

National Report

April to June 2002



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Executive Summary

This is the fifth national report for the Complaints and Compliments Management System (CCMS) covering the period April to June 2002.

Total number of complaint issues for the period = 358. This compares to 455 for the previous quarter which is a decrease of 21.3%.

Total number of compliments offered = 224. This compares to 242 for the previous quarter which is a decrease of 7.4%.

Complaints about 'Staff Attitude' are the top issue this quarter, with 40 representing 8.8% of the total complaints received.

The total number of travellers in and out of Australia for the quarter was 3,945,529.

Complaints referred to other agencies / organisations account for 8.4% (33 issues) of total complaint received.

The majority of compliments received were about "helpful staff" (64), and "informative staff" (50).

Average resolution time for complaints is 4.86 days compared to 4.11 for the previous quarter. This is a slight increase but well within the 15 day response standard.

Average response time to compliments is 0.90 days, compared to 0.69 days for the previous quarter.

Recommendation:

Staff attitude features as the top complaint, indicating a continuing trend worthy of note to managers.

Introduction

The fifth national report for the Complaints and Compliments Management System (CCMS) covers the period April to June 2002 and trend information for the 12 month period July 2001 to June 2002.

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

The national database for the CCMS, *Satisfy2000*, allows for the collection and analysis of complaints and compliments received by Customs. The database also has the capacity to provide customised reports to meet specific needs of managers, on request.

In the previous two reports we have attempted to provide trend data on the rate of TRS complaints per 1,000 claims. The third party service provider is unable to provide the required data to achieve this in a timely manner. As a result this information will not be included in this report. If you require these statistics please contact your regional coordinator.

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:

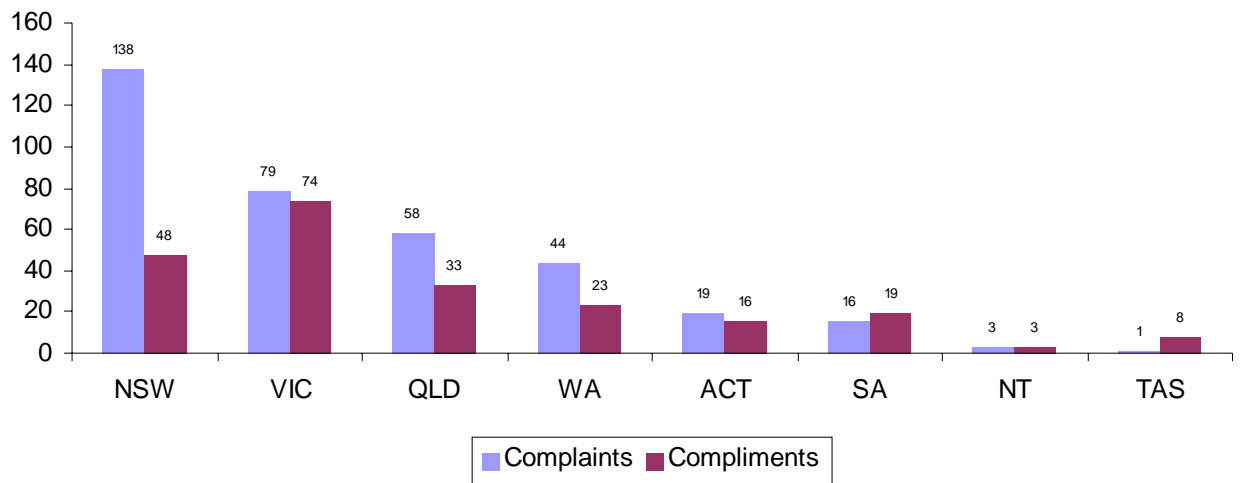
| | |
|--------------|---|
| Kaye Barron | 42 5450 (Manager Client Service Policy) or |
| Garry Dennis | 42 2023 (Acting National Coordinator CCMS). |

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.

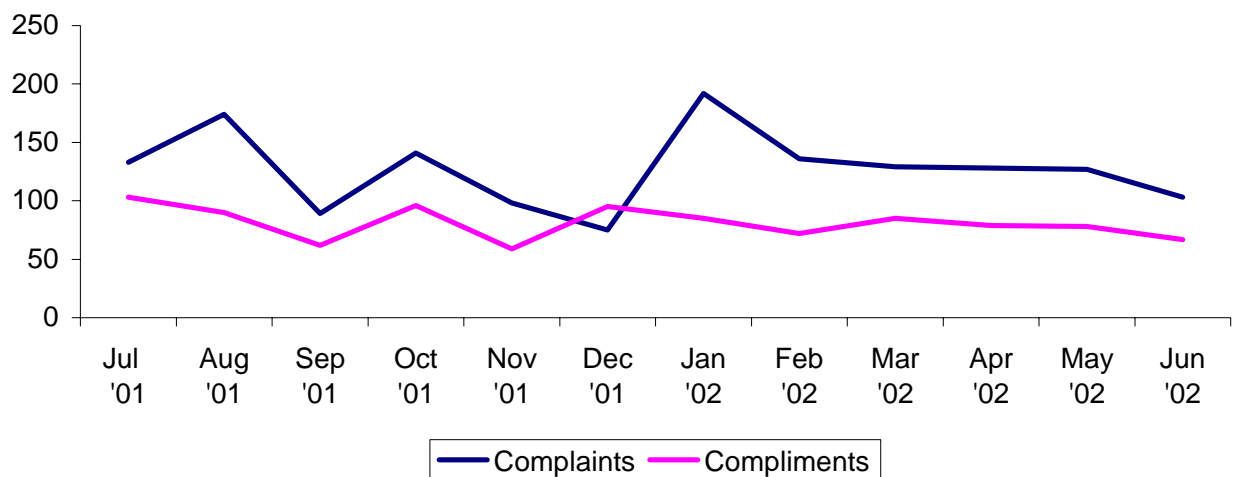
Complaint and Compliment Issues

Issues by Region

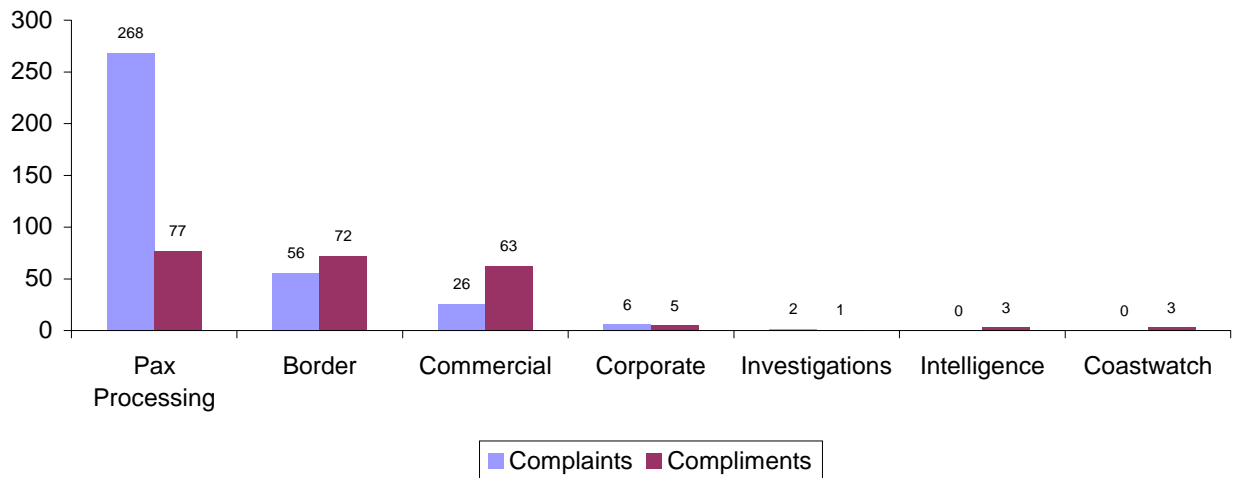


Total complaint issues received for this quarter is 358, compared to 455 for the previous quarter. Total compliments offered for this quarter is 224, compared to 242 for the previous quarter.

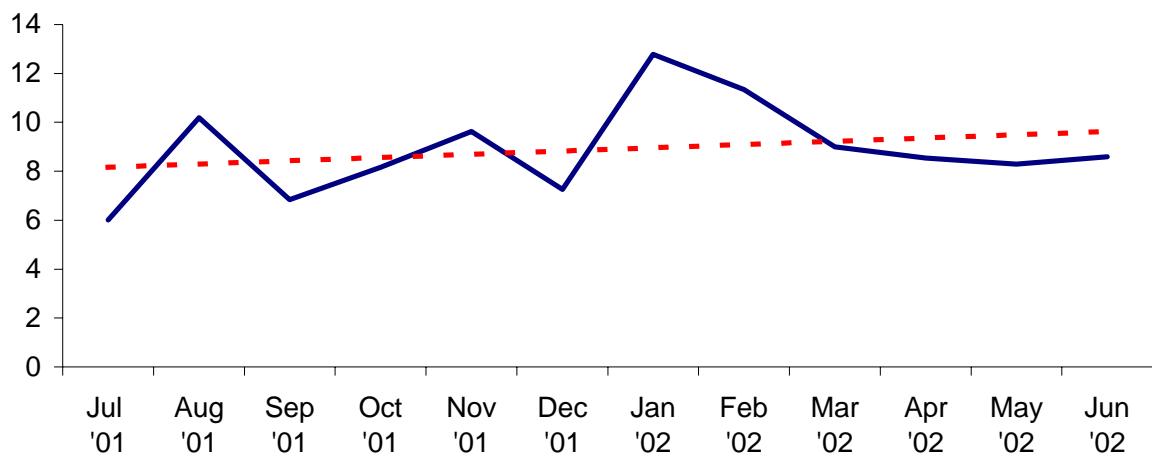
Trend by Issues



Issues by Division



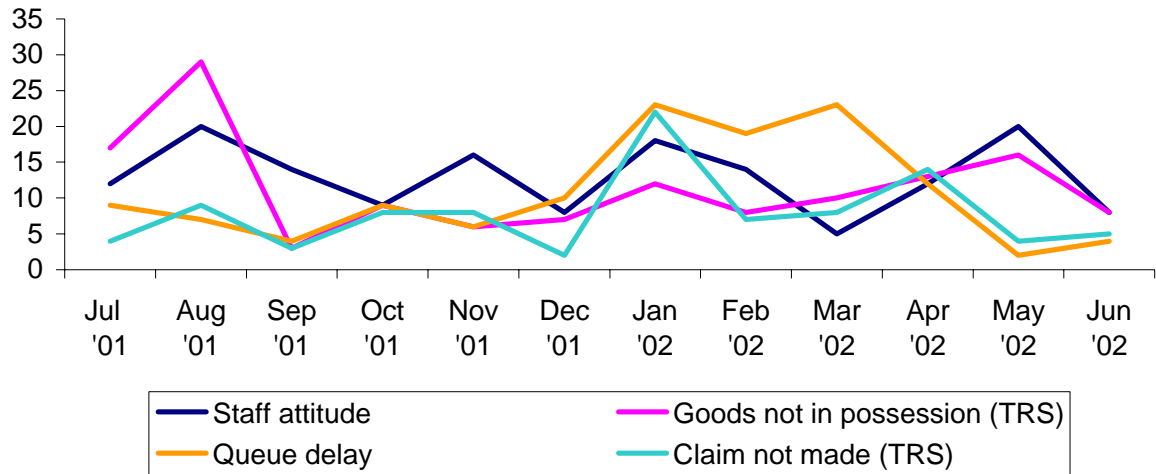
Rate of passenger processing complaints per 100 000 incoming international air passengers, last 12 months



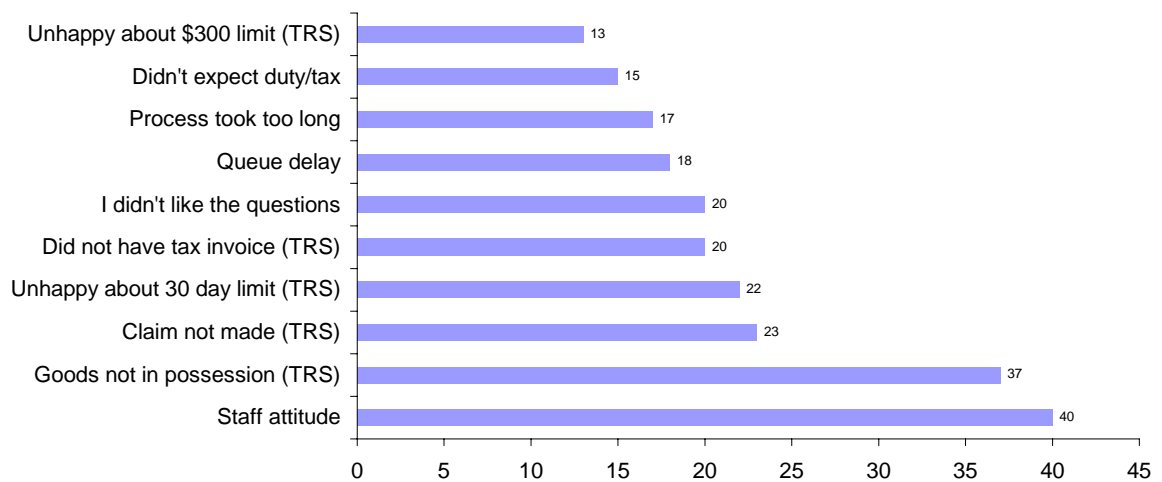
The rate of passenger processing complaints per 100 000 incoming international air passengers during the period July 2001 – June 2002 has ranged from 6.02 to 12.78 and has increased over the period by 4.6%.

Complaints

Trend by Complaint Issues



Main Complaint Issues



Staff Attitude

The top complaint for this quarter is 'Staff attitude', with a total of 40 (11.2%), compared to 37 in the previous quarter. As illustrated in the Trend graph on page 6, complaints about 'Staff attitude' continue to feature as an issue of note.

| Staff attitude | Jan to Mar | Apr to Jun |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Baggage | 20 | 17 |
| Primary Line | 9 | 13 |
| TRS | 3 | 4 |
| Postal Operations | 1 | 2 |
| Air Cargo Compliance | 0 | 1 |
| Commercial Compliance | 0 | 1 |
| Cargo Exams | 0 | 1 |
| Sierra | 2 | 1 |
| Case Activity (Invest) | 1 | 0 |
| Corporate | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 37 | 40 |

Tourist Refund Scheme

In the first quarter of 2002, 164 complaints relating to TRS were received. This represents 36.0% of total complaints. In the second quarter, 140 complaints were received representing 39.1% of total complaints.

| TRS Issues | Jan to Mar | Apr to Jun |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Goods not in possession | 30 | 37 |
| Claim not made | 35 | 23 |
| Unhappy about 30 day limit | 19 | 22 |
| Did not have tax invoice | 27 | 20 |
| Unhappy about \$300 limit | 19 | 13 |
| Unhappy about 30 minute rule | 11 | 6 |
| Staff attitude | 3 | 4 |
| No refund for services | 2 | 3 |
| Process not explained | 1 | 3 |
| Unhappy about refund | 2 | 3 |
| Lack of information | 6 | 2 |
| Misinformed by retailer | 1 | 2 |
| Goods exported unaccompanied | 5 | 1 |
| Queue delay | 0 | 1 |
| Misinformed by Customs | 2 | 0 |
| Unhappy about mail back facility | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 164 | 140 |

Referral to other agencies

Customs continues to receive complaints from clients about issues which they perceive are Customs responsibility, but which are actually owned by other agencies / organisations. In this quarter, 33 complaints were referred to other agencies (8.4% of total complaint contacts). This compares to 50 (9.9%) received in the previous quarter.

When Customs receives these complaints, the client is notified of the correct authority. The matter is then referred to the appropriate agency / organisation.

Other Complaint Issues

The remaining 113 complaints are spread over 23 separate issues. When combined, these issues cover a number of Customs processes including:

Search / Examination

Comments from clients were about why they were selected for baggage examination; racist selection; why they were repeatedly selected for examination; or that the examination was too thorough (eg examining personal documents).

Processing of People and Goods

This relates to clients expressing dissatisfaction about goods missing, or being damaged, withheld or seized; about queuing systems in place; being unhappy about the process; or that the process was not explained.

Payment Issues

Complaints from clients included the unexpected requirement to pay fees.

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 "Lack of information"; "Misinformed by Customs"; "I got the run around"; and "Documentation issues".

More specific information is available from the Acting National Coordinator, or from dedicated coordinators in each region (Refer Attachment A).

Selected Client Comments – Complaints

Staff Attitude

Case 106167

“Client rang to complain about her dealings with staff at Postal Operations in Brisbane. She received an Assessment Notice in the amount of \$145.00. She had imported 5 pairs of shoes, and had imported similar in the past, but has never been charged duty. She spoke to 2 staff members, and claims to have been given different information from both, but was most concerned at the way the second spoke to her. Client claims that he intimated that she was lying about previous shipments, and that he said that Customs would now charge her duty on them. Apparently the conversation became quite heated, resulting in the officer hanging up.”

Case 105938

“I wish to complain about a customs officer on the desk for flight crew and APEC card holders at Sydney Airport. I have an APEC card, followed the signs as usual, presented the card, passport and paperwork to this officer and was told brusquely to go and join the end of the normal queue. She insisted that 'we do not accept that card any more' and 'it is out of date' and a series of other incorrect statements. Her behaviour was unnecessarily rude and obstructive.”

TRS

Case 105726

“We had a piece of oversized luggage (didgeridoo) to claim back the GST on. The attendant on oversize luggage told us it was problematic to claim back GST on our item as it created problems for the airlines and getting it on board at the gate would be difficult. He said it was the fault of customs because they are located past the security barrier instead of in the foyer where the luggage is checked in. THIS SHOULD NOT BE OUR PROBLEM!! It made our journey very stressful!!”

Case 105984

“I spent \$1,500 to purchase goods subject to the GST. I arrived three hours before the flight to claim the refund. Unfortunately there were too many people on the queue (about 30 waiting for service), and every hour only 5-7 people were served. You do not provide high standard customer service, or enough staff for the service. How can people need 5-6 hours before their flight to claim the refund. Sounds like Australia does not like overseas tourist claiming the refund.”

Case 105983

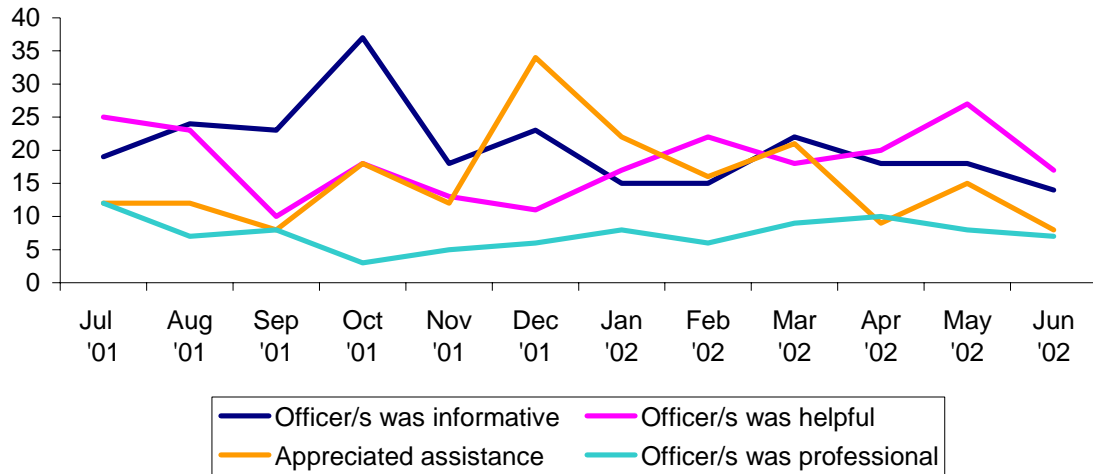
“When I purchased the camera, the salesperson failed to mention I only had 30 days to collect the tax portion of the invoice. Imagine my surprise when I recently traveled (40+ days later) and the officer had to deliver the bad news. Please find enclosed the original invoice and letter of rejection advice.”

Case 106118

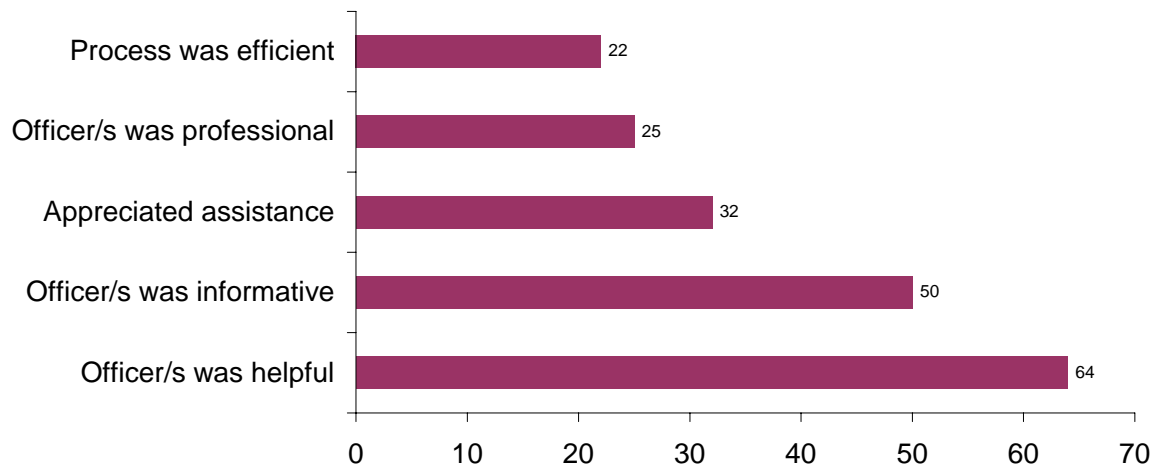
“I purchased an outfit with a price of \$790.00. I was unable to apply for a refund of the GST as I left Melbourne as the receipt was in the bag in my suitcase. Silly me. Is it possible to post or fax the receipt to you in order to ask for a refund? The tax was \$71.82.”

Compliments

Trend by Compliment Issues



Main Compliments Offered



Officer was helpful

The main compliment offered this quarter was 'Officer was helpful', with a total of 64 (28.6%).

| Officer was helpful | Jan to Mar | Apr to Jun |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Pax Processing | 26 | 26 |
| Border | 19 | 20 |
| Commercial | 11 | 18 |
| Total | 56 | 64 |

Officer was informative

The second top compliment offered this quarter was 'Officer was informative', with a total of 50 (22.3%).

| Officer was informative | Jan to Mar | Apr to Jun |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Commercial | 34 | 31 |
| Border | 10 | 14 |
| Pax Processing | 4 | 3 |
| Corporate | 2 | 2 |
| Intelligence | 2 | 0 |
| Total | 52 | 50 |

Referral to other agencies

Customs also receives compliments from clients about issues which they perceive are Customs responsibility, but which are actually owned by other agencies / organisations. In this quarter, 2 compliments were referred to other agencies (0.1% of total compliment contacts). This compares to 2 (0.1%) received in the previous quarter.

Other Compliments Offered

The remaining 31 compliments are spread over 4 separate issues. They are "Officers were friendly"; "Officers were efficient"; "Appreciated facilitation"; and "Easy to use".

Selected Client Comments - Compliments

Officer was helpful

Case 105798

"I am writing to you to inform you of the excellent customer service that I received from one of your staff members. The officer assisted me in trying to find lost items from a parcel that my son had sent his Grandparents. The officer showed empathy in my concern for the photos and letter that had been misplaced and investigated all avenues. I just would like to convey my many thanks to the Officer for his efforts in attempting to find them and alleviate my concerns about them."

Case 105847

"All staff we encountered were helpful, courteous and efficient. We had a minor problem (not Customs fault) which was dealt with immediately. All procedures were carefully and clearly explained. Wait times were minimal."

Case 106202

"I do not travel overseas regularly and do not know the procedures. The customs officer helped me with paper work and regulation that must be carried out. She was both polite and very helpful."

Case 106175

"My contact with Customs was in Melbourne at the TRS Booth. I dropped my UK driving License in the booth and was very pleased to have it returned to me in the UK less than a week later. Excellent service, thanks to Officer."

Officer was informative

Case 105853

"Darwin recently conducted a preparation course for United Nations Military Observers deploying to East Timor. A range of subject matter experts were drawn from throughout Australia and East Timor to deliver training and preparation briefings. Australian Customs contributed, providing an informative and professionally delivered presentation for which I offer our sincere thanks. I look forward to continued cooperation between our agencies."

Case 105875

"It is with great pleasure that I write on behalf of the members of the Dromana Bay Probus Club thanking you for the most interesting talk on the Australian Customs Service and informing us on many facts we were not aware of. The members thoroughly enjoyed it, and many thanks for the little gifts we received."

Case 105956

"Many thanks for visiting us at I.S.P. Your talk was interesting. I was glad to see these grade eights so interested. We all appreciate you giving us your valuable time."

Performance Against Service Standards

The CCMS 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 within 15 working days of receipt and, if we cannot, we will explain why there is a delay and advise the client when we will reply in full.

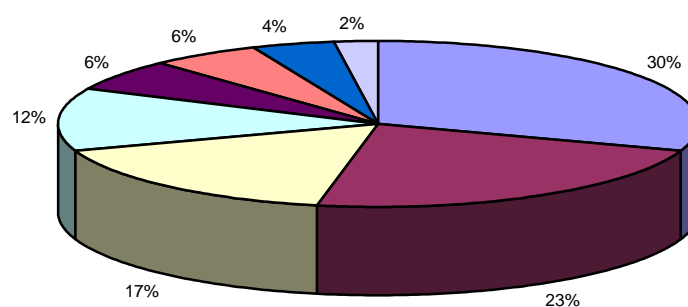
In acknowledging complaints, the CCMS met the time standard for every issue during the quarter.

In responding to clients, there were 27 issues where Customs did not respond within 15 working days. For 14 of these issues, the client was advised of the delay in responding to their complaint.

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

| | April | May | June | Average |
|-------------|-------|------|------|---------|
| Complaints | 7.79 | 3.96 | 4.02 | 4.86 |
| Compliments | 0.82 | 0.86 | 1.01 | 0.90 |

How People Contact Us



| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-----------|-------|
| Brochure | Letter | Email | Staff |
| Ministerial | 1800 228 227 | Telephone | Other |

Written communication continues to be the most popular form by which people provide feedback, with brochures, letters and emails accounting for 70%, as illustrated above.