



Australian Government
Australian Customs Service



Complaints and Compliments
National Quarterly Report
July – September 2003

For further details on any of the information contained in this report please contact Manager Performance Evaluation (42 6138) or National Coordinator (42 6499).

Introduction

This report provides statistical data for complaints and compliments received during the period July to September 2003. All statistical data included in this report was extracted on 20 October 2003. Where appropriate, comparative tables and graphs are provided for previous reporting periods.

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.

Executive summary

Complaints

A total number of **351** complaints were reported compared with **325** in the previous quarter. The top three complaints were: "Process took too long" (**52**) "Officer/s was rude" (**37**) and "Didn't expect fees" (**25**).

Compliments

A total number of **220** compliments were reported compared with **238** in the previous quarter. The top three compliments were: "Officer/s was helpful" (**58**), "Appreciated assistance" (**48**), and "Officer/s was informative" (**28**).

Referrals

Customs referred **54** complaints and **3** compliments to external agencies this quarter compared with **62** complaints and **0** compliments in the previous quarter. AQIS received the most complaints for referral (**23**), followed by airport operator (**7**) and airlines and Australia Post and security operator (each with **6**).

Resolution times

The average complaint resolution time of **9.0** days reported in the previous quarter has increased to **9.4** days. The average compliment resolution time of **1.91** days reported in the previous quarter has decreased to **0.46** days.

Note: These resolution times are within the 15 day service standard

Significant variations

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.

Issue - Queue delay

Passenger Processing, nationally, has seen an increase in “Queue delay” complaints with **20** received this quarter compared to **11** previously. Perth Airport received an additional **6** complaints and Brisbane Airport received an additional **5** complaints for this period. One reason for this increase may be an increase in passengers in Perth, together with some flights arriving out of schedule. The inwards primary area has also recently been refurbished. In addition, some delays in the Baggage Hall have resulted from AQIS work practices which appear to be improving after discussions with Customs. Victoria’s number of complaints regarding “Queue delay” has reduced from **5** to only **2**, and from **37** since the first quarter when problems were encountered with the baggage and primary line at Melbourne Airport.

Issue - Process took too long

The complaint “Process took too long” increased nationally in Passenger Processing from **5** to **13** during this quarter. Perth airport received an additional **4** complaints for this issue. Reasons for this are explained in “Queue Delay” above.

Issue – Always searched

The complaint “Always searched” increased nationally in Passenger Processing from **2** to **9** during this quarter. Melbourne Airport received **5** complaints on this issue compared to **0** last quarter.

Issue – CIC/Helpdesk

The NSW CIC had a rise in complaints from **5** to **12**. At the same time the number of compliments rose from **14** to **23**. Reasons for this are attributed to a greater client awareness of the CIC/Helpdesk facility.

Issue – Didn’t Expect Duty/Tax

Complaints fell from **25** to **14**. This reduction in complaints occurred mainly in both NSW (**11-6**) and Queensland (**7-4**). In these two regions complaints against Postal Operations fell from **8** to **1**.

1. National Trends

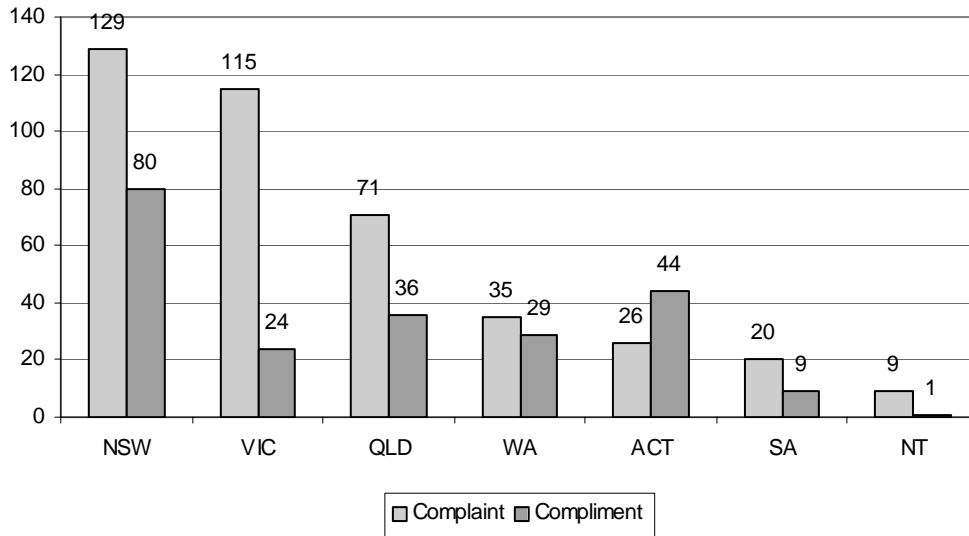


Figure 1. Total number of complaints and compliments by region July - September 2003

Comparing against the previous quarterly figures, an increase in complaints occurred in Queensland (+22), South Australia (+9), New South Wales (+6) and Northern Territory (+5), while Victoria (-7), Western Australia (-5) and the Australian Capital Territory (-4) experienced reductions. Tasmania remained static with 0 complaints.

A comparison of national trends for compliments between this quarter and the previous quarter revealed increases in New South Wales (+24), South Australia (+3) and Western Australia (+1). Victoria (-24), the Australian Capital Territory (-9), Queensland (-7) Northern Territory (-3), and Tasmania (-3) displayed reductions.

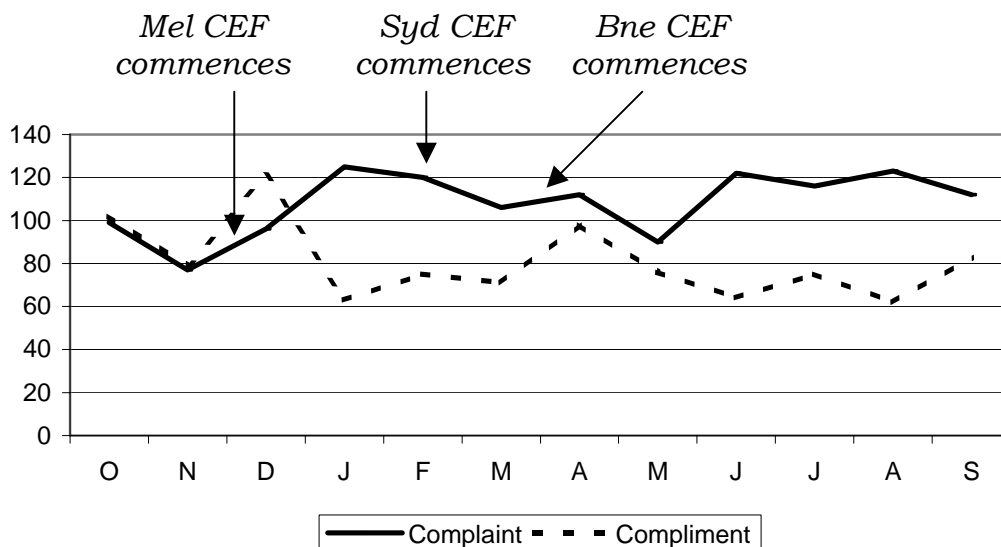


Figure 2. National trends October 2002 – September 2003: month- by-month figures

Annual national trends reveal that total complaint numbers between January and May 2003 declined, before increasing in June 2003 to a level where they have since remained stable. The total number of compliments between April and June 2003 declined but have recently increased.

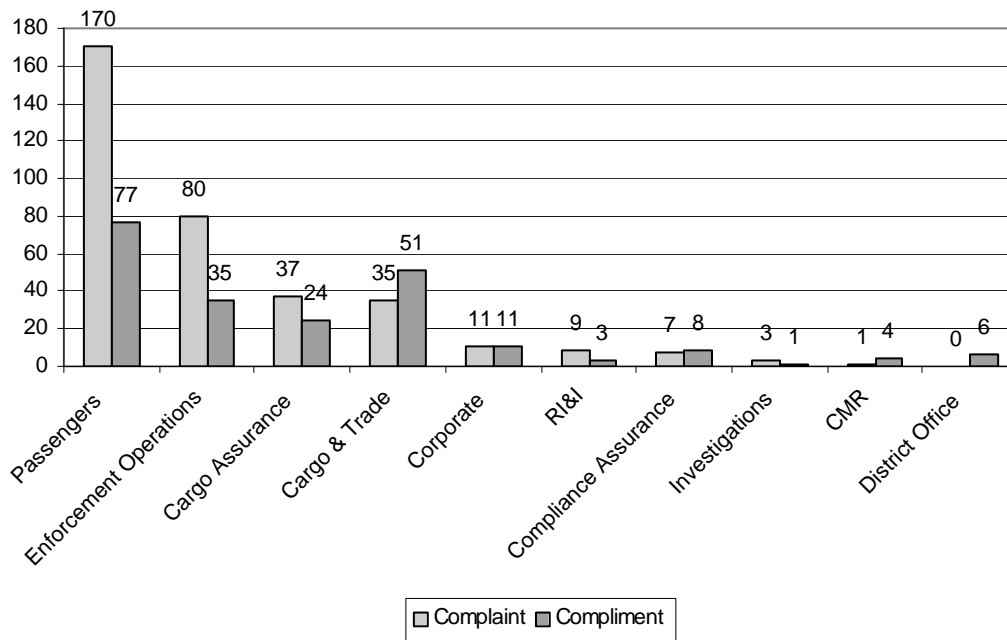


Figure 3: Complaints and compliments by division for July – September 2003

Comparing figures against the previous quarter reveal an increase in complaint numbers for Cargo and Trade **(+16)**, Passengers **(+10)**, RI&I **(+5)**, Compliance Assurance **(+2)**, Investigations **(+2)** and CMR **(+1)**. Enforcement Operations has not changed. A reduction in complaint numbers was experienced in Cargo Assurance **(-5)** and Corporate **(-4)**. The largest increases in complaints were attributed to Cargo and Trade **(+16)** [due to import clearance] **(+8)** and CIC/Helpdesk **(+7)** and Passengers **(+10)** [due to Baggage] **(+7)**. Coastwatch and District Offices continued to receive no complaints.

Compliment figures for this quarter compared to the previous quarter indicate decreases in Enforcement Operations **(-15)**, Cargo Assurance **(-9)**, Cargo & Trade **(-5)**, District Office **(-4)**, Compliance Assurance **(-3)**, RI&I **(-2)** and Coastwatch **(-1)**, while increases were experienced in Passengers **(+10)**, Corporate **(+6)**, CMR **(+3)** and Investigations **(+1)**.

A more detailed analysis of complaints and compliments for Passenger Processing, Cargo and Trade, Tourist Refund Scheme and the Container Examination Facility are provided in Annexes A-D.

2. Complaints

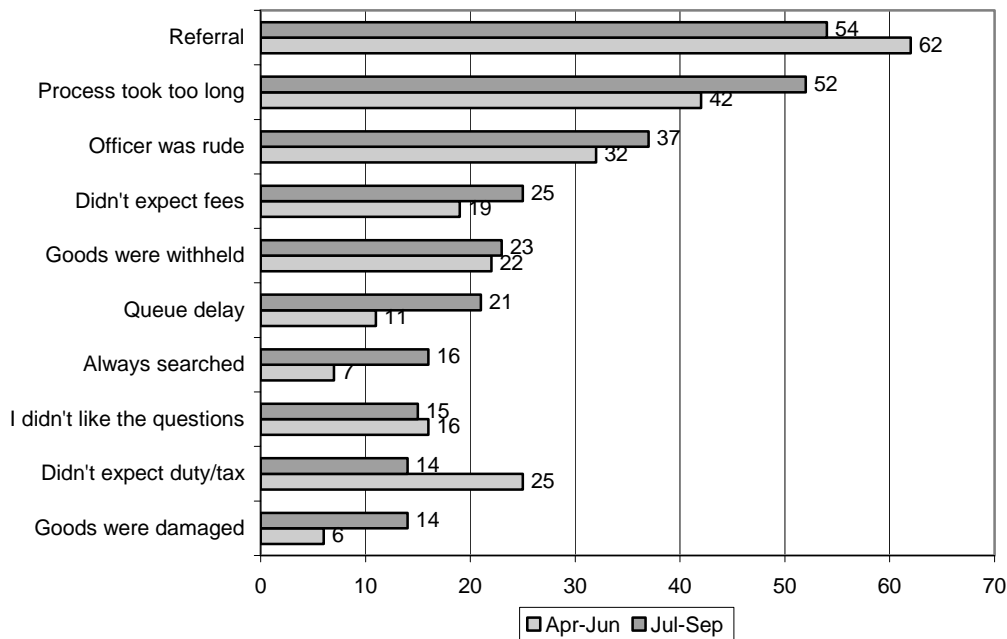


Figure 5. National Top 10 Complaints January – March and April - June 2003

A total number of **351** complaints were made for this quarter (excluding referrals). This compares to **325** for the previous quarter. This represents a **8%** increase from last quarter. The top four issues:

Referral (54): **23** of all referral complaints were to AQIS.

Process took too long (52): The Container Examination Facility received this complaint most often with **26** complaints (**12** of these were from NSW).

Officer/s was rude (37): This occurred **17** times in New South Wales and **10** times in Victoria, **9** of which were in enforcement and **7** were in baggage.

Didn't expect fees (25): This occurred **17** times in Victoria and **4** times in both New South Wales and Queensland. **9** of which were in enforcement and **7** were in baggage. **19** of these complaints were about the Container Examination Facility and **4** were about Air Cargo.

3. Compliments

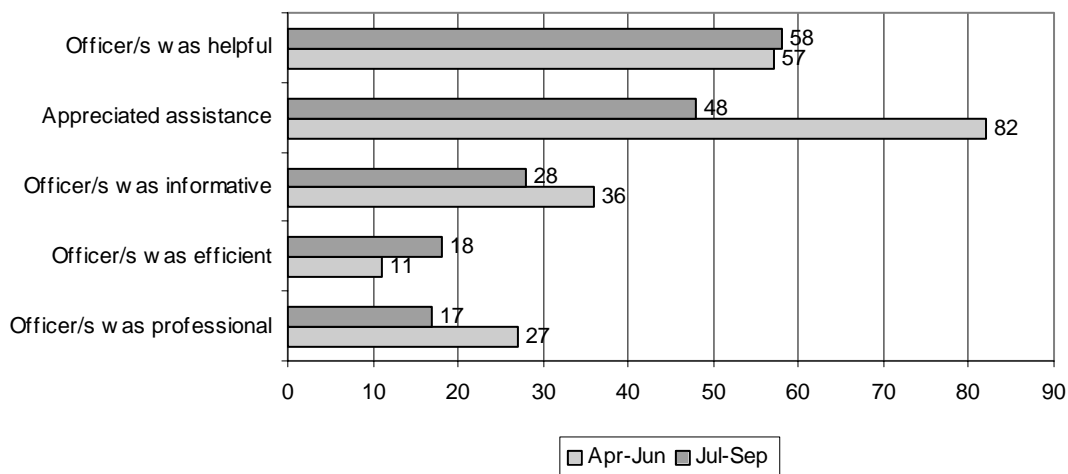


Figure 6. National top 5 compliments April - June and July - September 2003

A total of **220** compliments were registered for this quarter (excluding referrals). This compares to **238** for the previous quarter. This represents a **7.56%** decrease in compliments. The following provide a summary of the top three issues:

Officer/s was helpful (58): New South Wales received the most compliments in this category with **33**, **23** of which were for Cargo and Trade.

Appreciated assistance (48): The National Marine Unit (NMU) received this compliment most frequently (**21**). This is due to high levels of operational interaction with client groups.

Officer was informative (28): Victoria received **9** and New South Wales **8** compliments for this particular behaviour.

4. Referrals to other agencies

Where a complaint or compliment is not related to Customs operations or procedures the Complaints and Compliment network refers these to the relevant agencies. During this quarter Customs referred **54** complaints and **3** compliments. The three main referral agencies for complaint referrals were AQIS (**25**), airport operator (**7**) and Australia Post, airline and security operator (**6**).

5. Performance Against Service Standards

The Complaints & 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 only **14** cases out of a total of **571** cases registered where Customs did not meet the 15 working day benchmark (**2.45%**).

Unadjusted average resolution times (in days) for the **571** complaint and compliment issues (including referrals) reported during this quarter are as follows:

	July	August	September	Average
Complaint	9.62	7.46	11.25	9.40
Compliment	0.31	0.44	0.61	0.46

6. How People Contact Us

The main methods for contacting Customs during this quarter were by email (**170**), brochure (**137**), phone (including the 1800 number) (**124**), remote entry (**76**) and letter (**94**).

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.

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

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Passenger Processing

Complaints

There were **169** complaints registered for Passenger Processing during this quarter, an increase of **6.3%**. The number of passengers arriving in Australia was up **35.19%** for this quarter. This increase in client complaints occurred primarily in the baggage area for a number of regions including South Australia and Queensland. New South Wales baggage complaints reduced from **9** to **4**. TRS complaints also rose and are explored further in Annex C. See a comparison of Passenger Processing complaints in Table 1 below.

Branch	Apr-Jun 03	Jul-Sep 03
Baggage	29	35
Client education	-	1
Enforcement	63	59
Enquiry Counter	2	3
Other Activity	4	4
Primary line	29	31
TRS	32	36
Total	159	169

*Table 1. Passenger complaints - comparative assessment
April – June 2003 and July – September 2003*

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

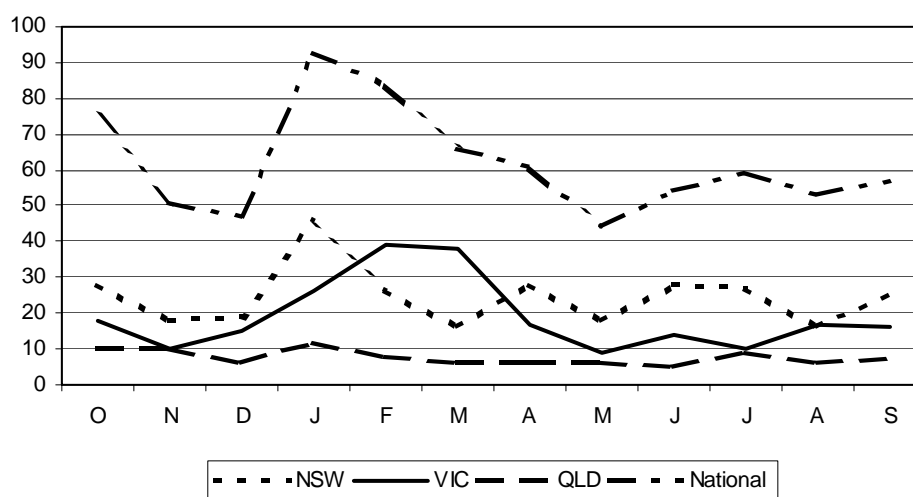


Figure 1. Trend Graph of New South Wales, Victorian and Queensland Passenger Processing complaints shown with the national trend for October 2002 - September 2003

The peaks in January and February 2003 largely result from complaints in:

Enforcement and TRS at Sydney Airport resulting primarily from increased travel movements, and the Baggage and Primary Line operation at Melbourne airport which has seen a significant increase in “Queue delay” complaints for that quarter. This is the result of staff actively seeking client group reaction to facilities at the airport.

The trough in May 2003 is largely due to the decrease in morning flights scheduled during the winter period.

Figure 2 below compares New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland Passenger Processing complaints by issues for the previous twelve months.

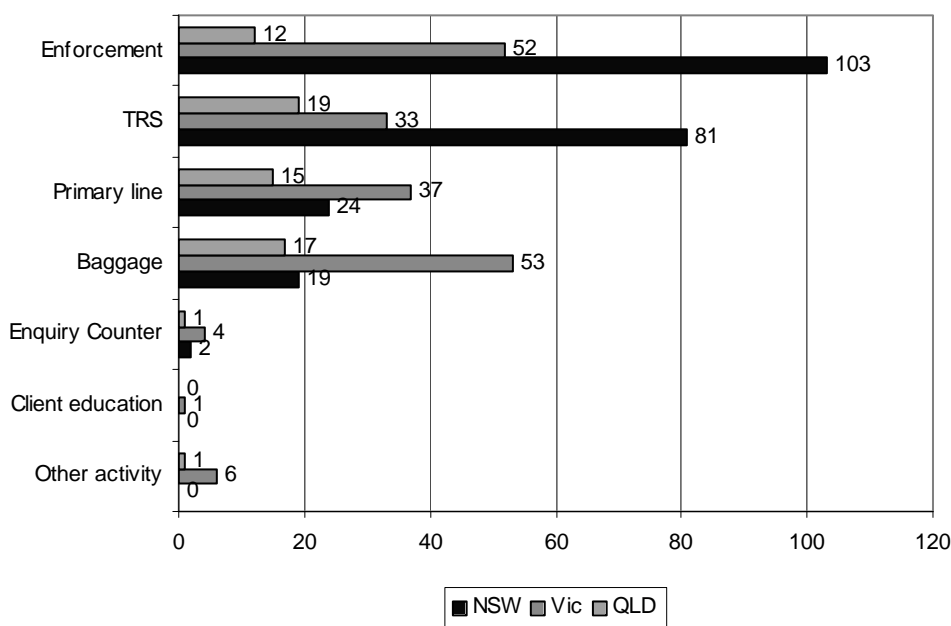


Figure 2. Bar Graph of New South Wales, Victorian and Queensland Passenger Processing complaints for October 2002 - September 2003

During the period 1 July to 30 September 2003, **2,186,776** passengers arrived through Passenger Processing nationally. Numbers of passengers arriving through each major airport are shown in Figure 3 below:

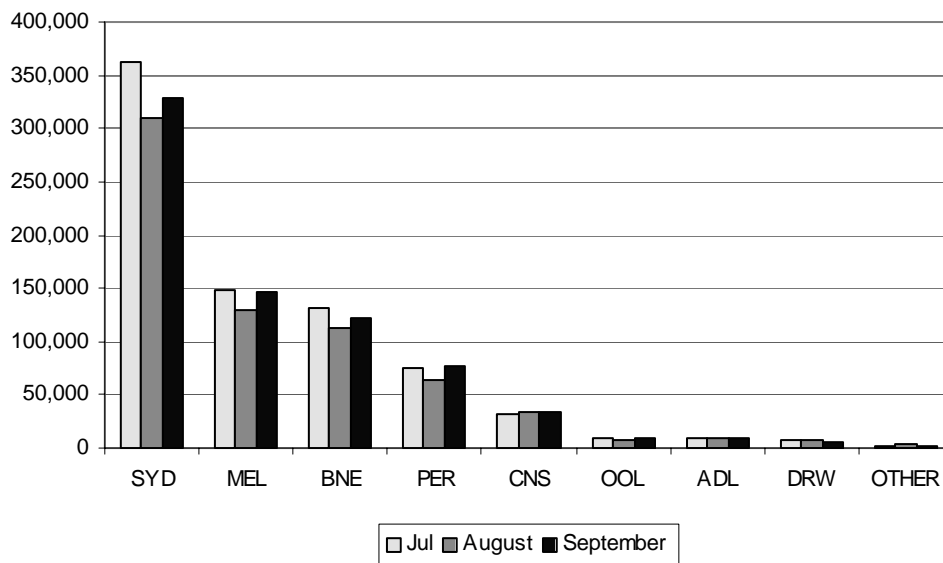


Figure 3. Bar Graph of passengers arriving at each major airport Jul - Sep 03

The number of complaints received nationally for Passenger Processing was **169** during this quarter which is 1 complaint for every 12,940 passengers arriving. Breaking this figure down further:

Airport	Airport Complaints	Passenger Arrival Numbers	Number of Passengers for Every Complaint
Sydney	67	1,001,250	14,944
Melbourne	43	423,451	9,848
Brisbane	20	364,975	18,249
Perth	22	215,032	9,774

Table 3. Number of complaints lodged at major airports compared to the number of arrival passengers for July - September 2003

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

Compliments

There were **77** compliments for Passenger Processing during this quarter, representing an increase of **14.92%**. See a comparison in Table 3 below.

Branch	Apr-Jun 03	Jul-Sep 03
Baggage	6	9
Client education	6	8
Enforcement	4	8
Enquiry Counter	3	4
Liaison	14	13
Other Activity	12	12
Primary line	13	20
TRS	9	3
Total	67	77

Table 3. Passenger compliments - comparative assessment April - June 2003 and July - September 2003

Cargo and Trade

Complaints

State	Branch	Apr-Jun 03	Jul-Sep 03
ACT	Client Education	1	1
	Broker Licensing	0	1
	Entry Processing	2	1
	Import Clearance	1	4
	Valuation	0	1
	Sea Cargo	1	0
NSW	CIC/Helpdesk	5	12
	Import clearance	1	3
QLD	CIC/Helpdesk	1	1
	Customs Store	0	1
	Import Clearance	0	2
	Sea Cargo	0	2
	Valuation	0	1
SA	Import Clearance	0	1
	Sea Cargo	1	1
VIC	Import clearance	1	1
	Temporary Imports	0	1
	CPR	1	0
	Entry Processing	1	0
	Liaison	1	0
WA	CPR	0	1
	Sea Cargo	1	0
	Entry Processing	1	0
Total		19	35

Table 1. Cargo & Trade complaints - comparative assessment
April – June 2003 and July-September 2003

35 complaints were received from importers during this quarter for the Cargo & Trade Branch, an increase of **84.21%**.

The majority of the increase of complaints occurred in:

the NSW CIC/Helpdesk from **5** last quarter to **12** this quarter, Queensland (Import Clearance and Sea Cargo with **2** each), and ACT import clearance from **1** last quarter to **4** this quarter.

Compliments

State	Branch	Apr-Jun 03	Jul-Sep 03
ACT	Broker Licensing	1	0
	Liaison	1	1
NSW	CIC/Helpdesk	14	23
	Entry Processing	1	1
	Import clearance	5	13
	Temporary Imports	1	0
QLD	CIC/Helpdesk	1	2
	Customs Store	0	2
	Import clearance	0	1
	Other activity	1	1
SA	Sea Cargo	1	1
	Broker Licensing	1	0
VIC	Client education	1	1
	Import clearance	1	1
	Broker Licensing	1	0
	CIC/Helpdesk	15	0
	Entry Processing	1	0
	Liaison	1	0
WA	CIC/Helpdesk	2	1
	CPR	2	2
	Import Clearance	1	0
	Sea Cargo	1	0
NT	Import Clearance	0	1
TAS	Client Education	2	0
	Import Clearance	1	0
Total		56	51

*Table 2. Cargo & Trade compliments – comparative assessment
April – June 2003 and July-September 2003*

There were **51** compliments from importers during this quarter, representing a decrease of **8.93%**. The majority of compliments relate to helpful, professional and efficient staff.

Compliments reduced slightly across all regions and all areas in Cargo and Trade.

Two exceptions to this were in NSW:

the CIC/Helpdesk continued with its increase from **14** last quarter to **23** this quarter, and
Import Clearance increased from **5** last quarter to **13** this quarter.

An annual trend of complaints and compliments for Cargo and Trade can be seen in figure 1 below.

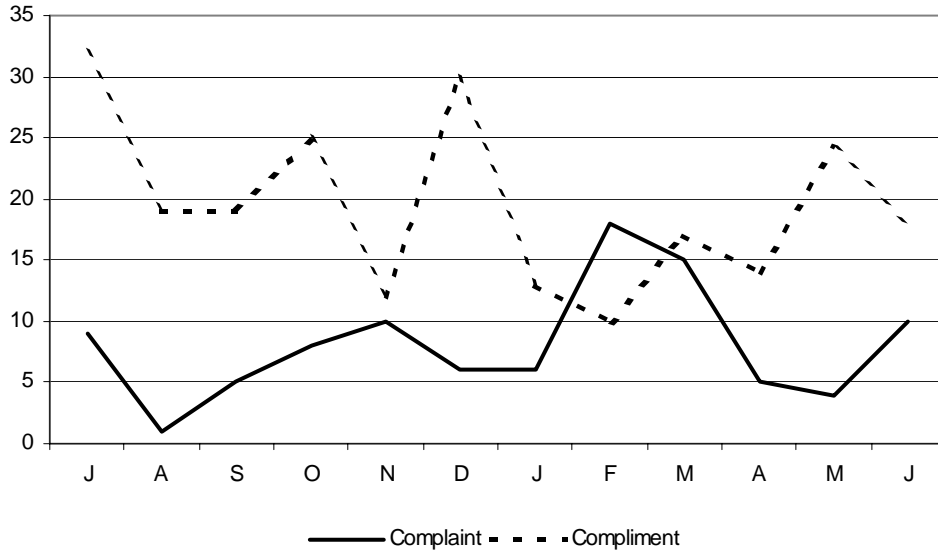


Figure 1. Trend graph of complaints and compliments in Cargo and Trade October 2002 – September 2003

Tourist Refund Scheme

During this quarter **36** TRS complaints were recorded, compared to **32** for the previous quarter. This represents a **12.5%** increase in complaints for the TRS. The three most common complaints recorded were “Goods not in possession” (**10**), “Unhappy about the \$300 limit” (**4**) and “Officer was rude” (**4**).

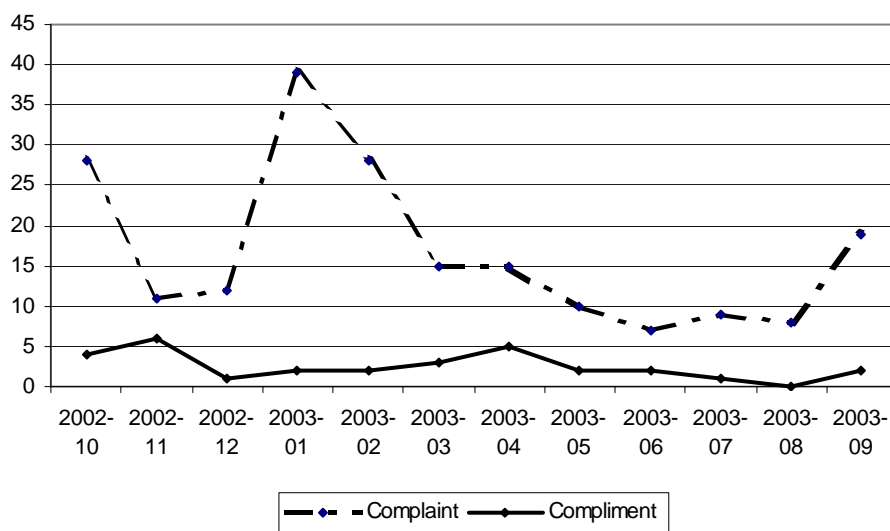


Figure 1. TRS trends October 2002 - September 2003

Note: The variance in TRS complaints numbers identified in October 2002 is noted. There is no single cause for this variation.

See Table 1 for a comparative assessment of TRS related complaints for April – June 2003 and July – September 2003.

Complaints

Issue	Apr-Jun 03	Jul-Sep 03
Claim not made	0	2
Did not have tax invoice	1	2
Goods not in possession	10	10
Lack of information	0	2
Misinformed by airline	1	3
Officer was rude	1	4
Unhappy about \$300 limit	4	4
Unhappy about 30 day limit	5	2
Unhappy about 30 minute rule	6	2

Table 1. TRS comparative assessment of main complaints April-June 2003 and July-September 2003

The three TRS related compliments were about officers being helpful, efficient and friendly.

Container Examination Facility (CEF)

The following table provides details of the total number of complaints registered for each of the three CEFs for the current quarter.

Symptom	NSW	QLD	VIC	ACT
Always searched	2	1	1	0
Didn't expect fees	3	1	15	0
Examination too thorough	0	0	1	0
Goods not repacked properly	0	0	1	0
Goods were damaged	1	4	0	0
Goods were withheld	1	5	6	1
I got the runaround	0	0	2	0
Office hours too short	0	0	1	0
Process not explained	0	0	1	0
Process took too long	12	4	8	2
Total	19	15	36	3

Table 1. National CEF complaints by region for July-September 2003

The three main complaints were:

'Process took too long' (**26**) complaints in Sydney (**12**), Melbourne (**8**), Brisbane (**4**) and Canberra (**2**) were largely relating to the time taken for containers to be released after arrival in Australia (more than three days) and the storage fees incurred.

'Didn't expect fees' (**19**) complaints in Melbourne (**15**), Sydney (**3**) and Brisbane (**1**) concerned the fees which accrued as a result of storage fees while containers were held at the wharves.

'Goods were withheld' (**13**) complaints in Melbourne (**6**), Brisbane (**5**), Sydney (**1**) and Canberra (**1**) related to containers being chosen to be searched and thereby held by Customs with storage fees charged.

The three cases classified against Canberra were more policy related rather than operational.

CEF complaints (**73**) accounted for **91.25%** of total Enforcement Operations Division complaints (**80**).

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

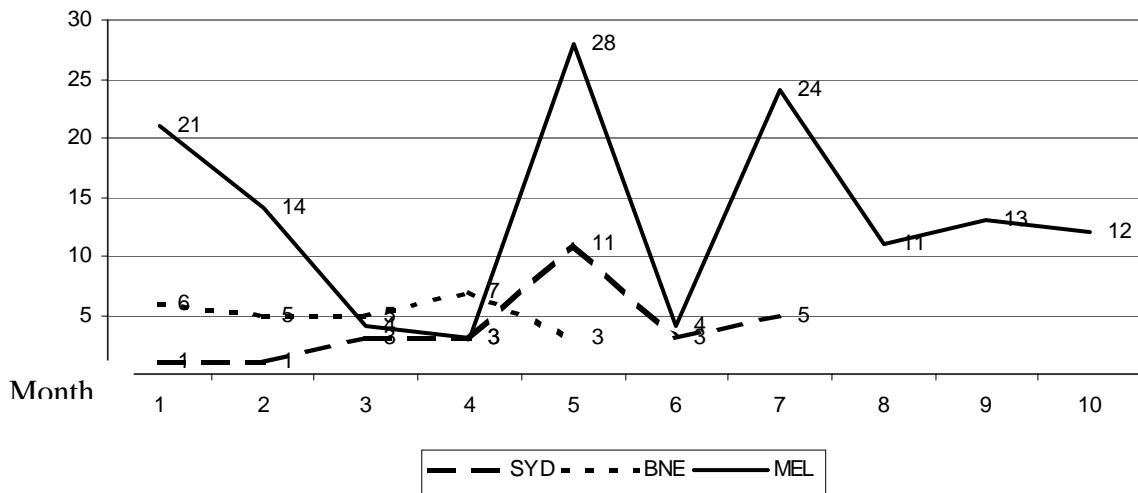


Figure 1. Comparison of complaints re CEF per month of operation eg Melbourne has operated for 10 months, Sydney for 8 months and Brisbane for 7 months