

SB:aac
Our ref: GOV:CTH

29 January 2010

Ms Jeanette Radcliffe
Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and
Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Radcliffe

Canberra Airport submission to Inquiry into Airservices Australia's Management of Aircraft Noise

Thank you for providing Canberra Airport with the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into Airservices Australia's Management of Aircraft Noise.

Canberra Airport supports Airservices' ongoing role in the management of aircraft noise at and around airports across Australia. We note that without the extensive work undertaken by Airservices, as supported by the aviation industry more generally, we would have been unable to deliver the range of aircraft noise benefits that the local community around Canberra Airport currently enjoy.

Current Noise Abatement Procedures assisted by Airservices Australia

The people of Canberra are the beneficiaries of a wide range of Noise Abatement Procedures in relation to operations at Canberra Airport, all of which have been made possible by the active involvement of Airservices, including the local Air Traffic Control (ATC) staff. In this regard, we note that the role of Airservices Australia ATC staff is critical to the ongoing maintenance and enforcement of noise abatement procedures.

Noise Abatement Procedures currently in place, as developed by Airservices and Canberra Airport include (data from Canberra Airport's 2009 approved Master Plan):

- Canberra and Queanbeyan Noise Abatement Areas to protect 99.5% of the regional population – established 1995;

- Offset departure runway 17 to protect for Jerrabomberra residents from departure flight paths – established 1996;
- Night Protection for Jerrabomberra residents from arrival flight paths by nominating runway 17 as preferred runway between 8pm and 7am – established 1998;
- Protection of North Canberra residents through altered departure procedures Runway 30 – established 2001;
- Higher overflight of residents located between Queanbeyan and Bungendore – established 2001;
- Increased protection for Carwoola, Captains Flat Road and Ridgeway residents via new Runway 30 arrival procedures – established 2002;
- Revised arrival procedures Runway 12 to protect North Canberra residents – established 2002;
- Minimised noise to Pialligo and North Canberra residents from circuit traffic by amending circuit routes – established 2002;
- Night (11pm-6am) operations agreements with night operators – established 2003;
- New Departure (SIDs) and Arrival (STAR) procedures keeping aircraft away from residential areas – established 2002 & 2005; and
- Required Navigation Performance (RNP) curved approaches protecting Jerrabomberra residents – established 2005.

As can be seen, Airservices has been very active in working to manage aircraft noise derived from operations at Canberra Airport and to protect the Canberra community from the full impact of aircraft operations. In this regard, Canberra Airport notes that many of the above measures were adopted as a result of Airservices, the airlines and Canberra Airport listening to the concerns of the community and acting to implement solutions to those concerns. Canberra Airport submits that Airservices management of aircraft noise has been consultative, independent and active.

Further details on these noise abatement procedures are available at Chapter 14 of the approved 2009 Canberra Airport Master Plan.

Notwithstanding Airservices current management of the aircraft noise, Canberra Airport welcomes the review of flight paths and aircraft noise at and around Canberra Airport. In this regard, Canberra Airport believes that by working with Airservices and the Airlines further noise abatement measures may be possible for Canberra Airport. As outlined in the approved 2009 Master Plan, these new measures may include:

- Additional protection of Jerrabomberra residents from arrival noise via a 15-degree (or similar) offset RNP or GPS approach;
- Further protection of Jerrabomberra community from arriving aircraft via the preferred use of Runway 17 (arrivals from north);
- Expansion of Noise Abatement Areas over existing and future residential areas of Gungahlin and Googong; and
- Strengthening of Noise Abatement Areas overnight.

Further details on these proposed noise abatement measures are provided at Chapter 14 of the approved 2009 Master Plan.

Canberra Airport looks forward to working with Airservices Australia in their conduct of this Review and in the implementation of further noise management procedures.

Active participation in community noise concerns

Airservices has played, and continues to play, an important role in engaging with local communities with respect to aircraft noise.

In the Canberra Airport context this has included:

- Active participation in the Canberra Airport Community Forum (and its predecessors);
- Development of a Noise and Flight Path Monitoring System (NFPMS) for Canberra Airport following community requests, and the quarterly reporting of findings from the system. This includes the installation of portable noise monitoring units to locations of community concern and the provision of additional information on a variety of NFPMS issues on request;
- The research into and publication of a report on the noise benefits of RNP approaches at Canberra Airport;
- The introduction of the “WebTrak” system across Australia, including at Canberra Airport to better enable the community to understand the causes of aircraft noise events;
- The introduction of internet noise complaint lodgement following community requests; and
- The active involvement of the Airservices Australia Noise Enquiry Unit (NEU) and local Air Traffic Control (ATC) staff in responding to community queries and complaints.

This role is critical as it gives the community comfort that noise is being reviewed, managed and considered by an “independent” party – a government organisation not directly involved in the provision of retail airline services.

In particular, the Airservices "WebTrak" and NFPMS have been excellent for the community and industry as it gives a true independent review and assessment of what the noise position actually is for an airport. With these services, the community and its representatives are able to make fully informed opinions about noise around airports by being able to access detailed noise information as collected by an independent body.

Canberra Airport also submits that as a practical matter it would be very difficult to separate the safe and efficient management of airspace from the management of aircraft noise – the two functions are intrinsically linked.

For instance, when assessing the desirability of flight paths or procedures it is in the interests of all parties that the relevant body take into account safety, efficiency for the airlines and airports, and amenity for the community. The process would become incredibly inefficient if two separate bodies were tasked with making different assessments (one about safety and regularity and the other about amenity) about proposed flight paths or procedures. Apart from the inevitable delays that would occur through the introduction of another organisation, there would also be questions as to what the position would be if the different bodies came to different conclusions – would this become the basis for challenging a flight path or procedures? How would the dispute be resolved? Would this just create more uncertainty for airlines and the community?

In these circumstances, it seems critical to Canberra Airport that to avoid any inconsistencies or contradictory policy outcomes the role of airspace and aircraft noise management needs to be undertaken by the one body.

Summary

Canberra Airport strongly believes that Airservices should continue with the management of Aircraft Noise at Australia's Airports and believes that the level of service currently provided to airports, the community and the aviation industry is of a high standard.

Canberra Airport considers that it is crucial that Airservices' current role continues, noting the fact that the independent management and monitoring of aircraft noise issues by Airservices (as opposed to, say, Airports) is essential in managing community perceptions and expectations with respect to aircraft noise.

We would be pleased to provide any additional assistance to the Committee should this be required, including making an oral submission if this would be of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Leece
General Counsel