

Reduce, Remove, Replace
A new approach to dealing with aircraft noise and pollution
No Aircraft Noise submission to Senate Inquiry into Air Services Australia

29 January 2010

Summary

Reduce, Remove, Replace

Aircraft noise must be reduced to acceptable levels according to Australian Standards where this noise affect sensitive land uses. Where this is not possible, the source of the noise must be removed, by relocating airports or flight paths. Polluting air travel must be replaced where possible by less carbon intensive transport modes. Air Services Australia (ASA) has failed to protect the human environment from adverse affects of aircraft noise.

Submission to Senate Inquiry

Term of reference (a) has conducted an effective, open and informed public consultation strategy with communities affected by aircraft noise;

No. In Sydney there is no direct consultation with affected communities by ASA. There is only consultation through the Sydney Airport Community Forum, comprised of appointees of the Transport Minister, mostly Federal and State MP's and Mayors of affected areas. Federal Governments select the membership carefully to give the ruling party a majority on the committee. The committee has not been open at all sessions and members of affected communities are not allowed to ask questions or make comments.

Term of reference (b) engages with industry and business stakeholders in an open, informed and reasonable way;

The aviation industry seems to get what it wants most of the time. The engagement with industry is not transparent or reported to the public.

Term of reference (c) has adequate triggers for public consultation under legislation and whether procedures used by Airservices Australia are compliant with these requirements;

Despite two Master Plans since Sydney Airport was privatised, ASA has not held any public consultation about the major increases in air traffic proposed.

Term of reference (d) is accountable, as a government-owned corporation, for the conduct of its noise management strategy;

ASA Noise Enquiry Line useless

The failure of the ASA Noise Enquiry Line lies in the fact that it merely tabulates and reports complaints and there is no action that flows from legitimate complaints by affected people.

The enquiry line is not adequately staffed and interminable delays await anyone who wishes to hang on to speak to an ASA officer. Complaints are met with explanations only and no follow up is undertaken by ASA to make changes.

The reporting of curfew breaches in Sydney may be a possible exception, but they are monitored directly by air traffic control and don't rely on an alert by a complainant.

Term of reference (e) has pursued and established equitable noise-sharing arrangements in meeting its responsibilities to provide air traffic services and to protect the environment from the effects associated with aircraft for which it is responsible;

Noise Sharing a flawed concept

Aircraft noise is a serious pollutant, with health effects as quoted in the 1995 Senate Report, and as found in the recent Kurnell Blood Pressure Study (Black et al) and the study by Dr Lars Jarup, Imperial College London 2008. This pollution must be reduced, rather than shared.

End the political manipulation of flight paths

Sydney has suffered for many years from the manipulation of flight paths for political ends without regard for the people being dumped on.

The Hawke Labor Government approved the third Runway and closed the East West Runway with the effect that noise was transferred from marginal Labor Seats (the then seat of Phillip and Barton) to the safe Labor seat of Grayndler and the Liberal seats of Lowe and Bennelong.

The response of the Keating Labor Government to outrage from residents north of the airport to the sudden increase in aircraft noise when the Third Runway was opened was to concentrate noise along a narrow corridor in the vain hope that this would minimise the number of angry people while blasting the daylight out of those who lived in the corridor.

The Howard Liberal Government, having won the seat of Lowe in 1996, then sacrificed it to take the noise of take offs away from Howard's seat of Bennelong.

Term of reference (f) requires a binding Community Consultation Charter to assist it in consulting fully and openly with communities affected by aircraft noise; and

Term of reference (g) any other related matter.

Australian Standards on Aircraft Noise

The land use recommendations by Air Services Australia are used in Australian Standard AS 2021-2000 Acoustics – Aircraft noise intrusion – building siting and design and

airport master plans.

In a monstrous hypocrisy, these standards are enforced on the community, but not on the aviation industry, which has been allowed to continue to impose higher noise zones on existing residential populations.

Local councils and state governments can prevent new dwellings above 25 ANEF or make them conditional on having noise insulation in areas above 20 ANEF.

Flight paths

ASA should arrange aircraft flight paths to comply at the very least with Australian Standards so that homes and noise sensitive land uses are not exposed to excessive noise.

In conditional zones, insulation to the Australian Standards levels of internal noise should be provided by the Australian Government, funded by a levy on aviation users, freight as well as passengers.

Where there is an existing aviation use and the current land use complies with the noise zone, land use restrictions should be applied to prevent new conflicts. Canberra Airport is justified in objecting to a new housing development in Queanbeyan under an existing flight path.

Flight paths where compliance is not possible

Where ASA finds that an airport is unable to operate with flight paths which conform to Australian Standards, it must prepare options for the Federal Government to correct the situation. This may include limiting flights at a particular airport, diverting traffic to other airports or other transport modes, or relocating badly sited airports. It may also include the option of voluntary purchase of buildings which would still be above the Australian Standards noise levels.

The present Sydney Airport is surrounded by a huge area of existing housing as well as hazardous industries. It is not practical to operate a major international airport at this site and have it comply with Australian Standards. Therefore it should be relocated outside the city limits.

1995 Senate Inquiry into Aircraft Noise “Falling on Deaf Ears?”

Senators should look at the recommendations of the 1995 inquiry into aircraft noise in Sydney and check which have not been implemented by successive Liberal and Labor Governments.

In particular note the failure to extend the noise insulation scheme to 25 ANEF, still 5 ANEF above the Australian Standards. The committee also noted that the National Acoustic Laboratories stated that “it does not seem unreasonable to describe an ANEF

value of 20 as an “excessive” amount of aircraft noise – more than is acceptable or desirable in a residential area.” Page E10.

The Howard Liberal Government continued the mean policy of the Keating Labor Government only to offer insulation to homes above 30 ANEF with schools and places of worship offered insulation above 25 ANEF.

Conclusion

Until aircraft noise, pollution and crash risk are treated as serious pollution concerns by ASA and the Federal Government, there will remain a major conflict between people’s rights to decent and healthy living conditions and the aviation industry.