

12th January 2010

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

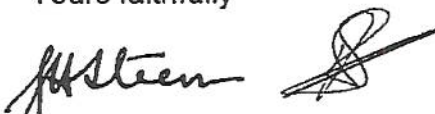
Dear Sir,

Rural And Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee
Submission by GH & BF Steemson

Attached are:

1. A letter addressed to our local member, Judi Moylan; and
2. A submission for your consideration regarding changes to flight paths around Perth.

Yours faithfully


GH & BF Steemson

12th January 2010

Hon Judi Moylan MP
Member for Pearce
PO Box 1005
Midland
WA 6936

Dear Mrs Moylan,

Rural And Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee
Flight Path Changes Around Perth

Firstly, while this letter and our submission contains some adverse comments regarding parts of our Government (and in our opinion justifiably so), we would like to acknowledge the considerable efforts by you and some of your colleagues in raising the profile of the Perth airspace issue.

It is now over a year since the imposition of the two new north–south flight path over the Eastern Hills and other associated changes to aircraft movements. We have still to hear from the Ombudsman regarding the process adopted by ASA or receive an apology from Mr Moore arising from his insults. It would seem that ASA and their colleagues are above all forms of government unless the latter are complicit in this matter.

Under normal circumstances, we should have some hope of at least a compromise arising from the Rural And Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee deliberations. Indeed, as we now understand the ASA charter better, we should have cause for optimism.

We are, like many people affected by these recent changes, dismayed by the actions of ASA and their colleagues. What right does an unelected corporate/non-government/government entity funded by the airline industry/Federal Government have to unilaterally change suburb demographics?

This matter has cost us considerable time to defend something we would have thought was never in danger. We have come to understand far more about aircraft operations than many of us ever wanted to know. This is all quite fine for ASA and their associates; they are paid to do what they do. We have a day job. The matter of continuing to make complaints creates a certain amount of angst, which is unwelcome, and probably part of ASA's strategy – spin it out.

Attached for your information is our submission to the Rural And Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee.

Yours Faithfully



Greg & Barbara Steemson



Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Reference Committee

Opening Statement

Our family home is located in Paulls Valley, Western Australia.

The desirable properties of the area are:

1. Low ambient noise (or as it was before the imposition of aircraft noise).
2. Property size restrictions and limited ability for subdivision.
3. Low population density.
4. Low turn over of property.
5. Proximity to the city of Perth.
6. Access to the forest for recreation.

The changes to aircraft flight paths implemented in November 2008:

1. Have been done without any consultation with people living under the narrow track now followed by aircraft. The tracks are so confined ASA would have been easily able to establish which households were going to be affected. This is quite apparent using the tracking website. These households should have at least been offered compensation on the basis of a major disruption to their lives, the environment in which they live and to property values.
2. Have been done without any disclosure to the various committees that seemingly were set up to have input to such changes.
3. Have imposed continual aircraft noise on areas where there was none.
4. Have implemented changes that appear to be contradictory to the reasons stated to be the drivers for change.
5. Have been done in a clandestine manner; indeed, ASA and the other statutory bodies and committees have sought to hide behind each other.
6. Have been done by unelected entities set up by the airline industry, airport operator and Federal Government whose brief is to serve the airline industry. These entities seemingly are above government and the Federal Ombudsman. The only other interpretation is that these offices are complicit.
7. Have changed demographics of the suburbs affected.

Terms of Reference 1

Since November 2008 we have been provided with various reasons justifying the changes to the flight paths.

These reasons seemingly arose from a safety review by CASA, which sought to:

1. Separate jet from non-jet aircraft. Observation would conclude this has been unsuccessful. All types of aircraft follow the same track and all aircraft cross other aircraft tracks.
2. Separation of departures and arrivals. Observation would conclude that this too has been unsuccessful both for jet and non-jet.
3. Separate civilian from military aircraft movements. This chestnut has been used once too often for it to be believable – it is an excuse of convenience.

There has never been any reference to the affects on the environment or the people living in that environment in the sensitive Darling Ranges and its National Parks and Reserves.

When these arguments were refuted, ASA then sought to use wind direction as the reason for the change.

We have the following comments:

1. How is it possible that the safety issue has been acceptable for 30 years or more and suddenly the status quo is unsafe?
2. Why would the wind direction now be any different to pre-November 2008? If it was safe for aircraft to depart and land using the flight paths that existed pre-November 2008, why was it suddenly unsafe? Are we to believe that CASA were delinquent pre-November 2008?
3. From a scientific and logic basis, the current situation is far more dangerous than the previous flight paths. While we had mainly small propeller planes departing Perth as the main traffic (which is a legacy of the 1996 fair spread deal imposed on us by the previous Government), there were no jet and large propeller aircraft and the traffic was mainly one way. Now all types of aircraft cross paths with all other types.
4. All of the north-south arrivals now affecting the eastern hills used to arrive at Perth using other routes. We have asked for this information but it has not been provided. Some of the Fairskies members, however, had some knowledge of these routes; they apparently travelled south along the coastal zone and then entered Perth airspace from the west. This would seem to be a much safer route as these arrivals would not interfere with the dominant traffic entering and leaving Perth from/to the east.
5. The various bureaucrats say the aircraft are all travelling at > 5,000' above us. This is clearly wrong as they cast a black shadow. Even if this observation was ignored, WebTrak should have alerted them that aircraft were below 5,000'. Any reasonable analysis would have shown that Pauls Valley, Bickley and Pickering Brook were all being overflowed at heights less than 5,000'. This factor alone should have triggered ASA's own internal procedures.
6. If the flight height did not raise the matter internally, completion of OAR Form 80 should have. From an outsider's point of view, isn't this the reason for the form?
7. Even if this was ignored, ASA's stated principles should have triggered disclosure and discussion.
8. The only conclusion that can be reached is that ASA chose to ignore its obligations and to continue regardless to implement the changes and run roughshod over affected residents.
9. In the built up city suburbs, aircraft noise is but one of many sources of noise. In the Perth hills the ambient noise levels are very low and any aircraft noise is very intrusive and destroys the environment which is one of the main reasons people like us live here. ASA contend that the aircraft are too high to cause any disturbance which is clearly untrue.
10. If the situation can't be resolved in a manner to reduce the noise intrusion back to a level pre-November 2008, then a **curfew** should be established between the hours of 10pm and 6am. The airline and airport operators will be unhappy; however, why should we subsidise their operations? Like everyone else, they and their customers should be responsible for the true cost.
11. As a follow on from the previous points, it would have been far better for the exit and entry points from/to the airport to have remained undeveloped so that the airport could have operated unfettered by noise complaints. However, successive governments have allowed (in particular) residential developments to close in around the airport and along all of the flight path corridors.

Now let's look at the various committees.

After spending a lot of time trying to understand what was going on, it became apparent that there was a **labyrinth of committees** that had been set up over a number of years, each one able to hide behind another. Each committee had all care but no responsibility.

It seems that unless the individuals on the various committees were directly affected, no action was taken. This became apparent during the recent Kalamunda Council elections where a Councillor running for re-election did not know about the issue despite her husband serving on one of the committees. When this was pointed out to her, she promised vehemently to address the matter if re-elected. Silence.

So, in conclusion, we don't believe that ASA, or any of the other committees, have acted in any way responsibly in the discharge of their responsibilities and obligations.

Terms of Reference 2(a)

ASA by themselves and through their public mouthpiece Mr Geoffrey Thomas have repeatedly stated both privately and publicly that there was "an effective, open and informed public consultation strategy". This has been denied by the various community committee representatives.

The truth can't be on both sides.

However, there is one fact: in the PANMCC minutes obtained from the Kalamunda Shire, the November 2008 changes were not minuted.

Mr Moore's (ASA) statement that the people living under the new north south track along the eastern hills would not notice or be inconvenienced by the changes because they are second class citizens is insulting and if the man had any integrity he would apologise and the same applies to his superiors.

The only comment that can be made on a purely factual basis is that ASA and its associates have acted in concert and in a clandestine manner to give the airlines and airport operator an outcome they wanted. There was no community consultation.

Terms of Reference 2(b)

We have no knowledge of this matter.

Terms of Reference 2(c)

There are existing triggers that would require ASA to consult the people affected in Paulls Valley and many of the suburbs further south. However, the only conclusion that can be reasonably drawn is that these triggers were deliberately ignored. No contact was made with any of the residents and it was quite a surprise when jet aircraft were roaring overhead every 3.5 minutes. ASA would have known exactly which households were going to be affected. Indeed, by Mr Moore's comments, he and they knew quite well which households were going to be affected.

Terms of Reference 2(d)

The entities set up to administer aircraft flight paths are seemingly above Government and the Federal Ombudsman. We have been in regular contact with the latter for 9 months without any progress. The only other interpretation of the facts is that they are complicit.

Terms of Reference 2(e)

The new north-south flight path along the Eastern Hills focuses the noise in a very narrow strip so the noise sharing principle espoused in 1996 has been set aside despite assurances to the contrary. If there was some concern for the low level noise environment, surely the noise would have been kept in the city where that environment has largely been obliterated.

Terms of Reference 2(f)

This is clearly required and should include some of the principles of mediation. For example, no reasonable outcome can be expected when one of the parties continues to act in a manner to cause continuing distress to the other party. In any normal mediation, the parties would assume their position previous to the dispute.

Clearly, the existing principles/guidelines are not being followed.

Now, let's look at some other related matters.**Valuations**

We made careful enquiry into such matters as the flight paths before purchasing property in this area. There were no flight paths existing or planned. In 1996 we were bombarded with light aircraft as part of the then Government's fair share policy. We were not happy about that either.

A recent property valuation for our property shows a 40% reduction in value. However, that is not the point. People like us just don't buy property under flight paths.

Helicopters

In addition to low flying fixed wing aircraft, the hills area frequently is subject to low flying helicopter traffic. These aircraft are flying so low that the pilot can be seen quite clearly – probably a few hundreds of metres. This traffic seems to be related to the TV industry. Again, these operators should have respect for other people's rights and not just the wishes of their employers. Surely these aircraft should also be subject to the same rules as fixed wing aircraft.

End of submission