

ACT Government submission to

Inquiry into Airservices Australia's Management of Aircraft Noise

Introduction

The ACT Government welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport's inquiry into Airservices Australia's management of aircraft noise.

The issue of airport noise is a key concern for the ACT Government in relation to the ongoing development of the Canberra Airport. The ACT Government recognises the current and future role that Canberra Airport has in the economic prosperity of Canberra and the Capital Region. However, the ACT Government also maintains a position that the benefits delivered by the airport to the ACT and region need to be balanced against community needs and residential amenity. The management and monitoring of aircraft noise is a fundamental part in creating this balance. This need for this balance is reflected in the Commonwealth Aviation White paper.

In its submissions on the Canberra Airport 2009 Preliminary Draft Master Plan and the Federal Government's Aviation Policy Green Paper the ACT Government raised concerns regarding the impact of aircraft noise on the community and how information on aircraft noise could be presented to help people better understand the effect of aircraft noise.

Noise Monitoring in the suburb of Hackett

The ACT Government welcomes Airservices Australia's initiative in installing a temporary noise monitor in the ACT suburb of Hackett. This was in response to community concerns about increased aircraft noise levels in that area.

In November 2008 the ACT Government announced that it would undertake an independent review of the output from the Hackett noise monitor. The ACT Government engaged Ms Marion Burgess from the Acoustics Vibration Unit, University of Sydney, ADFA Campus to undertake the independent review. This review is in response to concerns raised by the community and will cover the first six months of data.

The purpose of engaging an independent noise expert was so that the ACT Government and community would have a set of definitive and independently validated data. This independently validated data will inform all interested parties about the level of aircraft noise in the Hackett area.

Airservices Australia made its results available for independent analysis. A draft report has been received by ACT Chief Minister's Department. Airservices Australia is currently being consulted on the results before the report is considered by the ACT Government. It is

expected that the final report will be released to the public following consideration by Government and a copy could be made available to the Committee at that time.

Noise Abatement Procedures

The ACT Government advocates and supports further consideration of expanding the Noise Abatement Area to cover those suburbs that have been part of the planning strategy for Canberra for several decades, and are now being developed. With slight adjustment, the Noise Abatement Area could be expanded, in order to afford these areas protection from adverse aircraft noise, with minimal expected disruption to the north-south aircraft movement lines. The Canberra Airport endorsement of the expansion of the Noise Abatement Area in this location would suggest it is not concerned with potential impacts on the current and future operations of the Airport.

In March 2009 the ACT Government was advised (at an Industry Aircraft Movement Procedures Review Meeting held at Canberra Airport) that Airservices Australia did not currently intend expanding the existing Canberra Noise Abatement Areas. The expansion of the Noise Abatement Areas to cover developing areas in the north of Canberra, including Gungahlin (together with Googong in NSW) had been foreshadowed by Canberra International Airport (through their Preliminary Draft Canberra International Airport Master Plan) and supported by the ACT Government. The Airport had anticipated the expansion being in place by 2010.

Review by Airservices Australia

As noted above, the impact of aircraft noise on local communities continues to be an issue of concern in the ACT. The ACT Government looks forward to being involved in Airservices Australia's review of ways to minimise the impact of aircraft noise in Canberra. This review was announced by Minister Albanese in August 2009 when he approved the Canberra Airport 2009 Master Plan. The ACT has written to Minister Albanese seeking to be included in this review and asking that local community groups also be involved.

Measurement of Aircraft Noise

Research exists supporting the superiority of equal energy indicators, such as ANEF, as predictors of a person's reaction to a noise event. The Commonwealth Government Aviation White Paper indicates that the provision of this information can contribute to improving and enhancing land use planning arrangements and improve public understanding in relation to the impacts of aircraft noise.

The ACT Government submission in response to the Aviation Policy Green Paper noted the potential benefits for community understanding of the effects of aircraft noise that would result from publishing N70 diagrams in addition to ANEFs. N70 is an index which represents

the number of aircraft event/movements which generate a noise level 70dBA or higher at any given point. The N70 takes account of accumulation of movements over time and is expressed as a number of events on an average day. Usually this is presented as the number events above a specified noise level on an average day.

The National Acoustic Laboratories work that led to the adoption of the ANEF identified 70dBA as the noise level at which there was a significant adverse response and correlation with people's reaction to noise.