

Gary and Kerry Rowles

24 January 2010

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Services Committee

Honourable Senators

I write this Submission, speaking on behalf of myself and my husband Gary. Before I comment on the Terms of Reference in relation to Air Services Australia's ***Environmental Principles and Procedures for Minimising the Impact of Aircraft Noise*** appended to this document, please allow me to brief yourselves of the circumstances that compel me to write this Submission.

Background

Almost six years ago we purchased our "piece of paradise" after carefully researching many of Perth's outlying areas for a location that fitted our criteria, which included, primarily, PEACE AND QUIET, as well as other factors in the pursuit of our chosen lifestyle. We selected Warrigal Way Chidlow as it ticked all the boxes for us. It is nestled in a secluded valley approximately 6km between the historic towns of Chidlow and Woorloo, surrounded by beautiful jarrah forest and is roughly 60km from the Perth CBD. It was our plan to remain here indefinitely.

We have been developing our property along Permaculture and sustainable lines since moving here, producing much of our own food, harvesting and storing water, utilising the sun's energy to provide us with ours, and intend ultimately to make our living from this enterprise by teaching others. To this end, in 2008 I embarked upon a certified Permaculture course, from which I recently graduated. With the qualifications gained I had intended to teach from my property where our gardens would be the classroom. I doubt very much whether this will now be possible.

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Our first indication that the flight paths had been changed was when we were suddenly inundated with constant flights *directly* over our property at all hours of the day and night. This commenced in June 2009. The traffic includes commercial jets, small jets, turbo propeller and other non-jet size aircraft, and, on many occasions, military aircraft. These flights are both arriving to and departing from Perth Airport, Jandakot Airport and Pearce RAAF Base. In other words we are overflowed in both directions (sometimes AT THE SAME TIME). There has been no respite since June 2009.

The following information will indicate the impact these changes have had on Warrigal Way:

Flight Paths Prior to November 2008

Flight path was approximately 1.85kms to the North of Warrigal Way. Heading East-West or West-East there were jet departures and jet arrivals, and on a heading South-East non jet departures.

(Note: the above flights were using runways 03 & 06 and 21 & 24, which are reciprocal routes, and these flight paths therefore conflicted with Principle 12 of the ASA Principles shown at the end of this document.)

Flight Paths Post-November 2008

DIRECTLY OVERHEAD

Jet arrivals to runways 21 & 24

Jet departures from runways 03 & 06

Non-jet departures from runways 21 & 24

Non-jet arrivals from runways 21 & 24

Again these reciprocal routes violate ASA's Principle 12.

You can see from the above that we are now subjected to both jet and non-jet arrivals and departures **DIRECTLY OVERHEAD** in a four-way contest for air space. The flights prior to November 2008 had very little impact on us as they were too far to the North for us to see or hear as we are in a valley. Occasionally there would be a flight that came closer to us than the 1.85km mentioned above but these aircraft were flying at greater height than is now the practice. Most jet flights we now experience are under the 5,000ft ASA claims is the practice, one recent jet was as low as 1009m above sea level. As we are nearly 300m above sea level, we had a huge thundering aircraft roaring through our valley at 700m above our heads!

Impact on our health and way of life

The impact on our health and way of life is immeasurable. The flight path changes have totally trashed our peaceful lifestyle, sleep routines and business/income potential. I am concerned about the long-term affects from the inevitable fallout from all this heavy air traffic on our organic food gardens and drinking water (our only source of water is from rainwater collected from our rooves). Jets arriving flying at low altitude with the reverse thrusters on are deafening and cause conversation to have to cease. The aircraft cause disruption to electronic equipment such as radios, television and mobile telephone reception. The noise of jets heading our way either arriving or departing is akin to thunder and often as the noise from one jet recedes the noise of the next jet is building to a crescendo. Often there is barely 30 seconds between jets coming in to land or departing.

Flights commence as early as 4.30-5.00am most days (starting with extremely loud jet departures on vertical ascent acceleration) and do not cease until nearly midnight. Frequently they occur throughout the night (most of these are jets arriving—the noise is phenomenal and we frequently experience vibration from the noise in our house. EVERY jet wakes us up!). Our sleep is constantly being disturbed. We have often gone to work with little more than three or four hours sleep due to the disruption of the aircraft noise, which is akin to someone riding a Harley Davison motorbike *through* the house. This lack of sleep is **DANGEROUS** as we are driving tired and Gary works in a very dangerous environment (high rise construction).

Prior to these changes I had not had an asthma attack for nearly six years. The stress caused by the sudden and unannounced and certainly **most unacceptable** noise and disruption to life and sleep routines means that I am now having to take asthma medication several times daily. I am devastated by this outcome as my health had improved considerably since moving here (another reason for the move).

As an active member, and the Fire Control Officer (RFS/CFA Captain equivalent), of the Chidlow Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, Gary is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week to protect and serve the community. In the recent devastating Toodyay bushfires, where 38 properties were totally destroyed and 4 people injured, Gary was out all night (approximately 12 hours on duty after a full day's work in his daytime job) helping to

protect homes and lives. He was unable to catch up on lost sleep during the following days (and nights) because of the constant aircraft noise. I doubt if he has caught up with those lost hours sleep yet. Some reward for laying his life on the line every time he attends a fire!

Gardening, reading, meditating, walking the dog in the forest, sitting on the verandah listening to the birds, “nanna napping”, these are now pastimes we can no longer enjoy or pursue because of the noise from the aircraft. As an example of aircraft noise frequency: Saturday 23rd January 2010 departing flights commenced at 6.00am, then within 21 minutes seven more jets had screamed their way right above our house. This is not an isolated example, it happens EVERY DAY. Initially I attempted to keep track of the flights passing overhead for the Noise Management Consultative Committee, a request from the Mundaring Shire’s sitting member on that Committee. However, this exercise had a huge negative impact on my health. The worst day I recorded was 85 flights, the majority of which were jets (some 52) flying overhead between 05:20 and 18:00. The flights didn’t stop at 18:00, I had to cease counting them because of a severe asthma attack.

Not a day, hour or sometimes minute passes by without an aircraft screaming overhead.

Opinions and Comments Addressing the Terms of Reference in relation to ASA’s Environmental Principles and Procedures

1) An assessment of the effectiveness of ASA’s management of aircraft noise under its responsibilities to provide air traffic services and protect the environment from the effects associated with the operation of aircraft for which it has legislative jurisdiction **had not been complied with, refer Principles 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 12 below.**

2) With regard to this responsibility,

(a): ASA did **NOT** conduct **ANY** public consultation with communities affected by aircraft noise. Their arrogance is apparent when they informed the Western Australian Route Review Project (WARRP) Committee that the changes “would have little impact if any” and that “no individual communities would be adversely affected by these changes”. (Note: nowhere in my dictionary does the word “review” mean “implementation”. The changes were implemented seemingly without anyone other than the airlines, airports and ASA knowing.)

When letters began to appear in the local and state newspapers from residents affected by these changes demanding an explanation. Air Services Australia claimed in newspaper reports, to have conducted “extensive community consultation” prior to the changes being made. However, when pursued, ASA were unable to substantiate these claims of community meetings by providing dates/venues. **It was a blatant lie.** Apparently they provided something on a portal on their website that the public could access! Having **never** heard of ASA before I had no idea that this information was awaiting my perusal on a portal on their website! Their only announcement of the changes was a notice in *The West Australian* newspaper on 21 November 2008, **the day after the changes were implemented!** We did not see this announcement, nor did a significant number of other affected residents apparently.

(b): No engagement with industry or business or any stakeholders could have taken place as evidenced, by example, of Mundaring Shire’s ignorance of the changes prior to their implementation.

(d) ASA appears to not be accountable to anyone regarding noise and appear only interested in accommodating the airlines and airports who provide the majority of their funding. Surely this is a conflict of interest?

(e) Define “equitable”! With now 2200+ flights a month over our place it seems like we get the lion’s share, hardly “equitable” noise-sharing and environmental protection! Many suburbs have experienced a significant decrease (some by two-thirds) in air traffic due to these changes.

Additional comment and opinion

ASA have not protected the environment at all. The Noise Management Unit staff are arrogant, rude, condescending and patronising and frequently provide “generic” explanations to questions asked—the “one size fits all” approach. I have been informed that there is no compilation or review of the types of issues encountered by residents affected by noise, just numbers which they send through to the local airport noise committees. The impact and content of the complaint rates no merit and gets no mention. The community is not informed of this and also the committees are not informed of the impact that the industry is having. In other words this is not a complaints system in any real sense, just a tick the box and flick the numbers approach. It’s no wonder nothing changes.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES FOR MINIMISING THE IMPACT OF AIRCRAFT NOISE

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

The following fundamental principles are to be used in environmental assessments (of proposals for new air routes and for changes to existing arrangements) and as the basis for selecting preferred noise abatement procedures.

Total Noise Dose

Principle 1: Noise abatement procedures should be optimized to achieve the lowest possible overall impact on the community.

Spatial Distribution of the Noise Dose

Principle 2: Noise should be concentrated as much as possible over non-residential areas.

Principle 3: Noise exposure should be fairly shared whenever possible.

Principle 4: No suburb, group or individual can demand or expect to be exempt from aircraft noise exposure.

Upper and Lower Limits of Noise Exposure

Principle 5: Noise is not considered significant when selecting noise preferred options if exposure amounts to less than 40 Leq 24 and there are less than 50 overflights per day.

Principle 6: No residential area should receive more than 60 Leq 24, i.e., no residential area should receive more noise exposure than that which is considered “unacceptable” for residential housing under Australian Standard AS2021.

Principle 7: There should be a current agreed aircraft noise exposure level above which no person should be exposed, and agreement that this level should be progressively reduced. The goal should be 95 dB(A).

Timing/Historical issues

Principle 8: When comparing options, operations that are conducted at night or on weekends should be treated as being more sensitive than those which occur during the daytime or on weekdays.

Principle 9: Both short-term and long-term noise exposure should be taken into account in deciding between options.

Principle 10: Options which allow for a gradual change from the current to planned procedures should be given preference.

Principle 11: In deciding between mutually exclusive, but otherwise equivalent options, involving

(i) the overflight of an area which has previously been exposed to aircraft noise for a considerable period of time (and which a large proportion of residents would therefore have been aware of the noise before moving in); or

(ii) a newly exposed area,

option (i) should be chosen.

Reciprocal Flight paths

Principle 12: To the extent practicable, residential areas overflown by aircraft arriving on a particular runway should not also be overflown by aircraft departing from the runway in the reciprocal direction.