



Complaints and Compliments
National Quarterly Report
July to September 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 July to September 2004. All statistical data included in this report was extracted on 12 October 2004. Where appropriate, comparative tables and graphs are provided for previous reporting periods.

Executive summary

Complaints

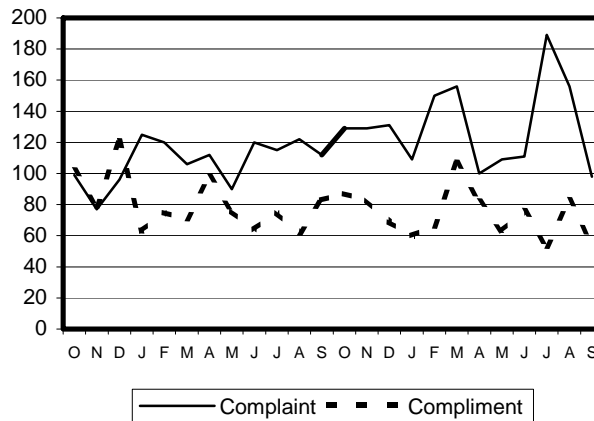


Figure 1. National trends for complaints and compliments from October 2002- September 2004 by month

The peak in July complaints was largely due to Passengers Division (see details at Annex A).

A total number of **515** complaints, including referrals, were reported about Customs compared with **319** in the previous quarter. This is the largest number of quarterly complaints since March 2001. The top three complaints were:

- “Process took too long” (**64**),
- “Queue delay” (**56**), and
- “Officer was rude” (**36**).

Compliments

A total number of **194** compliments, including referrals, were reported about Customs compared with **222** in the previous quarter. The top three compliments were:

- “Officer/s was helpful” (**67**),
- “Appreciated assistance” (**51**) and
- “Officer/s was professional” (**17**).

Significant variations in the September 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

'Queue Issues'

Passengers, nationally, has seen an increase in 'Queue delay' and 'Queue system' complaints with **89** received this quarter compared to **24** previously. Melbourne Airport received **64** of these complaints, **50** of which occurred in the baggage area (compared to **1** last quarter). **9** queuing complaints were related to flight crew requesting a dedicated queue channel at Brisbane Airport (see Annex A).

'Process took too long'

The complaint 'Process took too long' increased nationally from **28** to **64**. This increase occurred mainly within the Container Examinations Facility (CEF) (**50**) (see Annex B).

'Always searched'

The complaint 'Always searched' increased nationally from **12** to **24**. This increase occurred mainly in RI&I (**15** an increase of **7**), and Passengers (**7** an increase of **5**).

Complaint by Work Area

Container Examination Facility (CEF)

A total of **70** complaints were recorded for the CEF during the July to September quarter, compared to **31** during the previous quarter (see Annex B).

Customs Information & Support Centre (CI&SC)

A total of **38** complaints were recorded for the CI&SC, compared to **22** during the previous quarter (see Annex C).

Passengers Division

A total of **209** complaints were registered for Passengers Division during the September quarter, compared with **153** for the previous quarter (see Annex A).

1. National Trends

Complaints

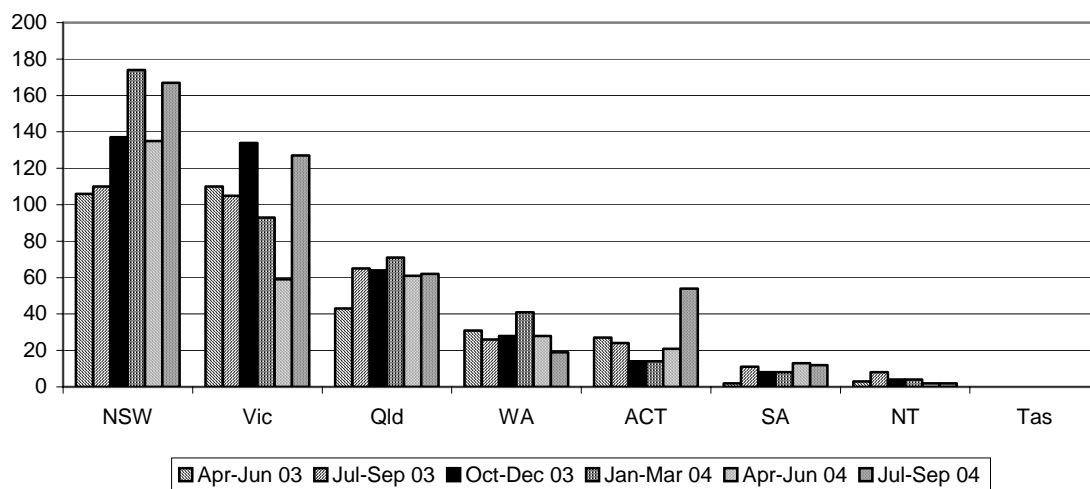


Figure 2. Total number of complaints by region comparing each quarter from April – June 2003 to July - September 2004

Comparing against the previous quarterly figures (excluding referrals), an increase in complaints occurred in Victoria **(+68)**, the Australian Capital Territory **(+33)**, New South Wales **(+32)** and Queensland **(+1)**. A reduction in complaints occurred in and Western Australia **(-9)** and South Australia **(-1)**. Northern Territory remained stable with **2** complaints and Tasmania remained stable with **0**.

Compliments

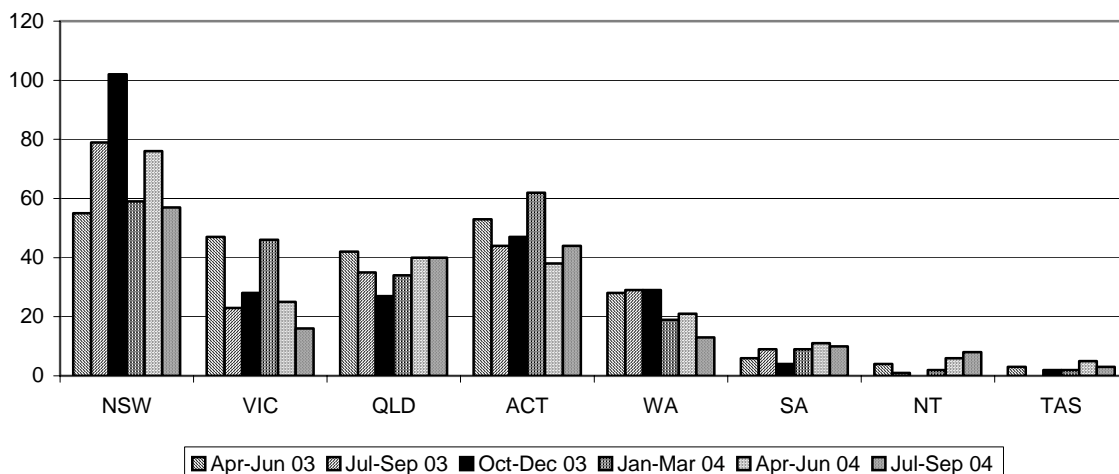


Figure 3. Total number of compliments by region comparing each quarter from April – June 2003 to July - September 2004

A comparison of national trends for compliments between this quarter and the previous quarter (excluding referrals) revealed increases in the Australian Capital Territory **(+6)** and Northern Territory **(+2)**. New South Wales **(-19)**, Victoria **(-9)**, Western Australia **(-8)**, Tasmania **(-2)** and South Australia **(-1)** experienced reductions. Queensland remained stable with **40** compliments.

National Trends by Division

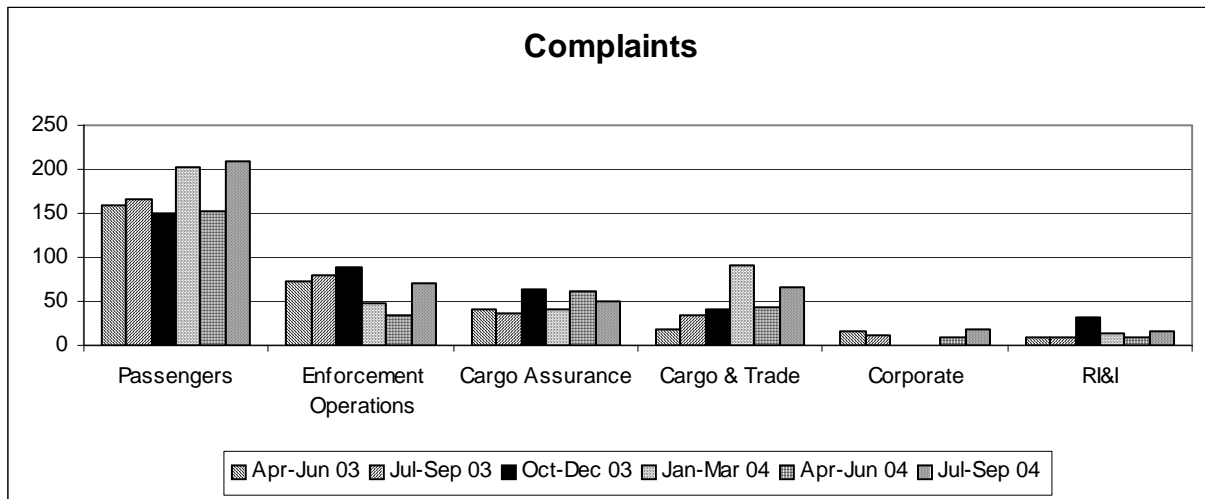


Figure 4. Total number of complaints for the six larger divisions comparing the last 6 quarters

A comparison of figures against the previous quarter reveal an increase in complaint numbers for Passengers (+56), Enforcement Operations (+37), Cargo & Trade (+23), Corporate (+10), RI&I (+5), Compliance Assurance (+4) and District Offices (+1), Investigations (+1), Trade Measures (+1) and CMR (+1). A decrease in complaint numbers was experienced in Cargo Assurance (-12).

The largest increase in complaints in Passengers was attributed largely to queuing which had 89 complaints compared to 24 complaints last quarter. The majority of these complaints occurred at Melbourne Airport.

Compliments

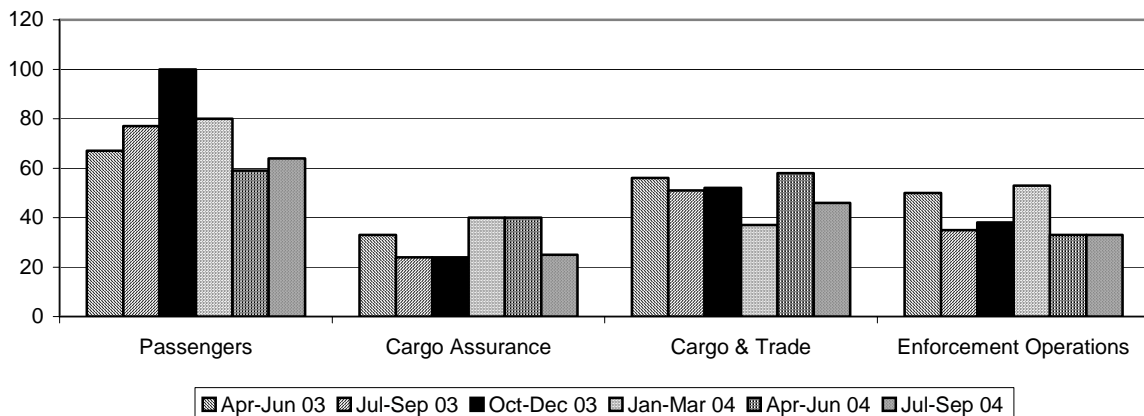


Figure 5. The trend in complaints for the four larger divisions comparing the last six quarters

Compliment figures for this quarter compared to the previous quarter indicate a decrease for Cargo Assurance (-15), Cargo & Trade (-11), Compliance Assurance (-6), RI&I (-5), Investigations (-2), CMR (-1). Increases were experienced in Passengers (+5)(see Annex A), Corporate (+3) and District Offices (+3). Enforcement Operations has not changed with 33 compliments. Coastwatch and Trade Measures have received no compliments.

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

2. Type of Complaint

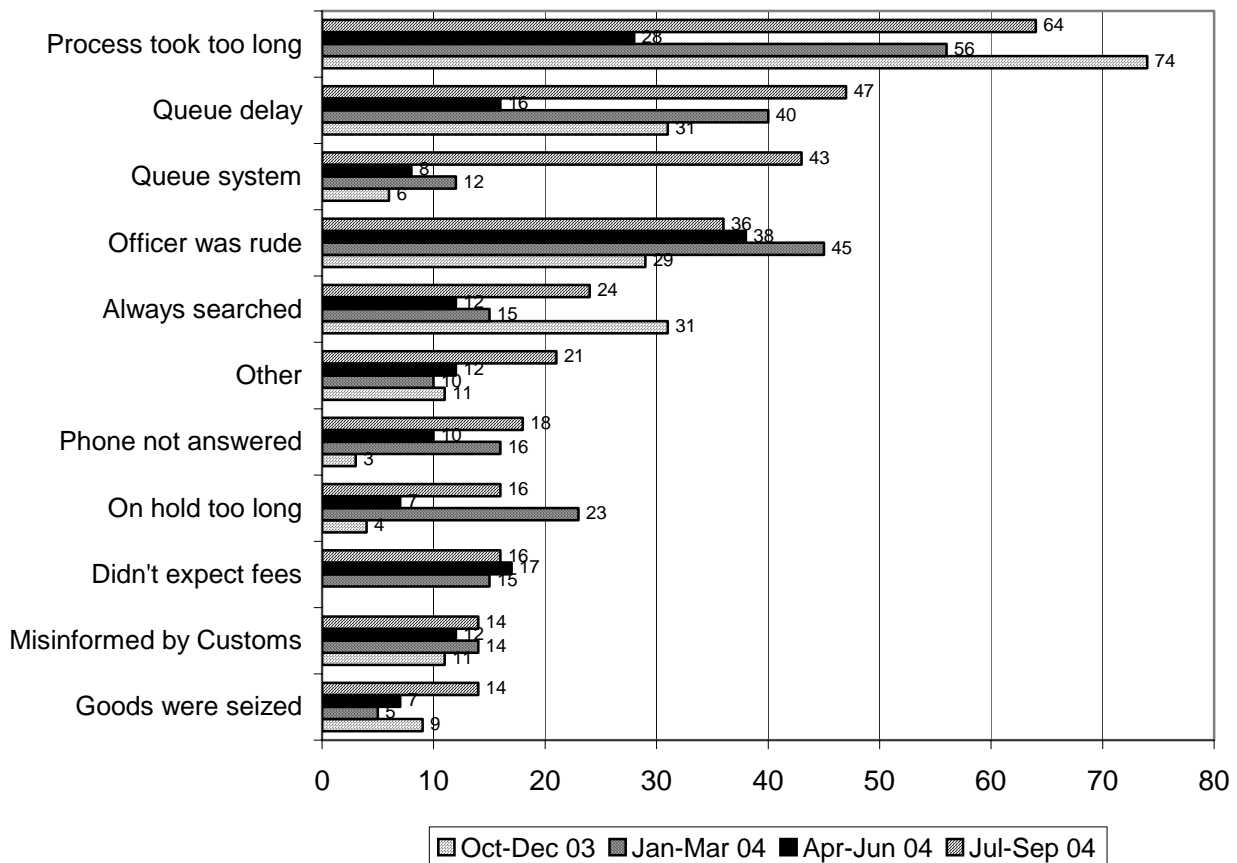


Figure 6. National Top 10 Complaints (excluding referrals) for the last four quarters

A total number of **443** complaints were made for this quarter (excluding referrals). This compares to **320** for the previous quarter and represents a **38.4% increase**.

The top four issues (excluding referrals) were:

- **Process took too long (64):** Enforcement Operations received this complaint most often with **50** complaints, the majority of which were for the CEF (see Annex B).
- **Queue delay (47):** The majority of these complaints (**46**) occurred in Passengers, **27** of which were in Baggage at Melbourne Airport.
- **Queue system (43):** **23** of these complaints occurred in Baggage at Melbourne Airport.
- **Officer was rude (36):** This occurred **22** times in Passengers, **11** of which were at Sydney Airport.

CMR Complaints: There were 2 complaints formally lodged during July and September 04, the same as during the last quarter.

3. Type of Compliment

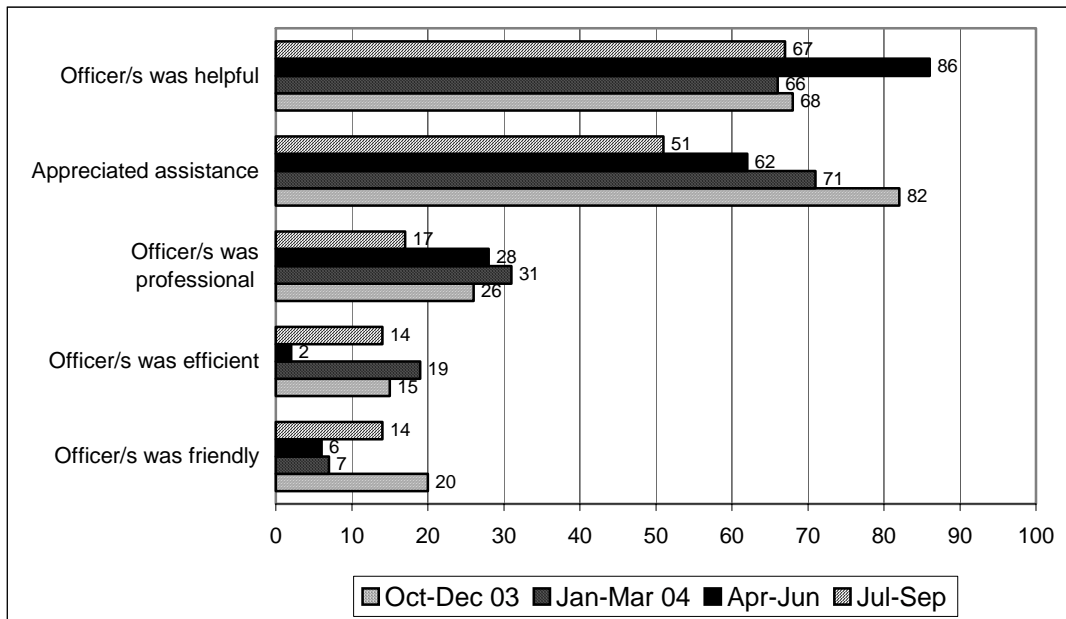


Figure 7. National top 5 compliments (excluding referrals) for the last four quarters

A total of **191** compliments were registered for this quarter (excluding referrals). This compares to **221** for the previous quarter and represents a **13.6% decrease**. The following provide a summary of the top three issues:

- **Officer/s was helpful (67):** Cargo & Trade received this compliment most frequently with **29** with **13** of these being for the CI&SC.
- **Appreciated assistance (51):** The National Marine Unit (NMU) received this compliment most frequently (**30**). This is due to high levels of operational interaction with client groups. Passengers (Liaison) also received this compliment (**10**).
- **Officer was professional (17):** Passengers received this compliment most frequently with **7**.

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 **72** complaints and **3** compliments. The three main agencies for referrals were AQIS (**27**), Australia Post (**21**) and brokers (**7**).

5. Complaints raised with the Commonwealth Ombudsman

The Customs guide to complaints and compliments procedures advises clients that at any time they may take their complaint to a body which is not part of Customs, such as the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman provides Customs with annual figures of complaints raised with their office. The statistics provided by the Ombudsman are published below for information.

Complaints and Issues Raised with the Commonwealth Ombudsman

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Complaints Raised	80	70	73
Complaints Finalised	81	76	73
Issues Investigated			
Agency Defect	5	2	3
No Agency Defect	16	10	6
Issues withdrawn or lapsed	10	2	4
Ombudsman exercised discretion not to investigate	54	62	70
Issues Finalised	89	82	83

More than one issue might be raised in a complaint
Some Issues are not completed within the year during which they are raised.

6. 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 **10.15** working days reported in the previous quarter has *decreased* to **9.52** working days. The average compliment resolution time of **1.44** working days reported in the previous quarter has also *decreased* to **1.29** working days. These resolution times are within the 15 working day service standard.

In responding to clients there were **13** cases out of a total of **709** cases (including referrals) closed during this quarter where Customs did not meet the 15 working day benchmark (**1.83%**).

Resolution Times

Average resolution times (in days) for complaint and compliment issues reported during the last nine months are as follows:

	Jan-04	Feb-04	Mar-04	Apr-04	May-04	Jun-04	Jul-04	Aug-04	Sep-04	Average
Complaint	7.21	9.19	11.19	12.93	11.21	11.59	9.85	10.44	6.50	10.17
Compliment	2.62	0.75	1.16	2.33	1.27	1.09	0.95	1.52	1.26	1.44

7. How People Contact Us

The main methods for contacting Customs during this quarter were by email (**215**), phone (including the 1800 number) (**150**), brochure (**179**), letter (**65**) and remote entry (**70**).

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

The number of complaints received nationally for Passengers was **209** during this quarter (compared to **153** in the previous quarter) which is equivalent to 1 complaint for every 12,263 passengers arriving in Australia. This is an *increase* in complaints of **36.60%** this quarter. (The number of passengers arriving also *increased* by **18.75%** this quarter).

The most substantial increase in client complaints in Passengers occurred in Baggage in VIC (from **8** to **64**). **50** of these complaints related to the queue system and queue delays.

The reason provided for the queuing problems at Melbourne Airport is:

The final stages of infrastructure change in the baggage reclaim and examination halls led to much disruption and delay in the facilitation of passengers through the area. Changes did not immediately include required alterations to queue arrangements which caused a great deal of confusion and frustration for staff and passengers alike. Subsequent negotiations with APAM led to considerable line marking, lane numbering and barrier changes which have led to vast improvements in the rate of passenger flow. Changes of work practice for both Customs and AQIS were also explored during this period to accommodate infrastructure change. Many of these practices have now been refined to an extent enabling a lessening of disruption to a smooth passenger flow.

'Other' largely refers to **9** complaints from air crew requesting a dedicated crew queue at Brisbane Airport.

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

Branch	Apr-Jun 04	Jul-Sep 04
Enforcement	59	48
Primary Line	36	32
TRS	34	32
Baggage	22	73
Other activity	0	18
Enquiry Counter	2	4
Liaison	0	1
Client Education	0	1
Total	153	209

*Table 1. Passengers complaints - comparative assessment
April - June 2004 and July to September 2004*

Issue: “Officer was rude”. The following tables (2 & 3) compare the number of complaints received for “Officer was rude” during the last five quarters:

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

Table 2. “Officer was rude” complaints - comparative assessment by **Branch** during the last 6 quarters

Region	Apr-Jun 03	Jul-Sep 03	Oct-Dec 03	Jan-Mar 04	Apr-Jun 04	Jul-Sep 04
NSW	14	13	8	15	16	18
VIC	5	6	8	6	8	8
QLD	3	1	3	8	4	4
WA	4	3	1	2	4	2
SA	0	1	0	3	2	2
NT	1	0	1	0	0	0
ACT	0	1	0	0	0	2
TAS	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	27	25	21	34	34	36

Table 3. “Officer was rude” complaints - comparative assessment by **Region** during the last 6 quarters

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

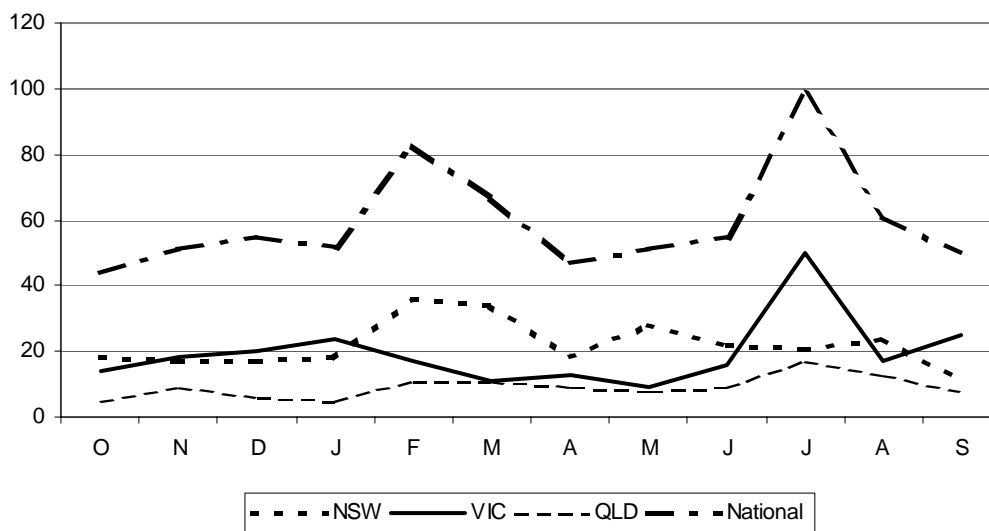


Figure 1. Trend Graph of New South Wales, Victorian and Queensland Passengers complaints shown with the national trend for October 2003 - September 2004

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

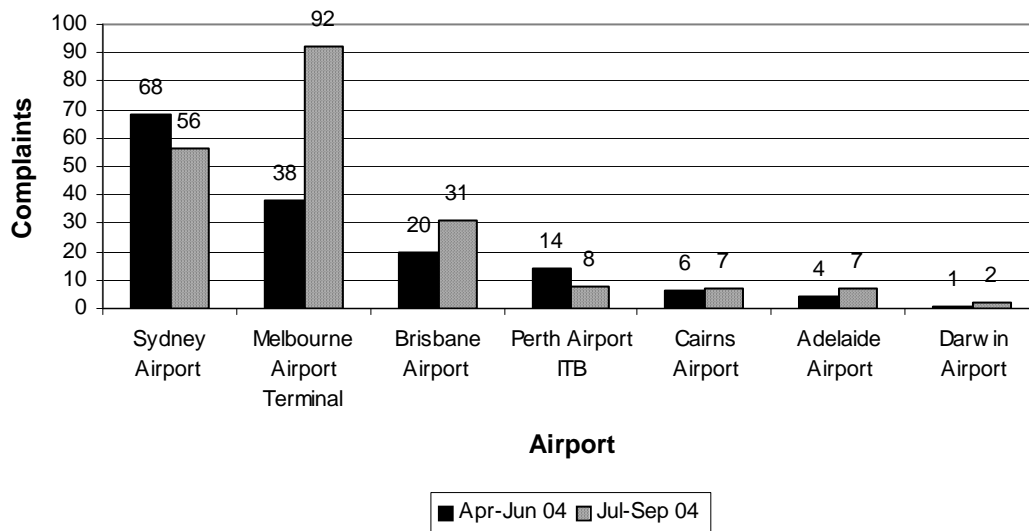


Figure 2. Passenger Complaints at each Airport for April - June 2004 and July - September 2004

A total of **32** complaints were received about the TRS. A comparison of the top five TRS complaints is shown in Table 4 below.

Symptom	Apr-Jun 04	Jul-Sep 04
Unhappy about 30 minute rule	3	5
Goods not in possession	4	4
Misinformed by Customs	4	3
Queue delay	3	3
Lack of information	5	3
Officer was rude	2	3
Unhappy about \$300 limit	1	3

Table 4. Top 5 TRS complaints - comparative assessment April - June 2004 and July - September 2004

During the period 1 July to 30 September 2004 **2,563,052** passengers arrived through international airports nationally. Numbers of passengers arriving through each major airport are shown in Table 5 below.

Airport	Number of Airport Complaints	Passenger Arrival Numbers	Number of Passengers for Every Complaint
Sydney	56	1,113,817	19,890
Melbourne	92	532,754	5,791
Brisbane	31	470,138	15,166
Perth	8	236,960	29,620

Table 5. Number of complaints lodged at major airports compared to the number of arrival passengers for July - September 2004

Compliments

There were **64** compliments for Passengers during this quarter, representing an increase of **8.47%**. See a comparison in Table 6 below.

Branch	Apr-Jun 04	Jul-Sep 04
Primary line	17	20
TRS	4	11
Liaison	20	10
Enforcement	7	7
Baggage	6	7
Enquiry Counter	2	5
Client education	2	2
Other activity	1	2
Total	59	64

*Table 6. Passenger compliments - comparative assessment
April - June 2004 and July - September 2004*

Container Examination Facility (CEF)

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

In July to September 2004 Customs x-rayed 29,391 TEU and received **70** complaints which is equivalent to **1** complaint for every **419.9 TEUs**. This compares with 1 complaint for every **574 TEUs** in the previous quarter.

Complaints per container:

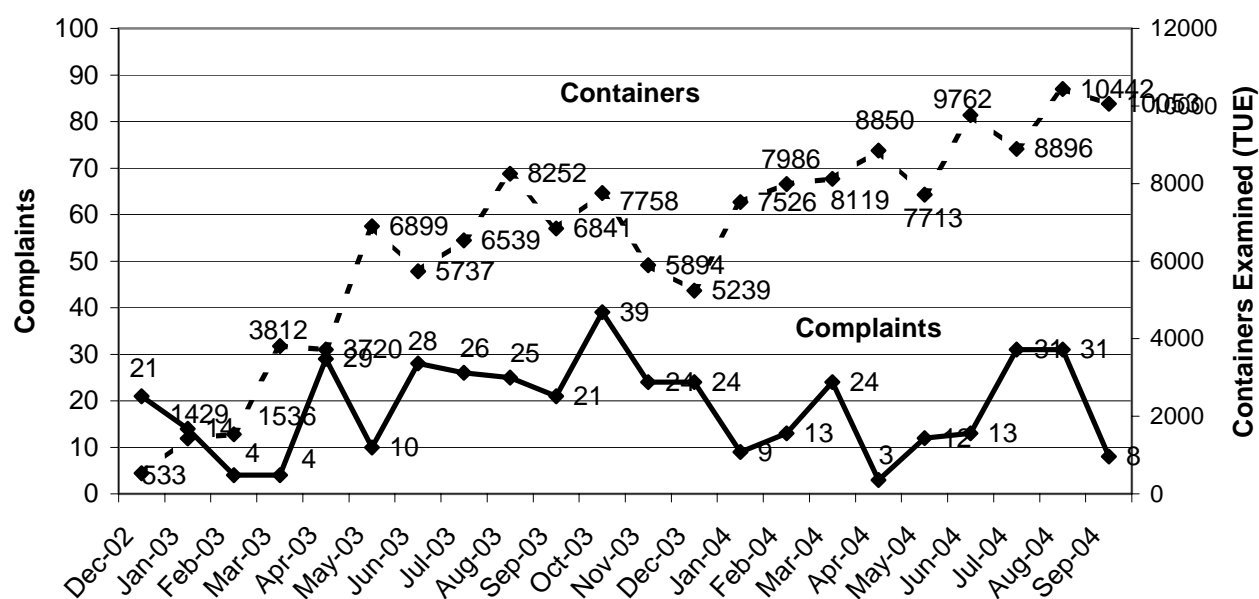


Figure 1: Trend of public complaints against TEUs x-rayed by Customs since CEFs opened in December 2002

The following table provides details of the total number of complaints registered for each of the five CEFs for the July to September quarter (**70** compared to **32** for last quarter - an *increase* of **126.67%**).

Issues	Canberra	Sydney	Brisbane	Melbourne	Fremantle	Total
Always searched	-	-	-	-	1	1
Didn't expect fees	1	7	-	2	1	11
Goods were not repacked properly	-	-	-	1	-	1
Goods were damaged	-	-	-	1	-	1
Goods were missing	-	-	-	1	-	1
Goods were withheld	-	1	-	-	3	4
Other	1	-	-	-	-	1
Process took too long	13	25	2	8	2	50
Total	15	33	2	13	7	70

Table 1. National CEF complaints by region for July - September 2004

The two main complaint issues were:

Issue – “Process took too long” (**50**) is an increase from **16** during the last quarter. This increase occurred mainly in Sydney (**+23**), Canberra (**+11**) and Melbourne (**+6**).

Issue – “Didn’t expect fees” (**11**) is an increase from **6** during the last quarter. This was a general increase.

The **15** cases classified against Canberra were policy related. The majority of these were regarding the length of time it takes to clear containers generally and the fees which are thereby accrued.

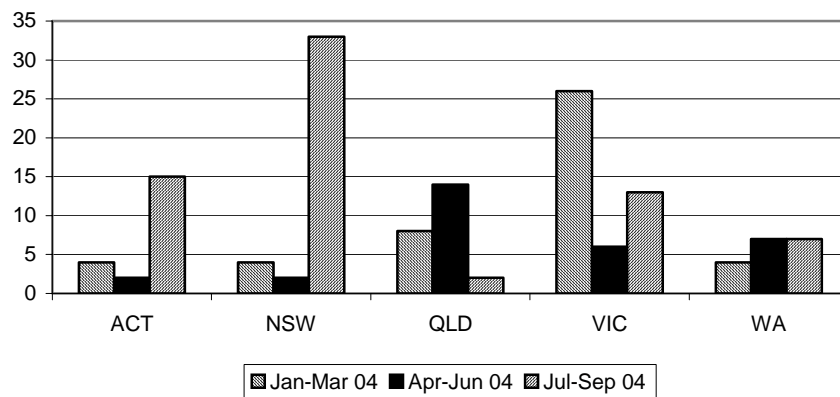


Figure 1. Comparison of CEF complaints by region for the previous three quarters

Information provided from NSW regarding the substantial increase in NSW complaints during this quarter is:

There were a number of wharf/vessel/weather related disruptions that resulted in major fluctuations of the volume of cargo that was available and able to be removed to the CEF on a daily basis. Additionally, in July Central Office requested that, as they were in negotiation with service providers/Container Terminal Operators in relation to CEF transport/container availability, they asked that "in the transition period we will ensure that we do not get involved in blaming the other parties for problems in the movement of containers". For this reason some complaints were classified and responded to by Customs rather than classifying them and referring them to the relevant organisation as would normally be the case.

During this period there was also a greater focus on ramping up selections to the CEF to ensure a greater number of containers were available for examination each day - this was in line with Governments expectation of increased Border intervention.

Excluding the 15 policy related complaints registered against the ACT, during this quarter the number of operationally based complaints received nationally for the CEF was **55**.

Breaking this figure down further:

CEF Location	Number of Complaints	TEUs Examined	Number of TEUs for Every Complaint
Melbourne	13	9120	701.5
Sydney	33	9073	274.9
Brisbane	2	5974	2,987
Fremantle	7	5224	746.3

Table 2. Number of complaints lodged compared to the number of TEUs² examined for July - September 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 **37** CI&SC complaints were recorded, compared with **22** for the previous quarter. The most common complaint related to the phone (**26**) 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:

These complaints relate mainly to the Information component of the CI&SC. Since late June, this area has been receiving a rising number of general ICS enquiries. At the same time, the appreciating Australian dollar has caused a higher number of inbound calls for traveler and imports enquiries, including enquiries about motor vehicles.

In addition to the above, other areas of Customs are directing enquiries into the Information area when these enquiries do not necessarily sit with CI&SC, eg, Postal Assessments or detention of goods. In these situations, the CI&SC is answering calls on specific matters, eg. a specific Assessment or a specific detention/seizure of goods. This aspect of referrals of enquiries to CI&SC is being followed-up with relevant Directors.

Issue	Apr-Jun 04	Jul-Sep 04
Phone not answered	7	10
On hold too long	5	15
Calls not returned	3	1
Misinformed by Customs	3	5
I got the runaround	2	4
Officer was rude	2	2
Total	22	37

*Table 1. CI&SC complaint issues - comparative assessment
January - March 2004 and April - June 2004*

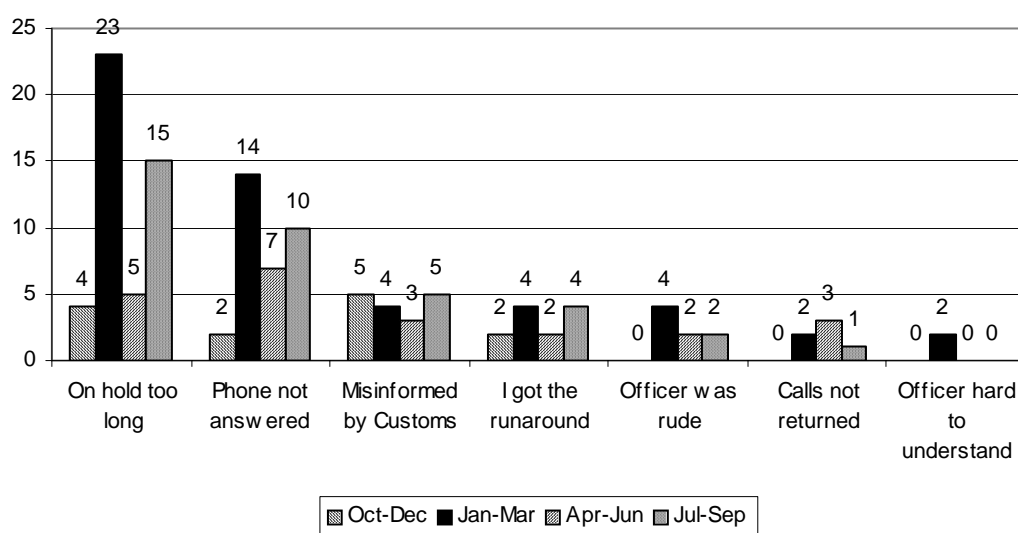


Figure 1. Comparison of CI&SC complaints for the previous four quarters

During the period 1 July to 30 September 2004 **133,224** enquiries were received at the CI&SC. The number of complaints received was **37** during this quarter which is 1 complaint for every 3,601 enquiries. See Table 2 below.

Month	Number of Complaints Received	Number of Phone Enquiries Received	Number of Email Enquiries Received	Total Number of Enquiries Received	Number of Enquiries for Every Complaint
July	6	32,067	4,142	38,096	6,349
August	15	36,964	4,899	43,591	2,906
September	16	39,045	10,247	51,537	3,221

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

Note: Non-phone or email enquiries (fax, counter & letter) received during this quarter total at 5,870.

Compliments

The CI&SC received **19** compliments this quarter (**30** 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]

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:
