



# *Complaints & Compliments*



## **National Report**

**January to March 2002**

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## **Executive Summary**

This is the national report for the Complaints and Compliments Management System (CCMS) covering the period January to March 2002.

- Total number of complaint issues for the period = 455. This compares to 363 for the previous quarter, an increase of 25%.
- Total number of compliments offered = 242. This compares to 215 for the previous quarter, an increase of 13%.
- Significantly, complaints about 'Queue Delay' is a major issue for Customs this quarter, with 65 complaints. This is a 260% increase on the previous quarter and relates, in the main, to Melbourne Airport receiving complaints about the outcomes of the IQI processes in Melbourne.
- As a general observation, complaints regarding TRS procedures and administration continue to form the bulk of all complaints received this quarter (36%).
- Complaints about 'Staff Attitude' continue to be a prominent issue with 37 complaints this quarter.
- Complaints referred to other agencies/organisations account for 10% (50 issues) of total complaint contacts.
- The majority of compliments received were about "appreciated assistance" (64), and "helpful staff" (56).
- Average resolution time for complaints has improved considerably with 4.11 days compared to 8.5 for the previous quarter.
- Average response time to compliments is less than one day, compared to 1.1 days for the previous quarter.

### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that:

- Customs continues to improve on the administration of the TRS,
- Customs continues to monitor the situation at Melbourne Airport, and
- Managers investigate why the recurring trend of complaints about 'Staff attitude' is continuing.

## Background

This is the national report for the Complaints and Compliments Management System (CCMS) covering the period January to March 2002. The report also contains trend information for the 12 month period April 2001 to March 2002.

The purpose of the CCMS is to provide:

- national coordination of complaints and compliments,
- analysis of data,
- reporting, and
- identification of opportunities for continuous improvement of our processes and services,

based on client feedback. The CCMS is committed to recording and reporting all comments provided by clients about their experience with Customs.

The national database for the CCMS, *Satisfy2000*, has been designed to log all complaints and compliments received in a systematic way and provide statistical information as detailed in this report. The database also has the capacity to provide customised reports to meet specific needs of managers, on request.

### **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 regarding the content and layout.

Please direct your comments to either:

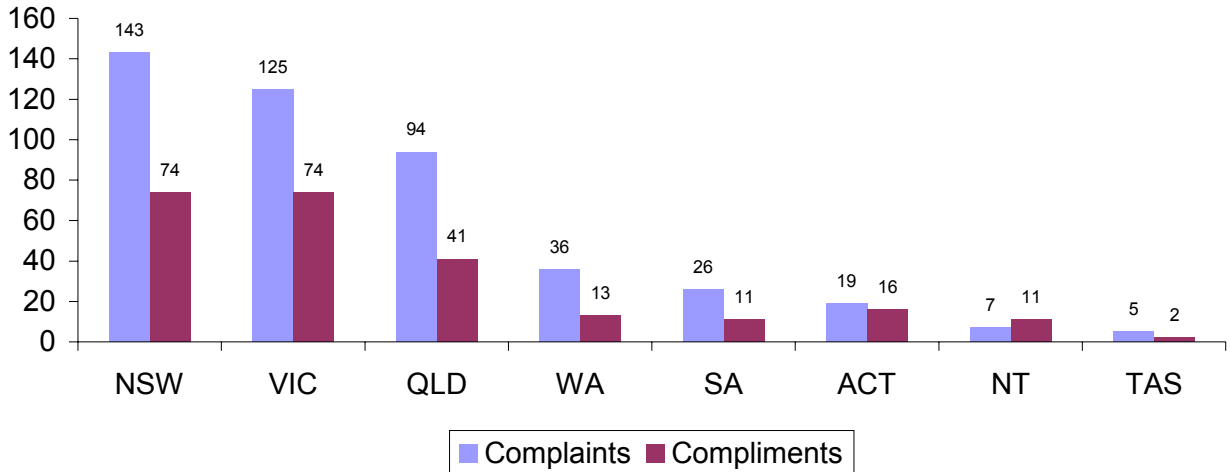
- Garry Dennis      42 2023 (National Coordinator CCMS); or
- Rob White        42 6589 (Acting Manager Client Service Policy)

### **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.

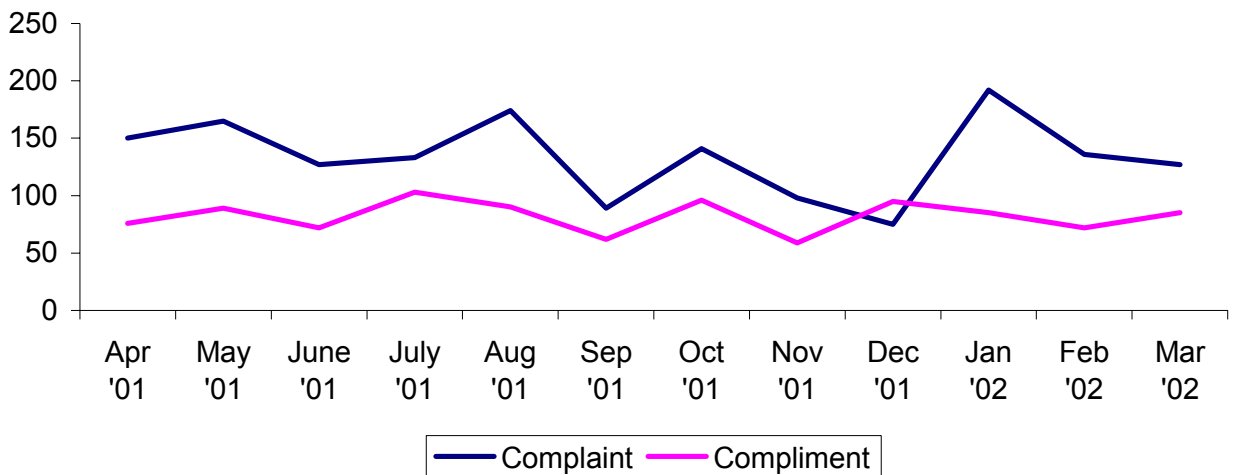
# Complaint and Compliment Issues

## Issues by Region

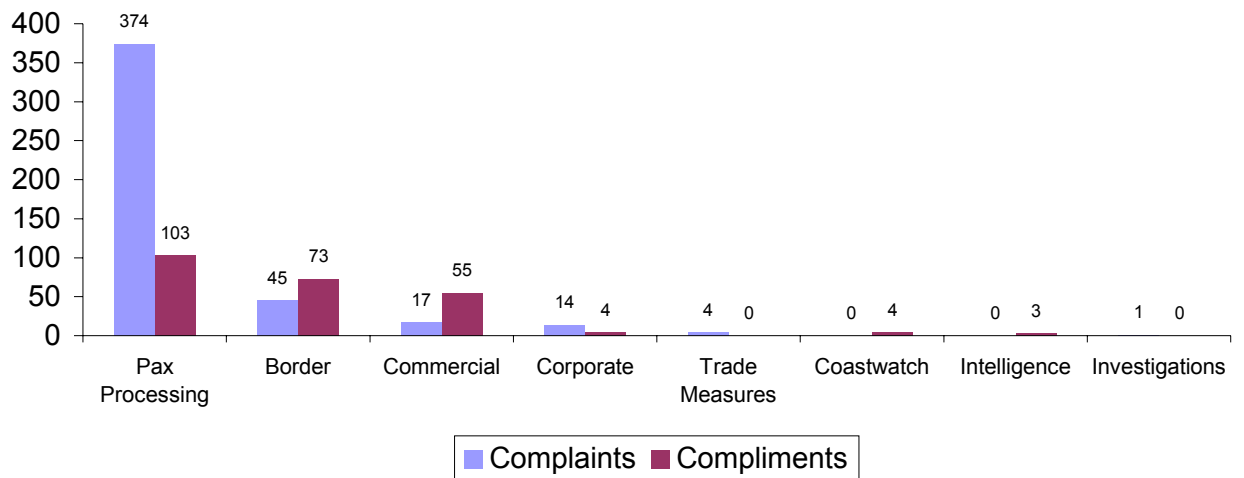


Total complaint issues received for this quarter is 455, compared to 363 for the previous quarter. Total compliments offered for this quarter is 242, compared to 215 for the previous quarter.

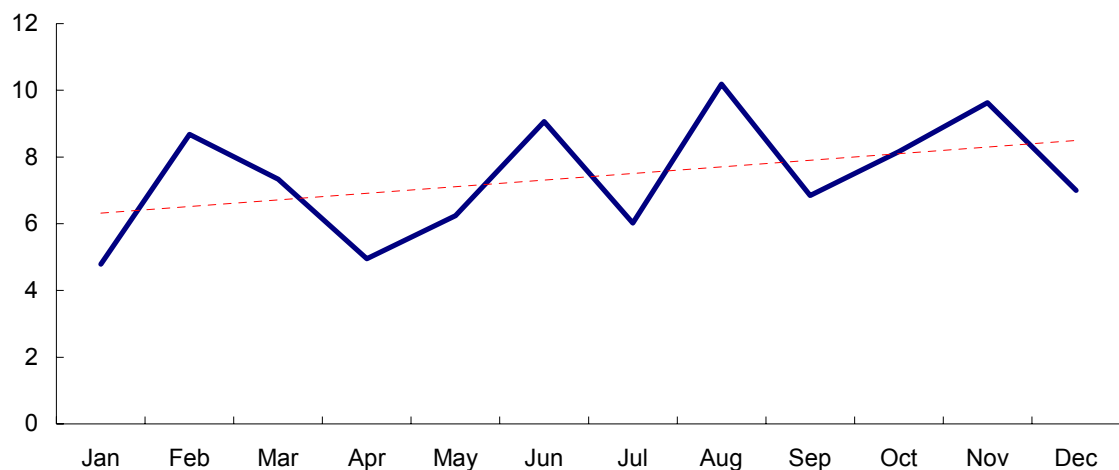
## Trend by Issues



## Issues by Division



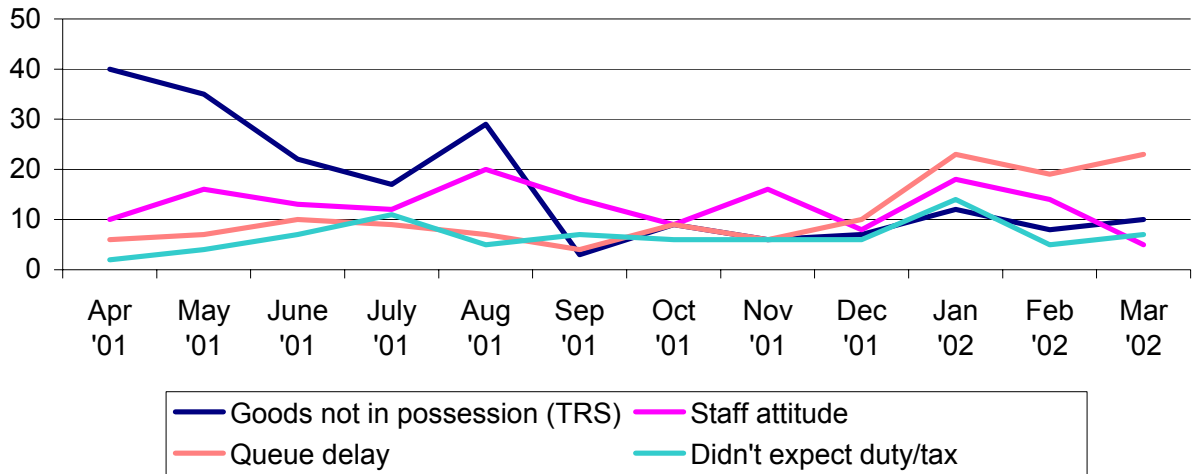
## Rate of passenger processing complaints per 100 000 incoming international air passengers, 2001



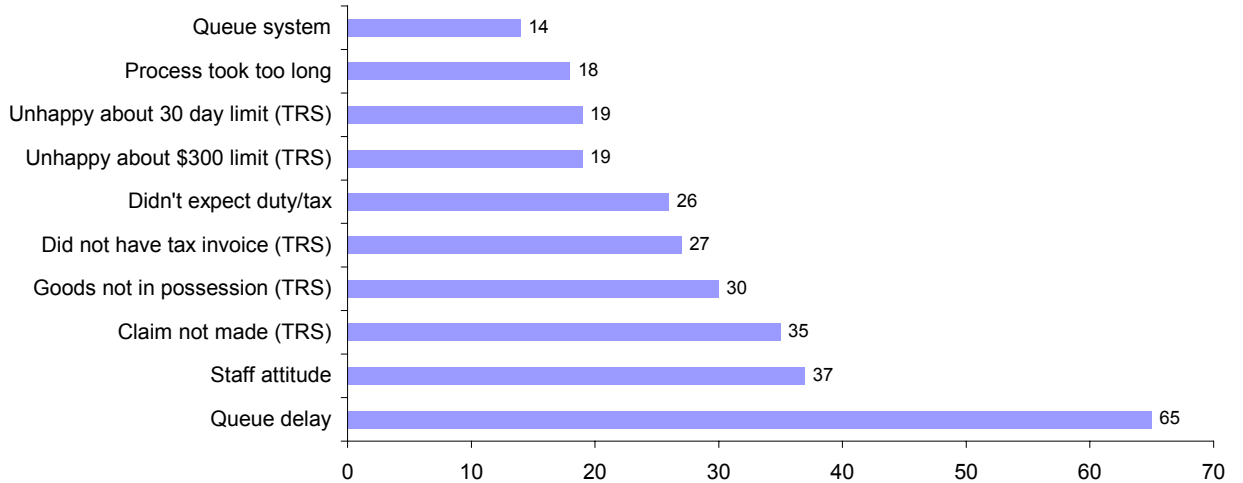
The rate of passenger processing complaints per 100 000 incoming international air passengers during 2001 has ranged from 4.79 to 10.18 and has increased slightly over the period.

## Complaints

### Trend by Complaint Issues



### Significant Complaint Issues



## **Queue Delay**

The main complaint issue for this quarter is 'Queue Delay' with a total of 65 (14.3%). This is a 260% increase on the previous quarter, where 25 complaints were made. Complaints about 'Queue delay' emanate mostly from Melbourne Airport, in the Baggage area. Increased Quarantine Intervention (IQI) and the physical limitations of the Customs Hall are the main causes for queue delays. Victoria Region Complaints and Compliments Coordinator reported that the following actions have been implemented to address the queue problem at Melbourne Airport:

- Negotiations between Customs, AQIS, Melbourne Airport and Department of Transport are occurring focussed on seeking more funds for a redesign and upgrade of Customs controlled areas at Melbourne Airport.
- Apology leaflets have been introduced by Passenger Processing MAP to provide an explanation for the queue delays.
- Slight increase in the number of AQIS rovers in queues writing off quarantine goods.
- Special consideration where possible given to the elderly and people with small children to alleviate some of the inconvenience they are experiencing due to queue delays.

Queuing delays have eased since April due to the change to the winter schedule. However, it is anticipated that if further strategies are not implemented to alleviate the queuing problem, queue delays will increase at the start of October when the summer schedule begins.

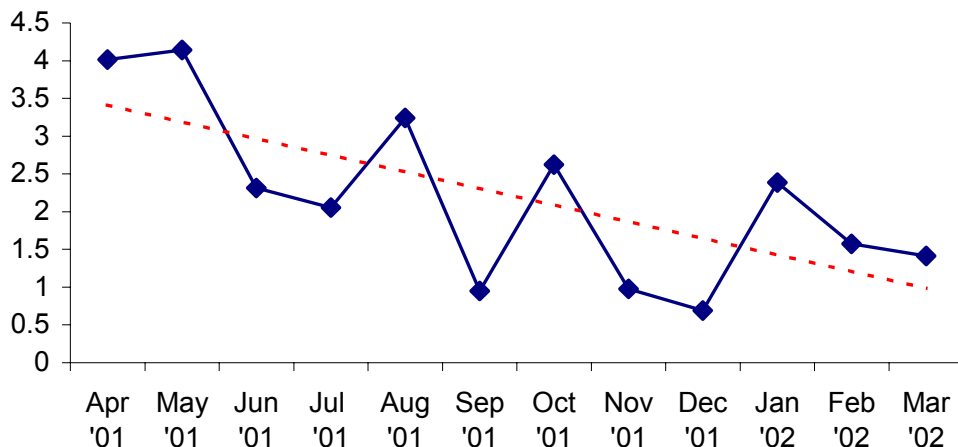
	<b>Work Area</b>	<b>Oct to Dec</b>	<b>Jan to Mar</b>
<b>VIC</b>	Baggage	5	36
	Primary line	5	8
	Postal Operations	1	0
<b>QLD</b>	Baggage	4	7
	Primary line	6	9
<b>NSW</b>	Primary line	0	3
	Entry Processing	1	0
	TRS	1	0
<b>NT</b>	Primary line	0	2
<b>WA</b>	Primary line	2	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>65</b>

## Staff Attitude

The second top complaint for this quarter is 'Staff attitude', with a total of 37 complaints (8.1%), compared to 33 in the previous quarter. As illustrated in the Trend graph on page 6, complaints about 'Staff attitude' continue to feature as a prominent issue.

**Staff Attitude Complaints**

Work Area	Oct to Dec	Jan to Mar
Baggage	13	20
Primary Line	9	9
TRS	4	3
Sierra	1	2
Postal Operations	1	1
Case Activity	0	1
Corporate	0	1
Enquiry Counter	2	0
Entry Processing	1	0
Cargo Exams	1	0
Import Clearance	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>37</b>



## Referral to other agencies

Customs continues to receive complaints from clients about issues which clients perceive are Customs responsibility, but which are actually the responsibility of the other agencies/organisations. In this quarter, 50 complaints were referred to other agencies (9.9% of total complaint contacts). This compares to 50 (13.8%) received in the past quarter.

When Customs receives these complaints, the client is notified of the correct authority. With the client's approval, the matter is then referred to the appropriate agency/organisation for their response.

### **Tourist Refund Scheme**

Last quarter, TRS complaints (114) accounted for 31.4% of total complaints, compared to 164 or 36.0% for this quarter.

Complaints about “Claim not made” has increased significantly; 35 this quarter compared to 18 last quarter. Complaints about “Claim not made” occur when clients are unable to claim a refund due to circumstances beyond their control (eg delay with connecting flights, long queue delays at check-in, etc).

<b>TRS Issues</b>	<b>Oct to Dec</b>	<b>Jan to Mar</b>
Claim not made	18	35
Goods not in possession	22	30
Did not have tax invoice	19	27
Unhappy about \$300 limit	8	19
Unhappy about 30 day limit	8	19
Unhappy about 30 minute rule	8	11
Lack of information	6	6
Goods exported unaccompanied	2	5
Staff attitude	4	3
Misinformed by Customs	1	2
No refund for services	2	2
Unhappy about refund	6	2
Process not explained	2	1
Misinformed by retailer	2	1
Unhappy about mail back facility	3	1
Signage	1	0
Queue delay	1	0
Crew not entitled	1	0
Misinformed by airline	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>164</b>

Rate of TRS complaints per 1 000 claims, last 12 months

## Other Complaint Issues

The remaining 134 complaints are spread over 27 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 Goods**

This relates to clients expressing dissatisfaction about goods missing, being damaged, withheld or seized.

- **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 "Unhappy about process"; "Process not explained"; "Misinformed by Customs"; "I got the run around"; "Facilities were inadequate"; "Documentation issues" and "Signage".

More specific information is available from the Complaints and Compliments Network which includes dedicated coordinators in each region (Refer to Attachment A).

## **Selected Client Comments – Complaints**

### **Queue Delay – (Melbourne Airport)**

#### **Case 104942**

*“Stood in long queue for 15 minutes at green exit. Then diverted to long queue at the start again for red exit. One and one half hours from arrival to clearance.”*

#### **Case 105155**

*“Flight arrived at 7:30 am was one of 7 aircraft arriving around this time - too many for Customs staff to deal with. We were queuing to go through Red Channel & were moved 3 times by 3 staff who did not know where the end of the queue was. Consequently we were moved to the end of the queue. 90 minutes later we were still there. Staff were not coping. Finally someone was working through the queue to see what we were claiming. They stamped our form to go to the green channel.”*

#### **Case 105379**

*“Excessive delays (2 hours) after baggage claim to get through Customs. Poor co-ordination between Quarantine and Customs Officers. Conflicting directives to passengers as to queues, and congestion in every area.”*

#### **Case 105426**

*“I declared some food item and found myself in a queue approx. 300 metres long of passengers going thru to red channel. This is not a good image, visitors will be discouraged from making declarations to avoid long delays in such queues!”*

#### **Case 105432**

*“The length of queues at Customs on arrival (approx 8am) followed by chaos and queues so long I couldn't find the end of the red line. Finally 20 minutes before boarding time for my connecting flight at 10.10, an officer started checking peoples' declared goods in the queue. Had she not started 3 back from me I would have missed the connection.”*

### **Staff Attitude**

#### **Case 105041**

*“One particular officer's conduct was "remarkably unprofessional, awfully humiliating and intensely stressful". When the search had been conducted and nothing found no apology was given.”*

#### **Case 105246**

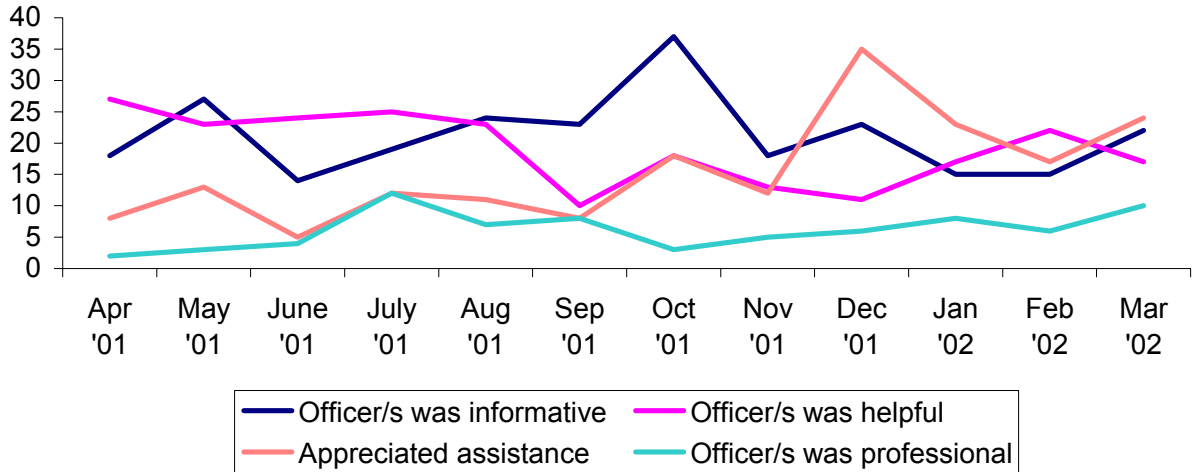
*“Staff are often openly suspicious and officious to the point of rudeness. I would like to see training in service skills for your staff – smiling, questioning gently, etc.”*

#### **Case 105276**

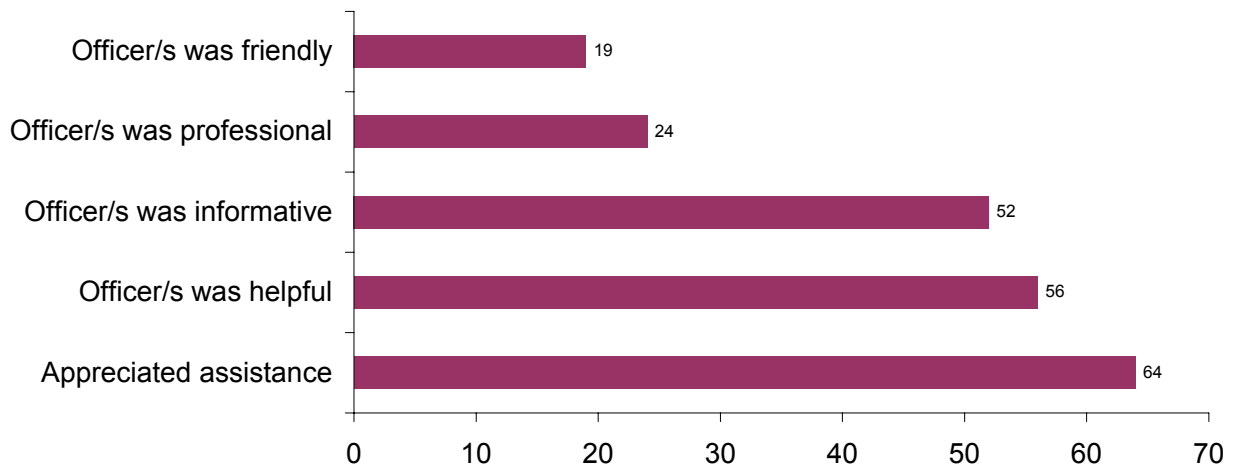
*“The woman customs officer was totally lacking in essential knowledge for the job. She was rude when she searched every single little thing in our luggage. She read our private correspondence without my consent. And asked me intrusive personal questions which are nothing to do with customs safety issues !!”*

## Compliments

### Trend by Compliment Issues



### Significant Compliments Offered



### ***Appreciated assistance***

The main compliment offered this quarter was 'Appreciated assistance', with a total of 64 (26.4%). Many of these compliments are received from other agencies, acknowledging the assistance given by Customs during a joint operation or project.

<b>Appreciated assistance</b>	<b>Oct to Dec</b>	<b>Jan to Feb</b>
Border	51	32
Pax Processing	10	27
Coastwatch	3	4
Intelligence	0	1
Investigations	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>64</b>

### ***Officer was helpful***

The second top compliment was 'Officer was helpful', with a total of 56 (23.1%).

<b>Officer was helpful</b>	<b>Oct to Dec</b>	<b>Jan to Feb</b>
Pax Processing	13	26
Border	14	19
Commercial	15	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>56</b>

### ***Referral to other agencies***

Customs also receives compliments from clients about issues which they perceive are Customs responsibility, but which are actually the responsibility of other agencies/organisations. In this quarter, 2 compliments were referred to other agencies (0.1% of total compliment contacts). This compares to 3 (0.1%) received in the past quarter.

## **Selected Client Comments - Compliments**

### **Appreciated assistance**

#### **Case 105584**

*"ACV Arnhem Bay / Roebuck Bay - Both crews were welcoming and performed very professionally. I enjoyed the experience." (R.A.N.)*

#### **Case 105597**

*"ACV Storm Bay - Customs Officers were extremely obliging and were a credit to the service. From the OIC to trainee personnel, all were ready to assist at all times and were totally professional in their dealings on our behalf." (Lord Howe Island Board)*

#### **Case 105620**

*"ACV Roebuck Bay - I was impressed by the very high standard, professionalism and friendliness of the crew and captain. I was looked after extremely well and assisted in my research." (Environment Australia)*

#### **Case 104895**

*"Just a quick note to acknowledge the excellent work by your District Manager in Bundaberg. His prompt response and professionalism is much appreciated." (DIMIA)*

#### **Case 105087**

*"I was very satisfied with the service and friendliness at Customs and all the good service they provide. They are very professional. I would like to see more people like this behind the counter."*

#### **Case 105255**

*"About staff at the ACT Regional Office - friendly and polite people. Great client service and people that listen to a problem and then help find a solution - continue the good work."*

### **Officer was helpful**

#### **Case 105587**

*"I just wanted to let you know the beautiful crystal lamp arrived today, and I wanted to thank you for being so kind and helpful, you are a credit to the Customs Department."*

#### **Case 105056**

*"I rang at 10.30 pm in an extremely worried state as I had discovered I was missing my son's passport and we were due to fly out the next day. The officer was very helpful and reassuring (and managed to locate the missing passport as well). I would like to commend his terrific service ethic."*

#### **Case 105200**

*"I received outstanding assistance by this officer. This lady went above and beyond her job to help me through a very bad experience. Good help is very hard to find these days and she should be acknowledged for her hard work."*

## Performance Against Service Standards

The Complaints & Compliments Network 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.

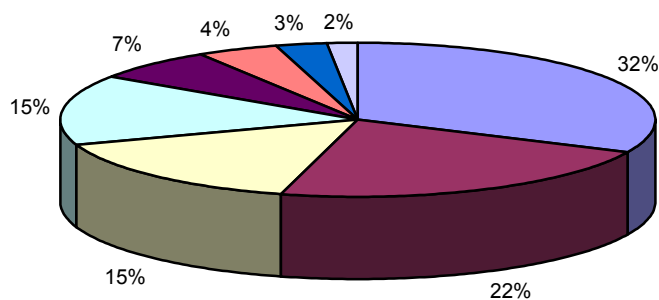
In acknowledging complaints, the Complaints & Compliments Network met the time standard in every case during the quarter.

In responding to clients, there were 20 cases where Customs did not respond within 15 working days. In 9 of these cases, the client was advised of the delay in responding to their complaint. The lack of responses within the specified timeframe has been addressed with all coordinators being advised of the performance standard required.

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

	January	February	March	Average
Complaints	3.53	5.36	3.68	4.11
Compliments	1.41	0.65	0.36	0.69

## How People Contact Us



Brochure	Letter	Email	Staff
Ministerial	Telephone	1800 228 227	Other

Written communication continues to be the most popular form by which people provide feedback, with brochures, letters and emails accounting for 69%, as illustrated above.