



Australian Government
Australian Customs Service



Complaints and Compliments
National Quarterly Report
January-March 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 January to March 2004. All statistical data included in this report was extracted on 7 April 2004. Where appropriate, comparative tables and graphs are provided for previous reporting periods.

Executive summary

Complaints

A total number of **405** complaints were reported about Customs compared with **390** in the previous quarter. The top three complaints were: "Process took too long" (**55**), "Officer was rude" (**45**) and "Queue delay" (**40**).

The number of complaints in March was the highest for **26** months.

Compliments

A total number of **233** compliments were reported about Customs compared with **239** in the previous quarter. The top three compliments were: "Appreciated assistance" (**71**), "Officer/s was helpful" (**66**) and "Officer/s was professional" (**31**).

The number of compliments in March was the highest for **15** months.

Service Standards

The average complaint resolution time of **10.62** days reported in the previous quarter has decreased to **8.12** days. The average compliment resolution time of **1.21** days reported in the previous quarter has increased to **1.29** days. These resolution times are within the 15 day service standard.

Significant variations in the December Quarter

General

The following Complaints and Compliments issues are highlighted as areas where a significant variation, increase or decrease, has occurred compared to the previous quarter. Explanations are provided by relevant Regional CCMS Coordinators or specific work areas where required.

Type of Complaint – “Process took too long”

The complaint “Process took too long” decreased nationally from **74** to **55**. This decrease occurred mainly in Enforcement Operations within the Container Examinations Facility (CEF) – from **51** to **29**.

Type of Complaint – “Officer was rude”

The complaint of “Officer was rude” increased nationally from **29** to **45** during this quarter. Areas which had an increase were:

- Baggage area from **3** to **10** (**4** in Melbourne and **3** in Adelaide),
- Enforcement from **8** to **13** (**7** in Sydney),
- CI&SC (Sydney) had an increase from **0** to **4**, and
- TRS had an increase from **2** to **6** (**4** of which occurred in Sydney).

The Primary Line decreased the number of complaints for this issue (from **8** to **3**).

Type of Complaint – “Queue delay”

Passenger Processing, nationally, has seen an increase in “Queue delay” complaints with **40** received this quarter compared to **31** previously.

- The Primary Line received **28** complaints (compared to **22** last quarter). Melbourne Airport received **10** complaints, Sydney Airport received **9** complaints and Perth Airport received **7** complaints for this period.
- TRS had **5** complaints about this issue, **3** of which occurred in Sydney.

Other Issue

Travel Document Readers - The first complaints received about travel document readers were recorded this quarter. A total of **4** complaints were recorded at Sydney Airport (SAP) (see Annex A).

Complaint by Work Area – Passengers Division

A total of **202** complaints were registered for Passengers Division in the first quarter, compared with **150** for the December quarter (see Annex A).

Complaint by Work Area – Customs Information & Support Centre (CI&SC)

A total of **53** complaints were recorded for the CI&SC, an increase of **15** for the previous quarter (see Annex C).

Complaint by Work Area – Container Examination Facility (CEF)

A total of **46** complaints were recorded for the CEF in the first quarter, a decrease from **87** from the previous quarter (See Annex D).

1. National Trends

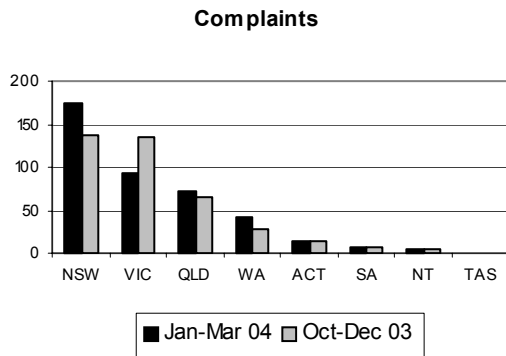


Figure 1. Total number of complaints by region comparing October - December 2003 with January - March 2004

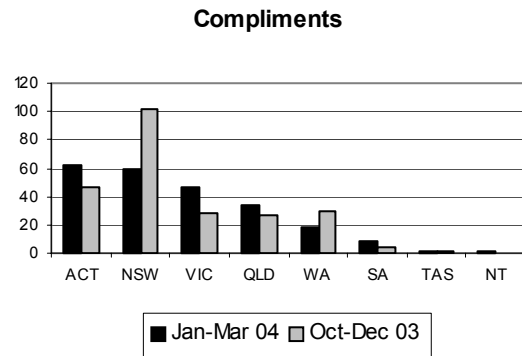


Figure 2. Total number of compliments by region comparing October - December 2003 with January - March 2004

Comparing against the previous quarterly figures (excluding referrals), an increase in complaints occurred in New South Wales (+37), Queensland (+7) and Western Australia (+13), while Victoria experienced a reduction (-41). The Australian Capital Territory remained static with 14 complaints, South Australia with 8, Northern Territory with 4 and Tasmania with 0.

A comparison of national trends for compliments between this quarter and the previous quarter (excluding referrals) revealed increases in Victoria (+18), the Australian Capital Territory (+15), South Australia (+5), Northern Territory (+2) and Queensland (+7). New South Wales (-43) and Western Australia (-10) experienced reductions. Tasmania remained static with 2 compliments.

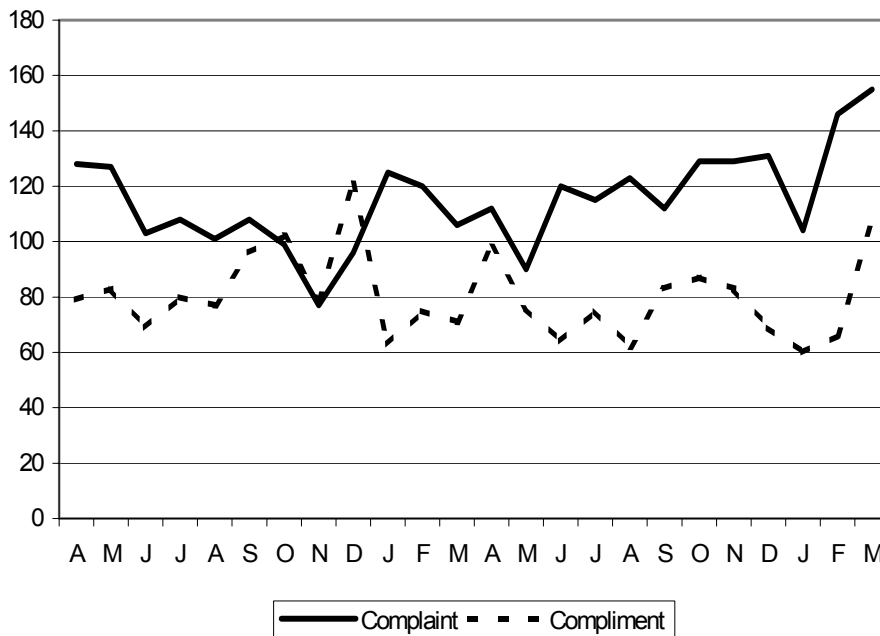


Figure 3. National trends April 2002 - March 2004

Comparison with Previous Quarter by Division

Complaints

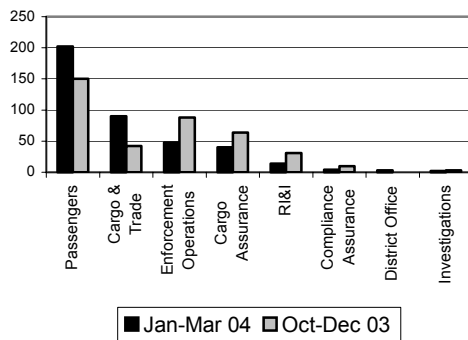


Figure 4. Total number of complaints by division comparing October - December 2003 with January - March 2004

Compliments

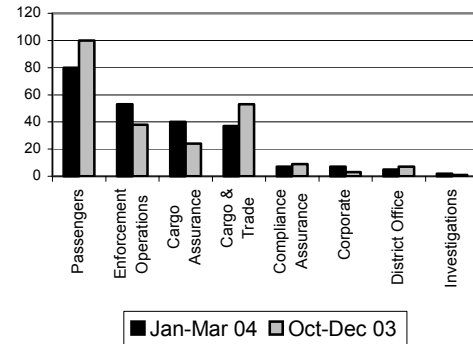


Figure 5. Total number of compliments by division comparing October - December 2003 with January - March 2004

Comparing figures against the previous quarter reveal an increase in complaint numbers for Passengers **(+52)**, Cargo & Trade **(+48)** and District Offices **(+3)**. A reduction in complaint numbers was experienced in Enforcement Operations **(-40)**, Cargo Assurance **(-24)**, RI&I **(-17)**, Compliance Assurance **(-6)** and Investigations **(-1)**. Corporate has not changed **(1)**.

The largest increase in complaints in Passengers (see Annex A) was attributed to the Enforcement role with **56** complaints compared to **33** complaints last quarter. This increase of **23** complaints largely relates to the issues of 'officer was rude' **(+5)** and 'didn't like the questions' **(+3)**.

The largest increase in complaints in Cargo & Trade (see Annex B) was attributed to the Customs Information & Support Centre (CI&SC) which had **53** complaints compared to **15** complaints last quarter (see Annex C). This increase of **38** complaints largely relates to the issues of 'On hold too long' **(+19)** and 'Phone not answered' **(+12)**.

Compliment figures for this quarter compared to the previous quarter indicate a decrease for Passengers **(-20)**, Cargo & Trade **(-16)**, Compliance Assurance **(-2)**, District Offices **(-2)**, RI&I **(-1)** and Coastwatch **(-1)** while increases were experienced in Enforcement Operations **(+15)**, Cargo Assurance **(+16)**, Corporate **(+4)** and Investigation **(+1)**.

A more detailed analysis of complaints and compliments for Passengers, Cargo & Trade, the CI&SC and the Container Examination Facility (CEF) are provided in Annexes A-D.

2. Type of Complaint

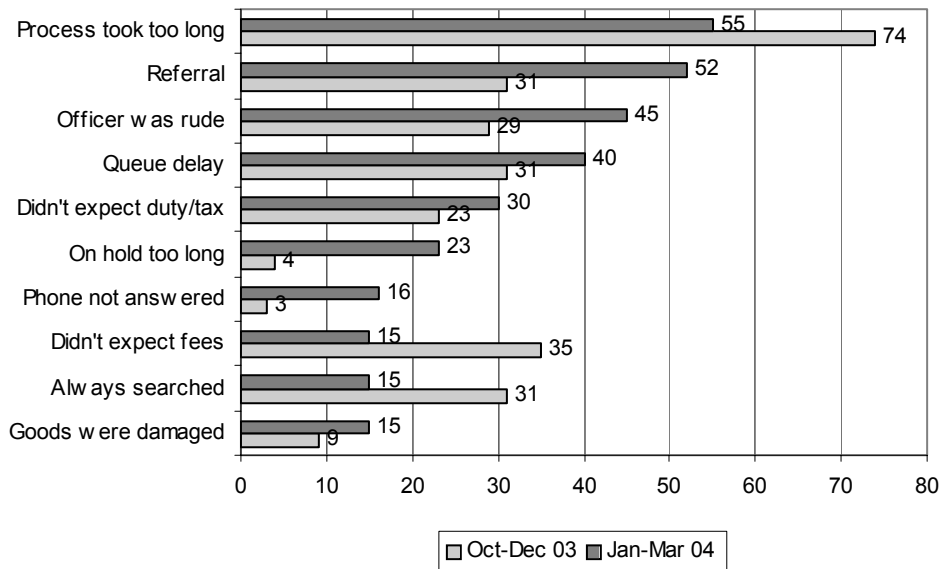


Figure 6. National Top 10 Complaints October-December 2003 and January – March 2004

A total number of **405** complaints were made for this quarter (excluding referrals). This compares to **390** for the previous quarter and represents a **3.85%** increase.

The top four issues (including referrals) were:

- **Process took too long (55):** Enforcement Operations received this complaint most often with **30** complaints, **29** of which were for the CEF (see Annex D).
- **Referral (52):** **23** of the **52** referral complaints were for AQIS.
- **Officer was rude (45):** This occurred **34** times in Passengers. The majority of these were classified against Enforcement (**13**) and Baggage (**10**).
- **Queue Delay (40):** All of these complaints occurred in Passengers, **28** of which occurred at the Primary Line.

3. Type of Compliment

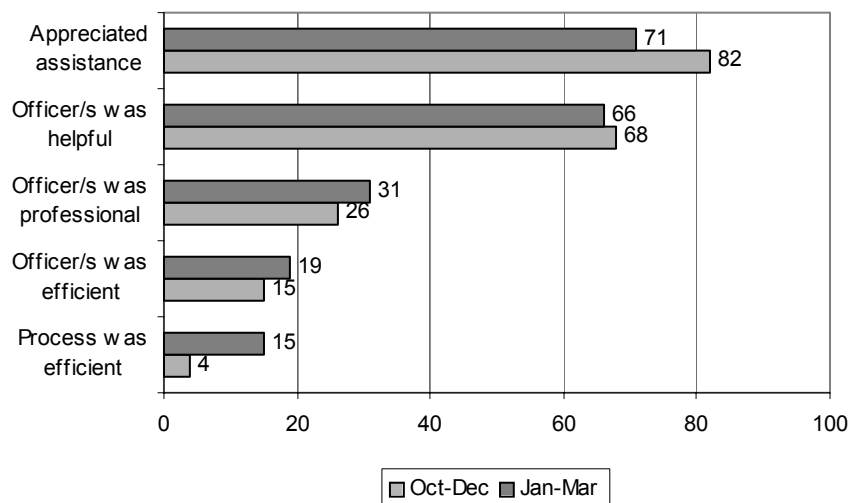


Figure 7. National top 5 compliments October – December 2003 and January- March 2004

A total of **233** compliments were registered for this quarter (excluding referrals). This compares to **239** for the previous quarter. The following provide a summary of the top three issues:

- **Appreciated assistance (71):** The National Marine Unit (NMU) received this compliment most frequently (**50**). This is due to high levels of operational interaction with client groups. Passengers (Liaison) also received this compliment (**12**).
- **Officer/s was helpful (66):** Cargo Assurance received this compliment most frequently with **25**. **16** of these were for Postal Operations. Cargo and Trade received **20** compliments with **12** being for the CI&SC.
- **Officer was professional (31):** Passengers received this compliment most frequently with **11**.

4. Referrals to other agencies

Where a complaint or compliment is 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 **52** complaints and **6** compliments. The three main agencies for referrals were AQIS (**29**), Australia Post (**7**) and brokers (**6**).

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.

In responding to clients there were **9** cases out of a total of **696** cases registered (including referrals) where Customs did not meet the 15 working day benchmark (**1.29%**).

Average resolution times (in days) for the **696** complaint and compliment issues reported during this quarter are as follows:

	January	February	March	Average
Complaint	7.38	8.40	8.42	8.12
Compliment	2.62	0.75	0.80	1.29

6. How People Contact Us

The main methods for contacting Customs during this quarter were by email (**180**), phone (including the 1800 number) (**163**), brochure (**138**), letter (**81**) and remote entry (**68**). During this quarter clients tended to use email and letters more often.

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 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

There were **202** complaints registered for Passengers during this quarter, a increase of 34.67%. (The number of passengers arriving in Australia increased by 1.66% this quarter). This increase in client complaints occurred primarily in the enforcement area with the issue 'Officer was rude' in both New South Wales **(7)** and Queensland **(5)**.

A comparison of Passengers complaints is shown in Table 1 below.

Branch	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar
Enforcement	33	56
Primary Line	45	51
TRS	32	47
Baggage	32	43
Other activity	4	3
Enquiry Counter	0	2
Client Education	4	0
Total	150	202

Table 1. Passengers complaints - comparative assessment
October-December 2003 and January- March 2004

Figure 1 below compares New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland against the national trend for Passengers complaints for the previous twelve months.

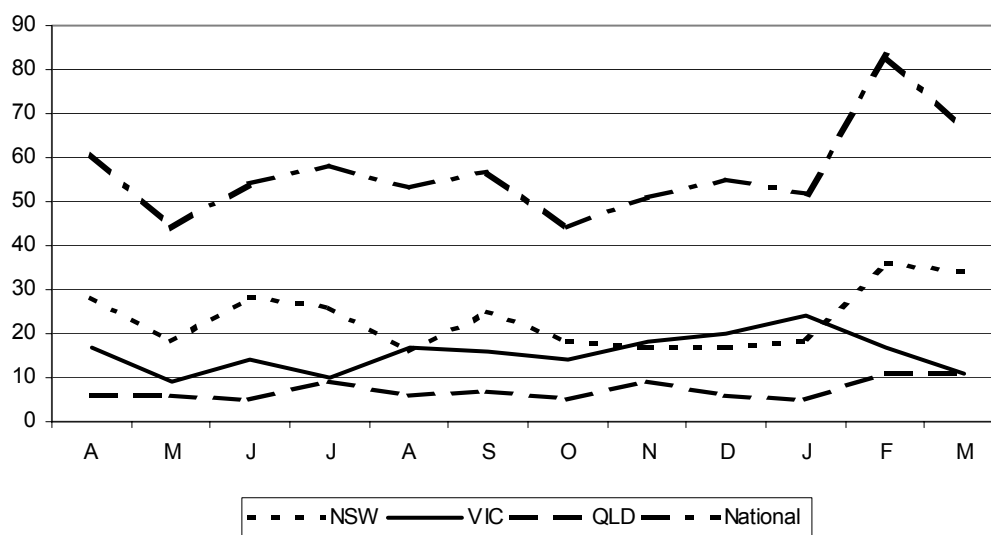


Figure 1. Trend Graph of New South Wales, Victorian and Queensland Passengers complaints shown with the national trend for April 2003 – March 2004

Figure 2 below compares complaints received by each of the airports during this quarter.

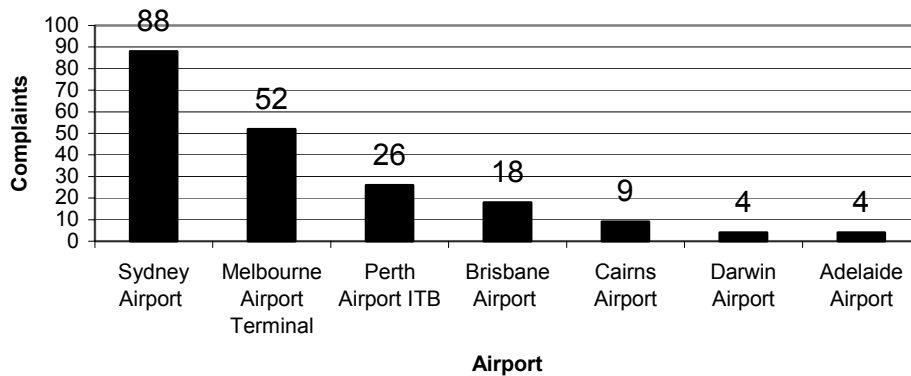


Figure 2. Passenger Complaints at each Airport for January – March 2004

A total of **47** complaints were received about the TRS. Of the **47** TRS complaints **31** occurred in NSW compared to **20** last quarter. A comparison of the top five TRS complaints is shown in Table 2 below.

Symptom	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar
Lack of information	6	6
Misinformed by retailer	2	6
Officer was rude	2	6
Queue delay	3	5
Unhappy about 30 minute rule	1	5
Goods not in possession	6	4

Table 2. Top 5 TRS complaints - comparative assessment
October-December 2003 and January- March 2004

Travel document readers were installed in all Australian international airports during this quarter and were funded under a Government Counter Terrorism initiative. One of the checks applied to Australian passports has resulted in higher than expected referral rates. Customs is working with the technology providers to resolve the technical issues that are creating the abnormal referrals.

Sydney Airport received **4** complaints about the travel document readers.

During the period 1 January to 31 March 2004 **2,503,127** passengers arrived through international airports nationally. Numbers of passengers arriving through each major airport are shown in Table 3 below.

Airport	Number of Airport Complaints	Passenger Arrival Numbers	Number of Passengers for Every Complaint
Sydney	88	1,145,077	13,012
Melbourne	52	532,878	10,247
Brisbane	18	403,627	22,423
Perth	26	244,159	9,390

Table 3. Number of complaints lodged at major airports compared to the number of arrival passengers for January- March 2004

The number of complaints received nationally for Passengers was **202** during this quarter which is 1 complaint for every 12,391 passengers arriving.

You will note from the above table that Brisbane airport had the lowest number of complaints per passenger arrival, and Perth airport had the highest number of complaints per passenger arrival.

Compliments

There were **80** compliments for Passengers during this quarter, representing a decrease of **20%**. See a comparison in Table 4 below.

Branch	Oct-Dec 03	Jan-Mar 04
Baggage	3	18
Primary line	26	18
Enforcement	13	12
TRS	8	11
Liaison	27	10
Enquiry Counter	7	5
Other activity	12	4
Client education	4	2
Total	100	80

*Table 4. Passenger compliments - comparative assessment
October – December 2003 and January- March 2004*

Cargo & Trade

Complaints

There were **90** complaints registered for Cargo & Trade during this quarter (an increase from **42** last quarter).

Branch	Oct-Dec 03	Jan-Mar 04
CI&SC	15	53
Counter	2	10
Client Education	3	6
Entry Processing	13	7
Import Clearance	6	6
Sea Cargo	0	3
Temporary Imports	0	3
Other Activity	0	2
CPR	3	0
Total	42	90

*Table 1. Cargo & Trade complaints - comparative assessment
October-December 2003 and January- March 2004*

The increase in Cargo & Trade complaints during this quarter was mainly in the CI&SC area (see Annex C) and in the Counter area in Brisbane. Entry processing complaints reduced during this quarter.

Compliments

There were **37** compliments for Cargo & Trade during this quarter (a decrease from **53** last quarter). See a comparison in Table 2 below.

Issue	Oct-Dec 03	Jan-Mar 04
Officer/s was helpful	29	20
Officer/s was professional	5	8
Officer/s was efficient	8	5
Appreciated assistance	6	1
Officer/s was friendly	2	1
Officer/s was informative	3	1
Process was efficient	0	1
Total	53	37

*Table 2. Cargo & Trade compliments - comparative assessment
October - December 2003 and January- March 2004*

Postal Operations

The number of complaints for Postal Operations have decreased from **43** to **32**. Due to differing regional structures, figures for Postal Operations are not included in 'Cargo and Trade', but are shown under 'Cargo Assurance'. Some regions include Postal Operations under 'Cargo Assurance' and others include it under 'Border Compliance and Enforcement'. As such the figures have been extracted separately and shown in Table 3 below.

Issue	Oct-Dec 03	Jan-Mar 04
Didn't expect duty/tax	10	6
Goods were damaged	4	5
Goods were missing	7	4
Officer was rude	3	3
Payment facility	0	3
Process took too long	4	3
Misinformed by Customs	1	2
Phone not answered	0	2
Documentation	1	1
Goods were withheld	5	1
Other	0	1
Unhappy with selection	0	1
Examination too thorough	1	0
Goods were seized	4	0
I got the run-around	1	0
Process not explained	2	0
Total	43	32

*Table 3. Postal Operations - comparative assessment
October-December 2003 and January- March 2004*

Postal Operations received **24** compliments during this quarter (**13** of which were in Queensland). See a comparison in Table 4 below.

Issues	Oct-Dec 03	Jan-Mar 04
Officer/s was helpful	9	16
Officer/s was professional	3	3
Officer/s was efficient	1	2
Officer/s was informative	0	1
Appreciated assistance	1	0
Process was efficient	0	2
Total	14	24

*Table 4. Postal Operations compliments - comparative assessment
October – December 2003 and January- March 2004*

Customs Information and Support Centre

Complaints

During this quarter **53** CI&SC complaints were recorded, compared with **15** for the previous quarter. The most common complaint related to the phone (**39**) 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 these complaints were:

- the appreciating Australian dollar was the driver for an inordinate increase in phone calls for traveller and import enquiries which resulted in increased waiting times as reflected in the statistics and which was beyond the capacity of the current system to handle;
- a technical fault was highlighted which involved the initial recorded message cutting in over the top of the ongoing corporate message whilst callers were on 'hold'. Thus the initial message was constantly being repeated, much to the irritation of the caller. This was rectified by the end of February;
- in relation to the 1300 information number specifically, there has been a heightened number of enquiries in firearms and associated regulations as well as in new areas of responsibility for Customs, such as the new ozone controls.

Issue	Oct-Dec 03	Jan-Mar 04
On hold too long	4	23
Phone not answered	2	14
I got the runaround	2	4
Misinformed by Customs	5	4
Officer was rude	0	4
Calls not returned	0	2
Officer was hard to understand	0	2
Process not explained	1	0
Process took too long	1	0
Total	15	53

*Table 1. CI&SC complaint issues - comparative assessment
October – December 2003 and January- March 2004*

Compliments

The CI&SC received **20** compliments this quarter (**21** were received last quarter).

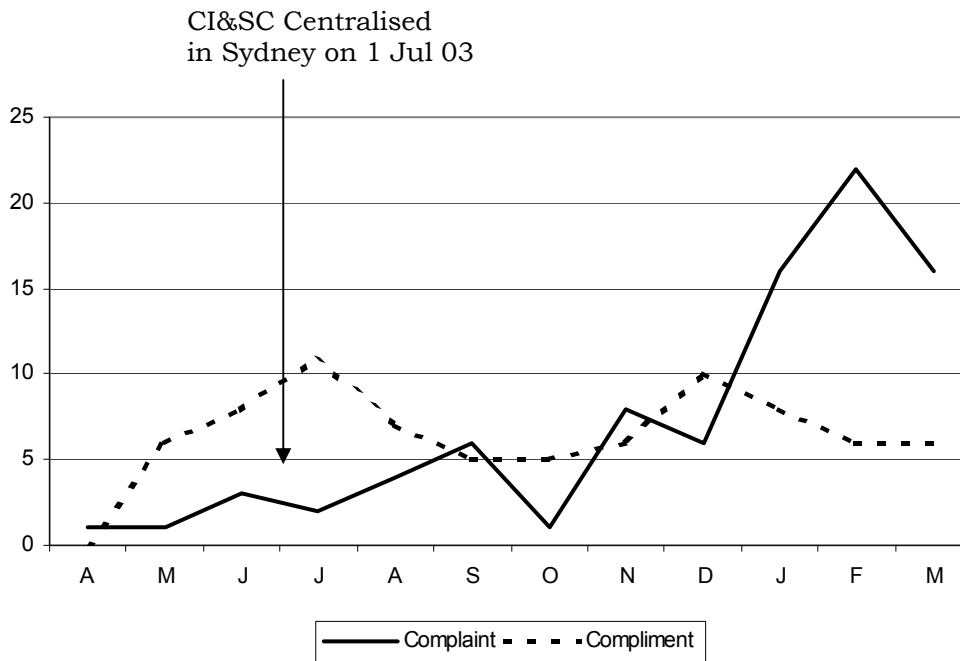


Figure 1. CI&SC monthly trend for April 2003-March 2004

The reduction in complaints in March is related to a reduction in phone related complaints (from **16** complaints in February to **11** complaints in March).

Container Examination Facility (CEF)

The following table provides details of the total number of complaints registered for each of the four CEFs for this quarter (**46** compared to **87** for last quarter – a decrease of **47.12%**).

Issues	ACT	NSW	QLD	VIC	WA	Total
Process took too long	2	4	7	13	3	29
Didn't expect fees	2	0	0	9	1	12
Goods were damaged	0	0	1	1	0	2
Goods were withheld	0	0	0	2	0	2
Payment facility	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	4	4	8	26	4	46

Table 1. National CEF complaints by region for January- March 2004

The two main complaint issues were:

Issue – “Process took too long” (**29**) is a decrease from **51** during the last quarter. This decrease occurred in Sydney (**-13**), Melbourne (**-6**) and Brisbane (**-3**). Canberra and Fremantle each had an increase of **1** complaint.

Issue – “Didn't expect fees” (**12**) is a decrease from **27** during the last quarter. This decrease occurred in Sydney (**-11**), Brisbane (**-4**), Melbourne (**-2**). Canberra and Fremantle each had an increase of **1** complaint.

The **4** cases classified against Canberra were more policy related than operational.

A trend graph for all CEF complaints received since the facilities commenced operations is shown below.

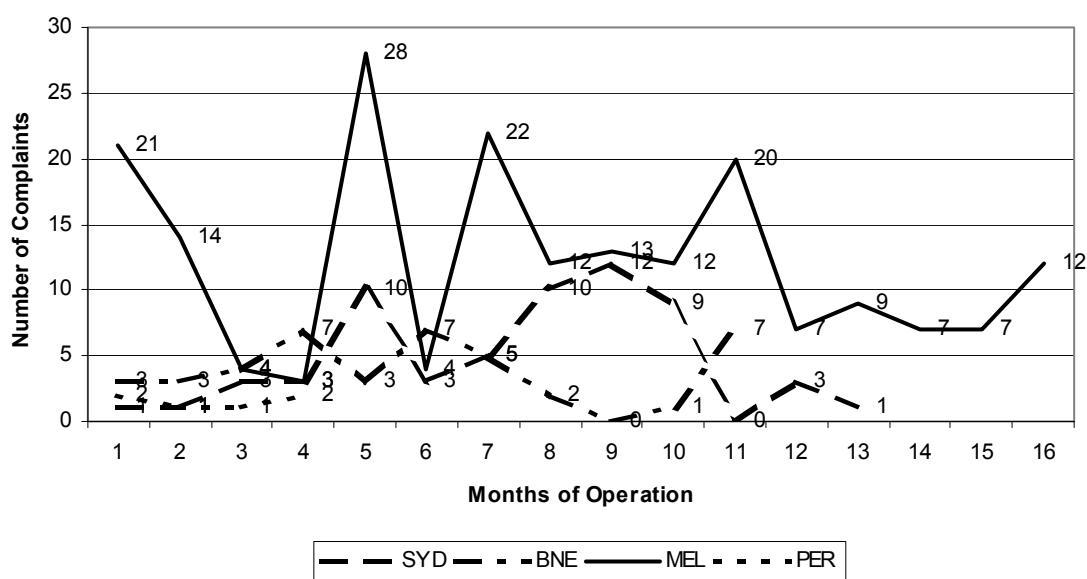


Figure 1. Comparison of complaints re CEF per month of operation eg Melbourne has operated for 16 months, Sydney for 14 months, Brisbane for 13 months and Fremantle for 5 months

During this quarter the number of complaints received nationally for the CEF was **42** (excluding those responded to by the ACT).

Breaking this figure down further:

CEF Location	Number of Complaints	TEUs Examined	Number of TEUs for Every Complaint
Melbourne	26	9621	370
Sydney	4	7612	1903
Brisbane	8	6513	814
Fremantle	4	3186	796

Table 2. Number of complaints lodged compared to the number of TEUs examined for January- March 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.

This is 1 complaint for every **641.23** TEUs examined (excluding those responded to by the ACT). This compares with one complaint for every **242.89** TEUs in the previous quarter.