-5), Enforcement Operations (-5), Corporate (-3), District Offices (-3) and RI&I (-1). An increase was experienced in Compliance Assurance (+1).

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

2. Type of Complaint

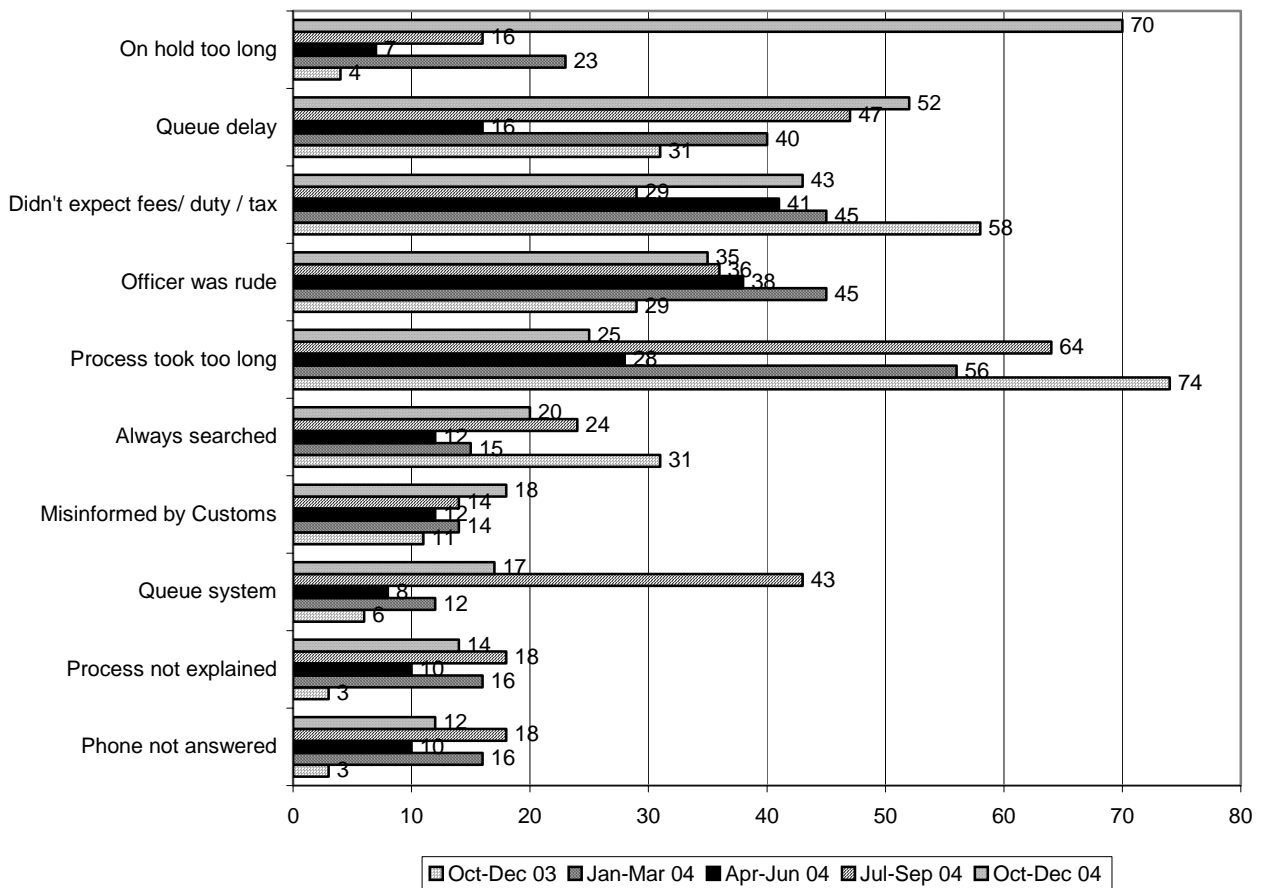


Figure 6. National Top 10 Complaints (excluding referrals) for the last five quarters

A total number of **455** complaints were made for this quarter (excluding referrals). This compares to **443** for the previous quarter and represents a **2.71% increase**.

The top four issues (excluding referrals) were:

- **On hold too long (70):** **68** of these complaints were made to the CI&SC (see Annex C).
- **Queue delay (52):** These complaints occurred in Passengers, **24** of which were at Melbourne Airport (see Annex A).
- **Didn't expect fees /Didn't expect duty or tax (43):** These complaints occurred in Cargo and Trade (**16**), Cargo Assurance (**16**), and R&D (**7**) (see Annex B). They relate largely to items imported via post and air cargo.
- **Officer was rude (35):** This occurred **27** times in Passengers, **16** of which were at Sydney Airport.

3. Type of Compliment

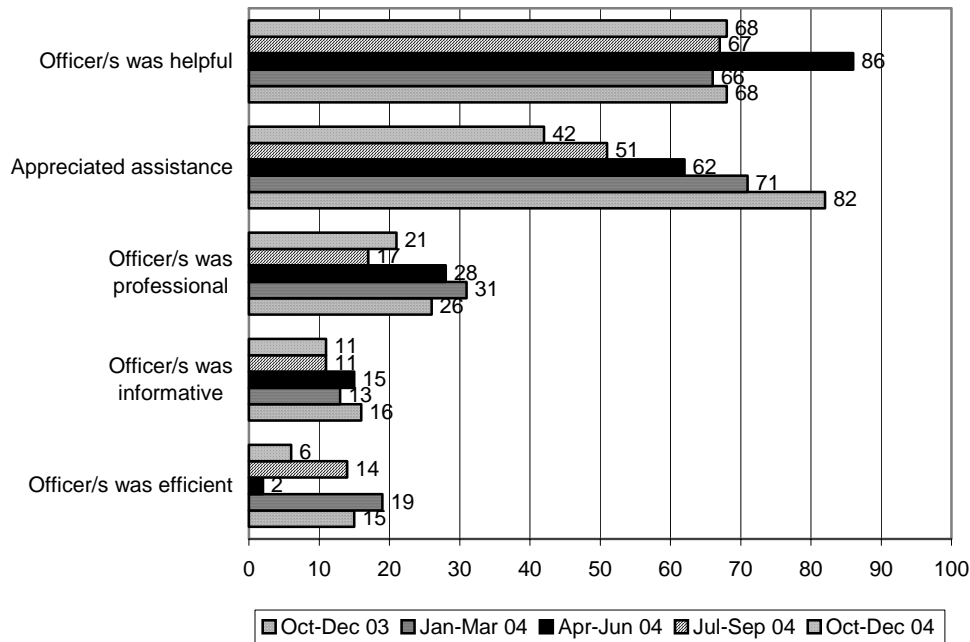


Figure 7. National top 5 compliments (excluding referrals) for the last five quarters

A total of **162** compliments were registered for this quarter (excluding referrals). This compares to **191** for the previous quarter and represents a **15.18% decrease**.

The top three issues (excluding referrals) were:

- **Officer/s was helpful (68):** Cargo & Trade received this compliment most frequently with **41**, **18** of these being for the CI&SC and **12** for the Counter (**10** of which were in NSW).
- **Appreciated assistance (42):** The National Marine Unit (NMU) received this compliment most frequently (**24**). This is due to high levels of operational interaction with client groups. Passengers (Liaison) also received this compliment (**11**).
- **Officer was professional (21):** This compliment occurred **9** times in Queensland in Passengers (**4**), Postal Operations (**3**), and two District Offices – Bundaberg (**1**) and Gladstone (**1**).

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 Compliment Network. During this quarter Customs referred **69** complaints and **0** compliments. The main agencies receiving referrals were AQIS (**34**), Australia Post (**7**) and brokers/airport operators (**5 each**).

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 **9.52** working days reported in the previous quarter has *decreased* to **9.33** working days. The average compliment resolution time of **1.29** working days reported in the previous quarter has also *decreased* to **0.34** working days. These resolution times are within the 15 working day service standard.

Out of a total of **686** cases, **22** cases did not meet the 15 working day benchmark (**3.21%**).

6. How People Contact Us

The main methods for contacting Customs during this quarter were by email (**178**), phone (including the 1800 number) (**201**), brochure (**144**), letter (**70**) and remote entry (**66**).

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 by phone has increased from **150** to **201** this quarter, whereas there has been a decrease in the receipt of complaints or compliments by brochure (from **179** to **144**) and by email (from **215** to **178**).

The purpose of the CCMS is to provide:

- National coordination of complaints and compliments
- Analysis of data
- Reporting of results
- 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:

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Passengers

Complaints

The number of complaints received nationally for Passengers was **205** during this quarter (compared to **209** in the previous quarter) which is equivalent to 1 complaint for every 13,290 passengers arriving in Australia. This compares with one complaint for every 12,263 passengers in the July to September quarter.

During the period 1 October to 31 December 2004 **2,724,371** 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	69	1,201,228	17,409
Melbourne	74	575,509	7,777
Brisbane	21	467,200	22,248
Perth	22	273,515	12,433
Average	46.5	629,363	13,535

Table 1. Number of complaints lodged at the **four major airports** compared to the number of passengers arriving during October - December 2004

Figure 1 below compares the number of complaints received by each of the major airports:

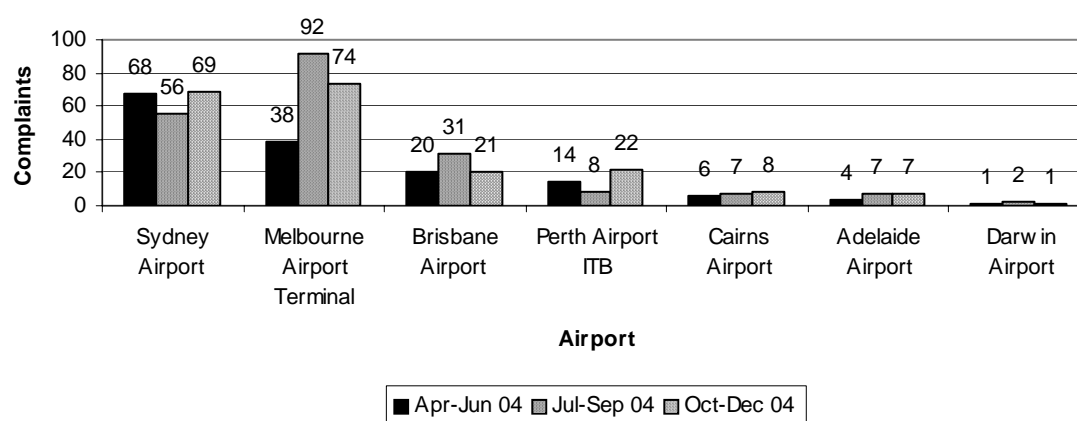


Figure 1. Passenger Complaints at each Airport for April - June 2004, July - September 2004 and October - December 2004.

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

Branch	Jul-Sep 04	Oct-Dec 04
Enforcement	48	46
Primary Line	32	49
TRS	32	45
Baggage	73	62
Other activity	18	3
Enquiry Counter	4	0
Liaison	1	0
Client Education	1	0
Total	209	205

Table 2. Passengers complaints - comparative assessment by work area July to September 2004 and October to December 2004

The increase in complaints in the Primary Line was mainly relating to ‘Officer was rude’ (see details below). The increase in complaints in TRS was mainly relating to ‘Queue delay’ (see third page of this Annex).

Issue: “Officer was rude”

The following table compares the number of complaints received for “Officer was rude” during the last seven quarters:

Branch	Apr-Jun 03	Jul-Sep 03	Oct-Dec 03	Jan-Mar 04	Apr-Jun 04	Jul-Sep 04	Oct-Dec 04
Enforcement	12	8	8	13	12	7	9
Primary line	9	5	8	3	12	3	10
Baggage	5	7	3	10	8	8	5
TRS	1	4	2	6	2	3	3
Enquiry Counter	0	0	0	2	0	1	0
Other	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total	27	25	21	34	34	22	27

Table 3. “Officer was rude” complaints - comparative assessment by **Branch** during the last 7 quarters

The most substantial decrease in client complaints in Passengers occurred at Melbourne Airport:

Queue Delays – **24** (down from **37** last quarter)

Queue Systems – **15** (down from **27** last quarter).

Melbourne Airport Queuing Complaints

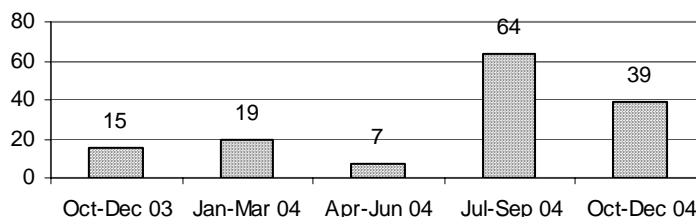


Figure 1. Queuing complaints (Queue Delays and Queue Systems) at Melbourne Airport over the last 5 quarters

Reasons for the increase in complaints for the Jul-Sep 04 quarter related to queuing problems at Melbourne Airport resulting from the final stages of infrastructure change in the baggage reclaim and examination halls.

A total of **45** complaints were received about the Tourist Refund Scheme (TRS). A comparison of the top five TRS complaints is shown in Table 4 below.

Symptom	Jul-Sep 04	Oct-Dec 04
Queue delay	3	15
Goods not in possession	4	5
Unhappy about 30 minute rule	5	5
Misinformed by Customs	3	4
Signage	1	4

Table 4. Top 5 TRS complaints - comparative assessment July – September 2004 and October – December 2004

Of the **15** complaints about queue delays, **8** occurred at Sydney Airport.

Compliments

There were **57** compliments for Passengers during this quarter, representing a decrease of **10.94%**.

Branch	Jul-Sep 04	Oct-Dec 04
Primary line	20	17
Liaison	10	13
Baggage	7	11
Other activity	2	6
Enquiry Counter	5	4
Enforcement	7	3
TRS	11	1
Client education	2	1
Olympics (para)	0	1
Total	64	57

*Table 5. Passenger compliments - comparative assessment
July – September 2004 and October – December 2004*

The **6** ‘Other activity’ cases refer to compliments for Customs Officers in general which didn’t fit within the other classifications.

Research & Development Division (R&D) Container Examination Facility (CEF)

Figure 1 below shows that complaints against CEFs per number of twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU)¹ examined have decreased substantially during the quarter.

In October to December 2004 Customs inspected **29,938 TEU** and received **25** complaints. This is equivalent to **1** complaint for every **1,198 TEUs**. This compares with **1** complaint for every **420 TEUs** in the previous quarter.

Complaints per container:

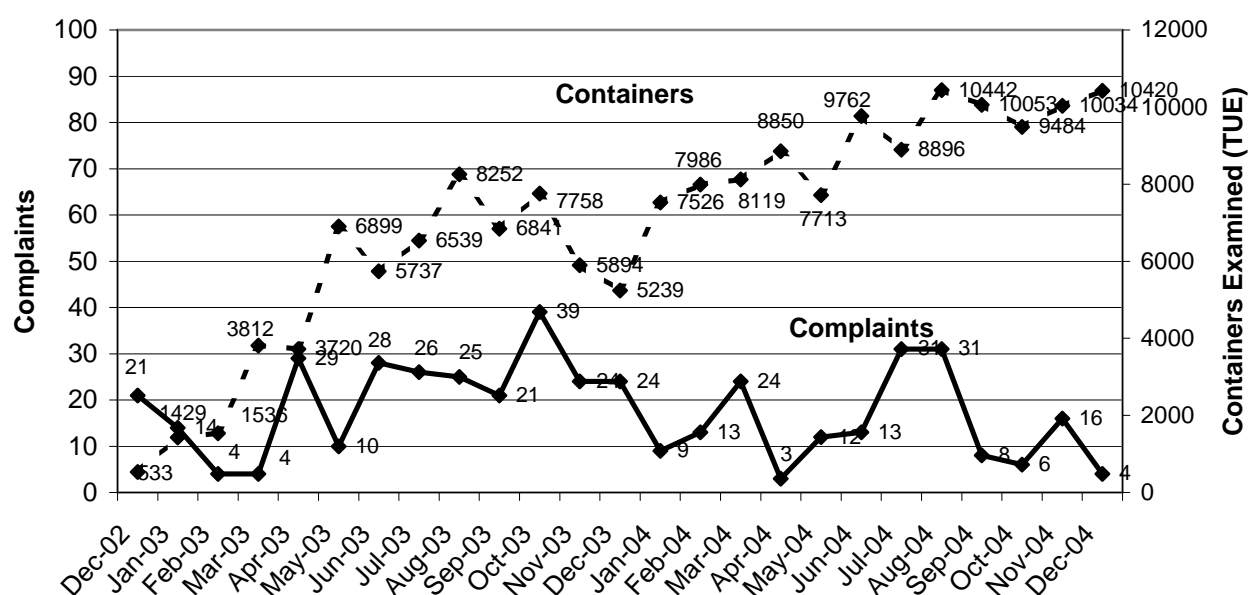


Figure 1. Trend of complaints against TEUs x-rayed by Customs since CEFs opened in December 2002

The following table provides details of the total number of complaints registered for each for the October to December quarter (**25** compared to **70** for last quarter). This is a decrease of **64.28%**.

Issues	Canberra	Sydney	Brisbane	Melbourne	Fremantle	Total
Didn't expect fees/duty/tax	1	-	2	3	1	7
Goods were damaged	-	-	-	2	-	2
Goods were missing	-	-	-	1	-	1
Goods were withheld	-	-	-	3	1	4
Misinformed by Customs	1	-	-	-	-	1
Process took too long	1	3	1	3	2	10
Total	3	3	3	12	4	25

Table 1. National CEF complaints by region for October - December 2004

Note: Issues for Canberra are policy related

The two main complaint issues were:

Issue: “Process took too long” (**10**) is a decrease from **50** during the last quarter. This decrease occurred mainly in Sydney (**-22**), Canberra (**-12**) and Melbourne (**-5**).
Issue: “Didn’t expect fees/duty/tax” (**7**) is a decrease from **11** during the last quarter. This decrease occurred in Sydney (**-7**).

The **3** cases classified against Canberra were policy related. These were regarding the length of time it takes to clear containers generally and the fees which are thereby accrued.

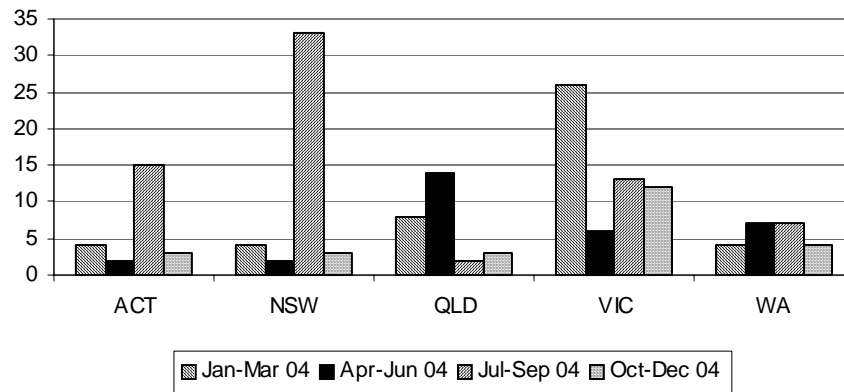


Figure 2. Comparison of CEF complaints by region for the previous four quarters

Information provided from NSW regarding the substantial decrease in NSW complaints during this quarter to **3** (from **33** last quarter) is:

Comments from NSW CEF manager regarding this decrease were:

The situation is not so much that the numbers went down in the December quarter, but rather that the numbers had gone up in the previous quarter largely due to a number of wharf, vessel and weather related disruptions which resulted in major fluctuations of the volume of cargo that was available and able to be removed to the CEF.

Also, during the July to September quarter efforts were underway to increase the number of containers were available for examination each day.

Excluding the **3** policy related complaints registered against the ACT, during this quarter the number of operationally based complaints received nationally for the CEF was **22**.

Breaking this figure down further:

CEF Location	Number of Complaints	TEUs Inspected	Number of TEUs for Every Complaint
Melbourne	12	9291	774
Sydney	3	9673	3224
Brisbane	3	5926	1975
Fremantle	4	5048	1262

Table 2. Number of complaints lodged compared to the number of TEUs² inspected for October - December 2004

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.

Customs Information and Support Centre

Complaints

During this quarter **97** complaints were recorded about the CI&SC, compared with **37** for the previous quarter. The most common complaint related to the phone (**79**) where it was either not answered, the calls were not returned, or clients felt that they were on hold for too long. The reasons provided by the CI&SC for the increase in complaints this quarter were:

“This Quarter saw a very high number of phone contacts with the CI&SC following the ICS Exports Release in September and full cutover to the new system from 6 October. Callers experienced longer than usual wait times because of this, but with the Sydney office relocation on 6 December and the related upgrade in telephony, complaints quickly declined over the remainder of the month”.

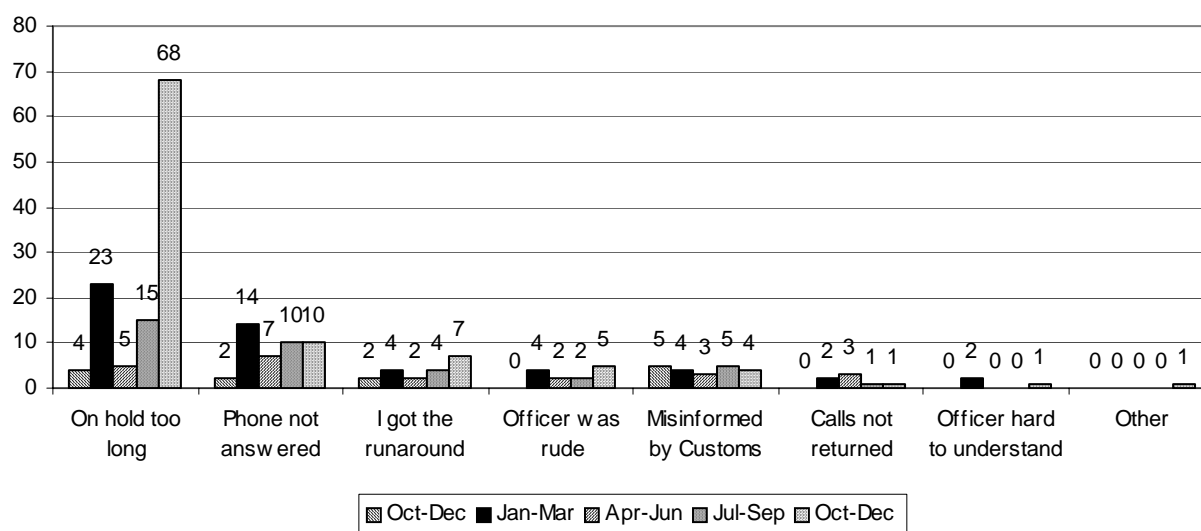


Figure 1. Comparison of CI&SC complaints for the previous five quarters

During the period 1 October to 31 December 2004 **157,628** enquiries were received by the CI&SC.

The number of complaints received was **97** during this quarter which is **1** complaint for every **1,625** 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
October	45	52,507	6,519	2,281	61,307	1,362
November	37	41,078	6,690	2,180	49,948	1,350
December	15	37,278	7,022	2,073	46,373	3,092

Table 2. Number of complaints lodged at the CI&SC compared to the number of calls received for October - December 2004

Compliments

The CI&SC received **26** compliments this quarter (**19** were received last quarter). All compliments related to officers being helpful and informative.

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 is:

- 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:

Other Comments

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