

Perth Airports Municipalities Group Inc.

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

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AIRSERVICES AUSTRALIA'S MANAGEMENT OF AIRCRAFT NOISE

The Perth Airports Municipalities Group Incorporated (PAMG) is providing comment on behalf of its 10 member local governments i.e. Town of Bassendean, City of Bayswater, City of Belmont, City of Cockburn, City of Gosnells, Shire of Kalamunda, City of Melville, Shire of Mundaring, City of South Perth and City of Swan. Each of our members is impacted either directly or indirectly by airports (Perth, Jandakot, and Pearce Airbase). It should also be noted that some of our members may also comment directly to you in their own right.

At the PAMG's ordinary meeting of 17 December 2009, Mr Richard Dudley, General Manager Corporate & International Affairs, Airservices Australia, addressed the Group to provide the rationale behind the WARRP review, how the WARRP review was conducted and the corresponding impacts that the outcomes of that review has had on the community.

The PAMG's comments are based on the discussions that ensued after Mr Dudley's presentation and individual member's feedback to the PAMG Management Committee.

The PAMG's response has been structured to the Senates inquiry parameters.

1. Whether Airservices Australia has conducted an effective, open and informed public consultation strategy with communities affected by aircraft noise;

Response

The general consensus is that "No, Airservices Australia has not conducted an effective, open and informed public consultation strategy with communities affected by aircraft noise".

The view is that whatever consultation was undertaken it was not in a forum that would guarantee a balanced and wide ranging audience, nor in a language/format that could be understood and interpreted by those who were consulted i.e. too technical.

Our members have advised that they have received a significant number of complaints from the community regarding significant changes to flight paths and that aircraft related noise levels have increased over the past 12 months. The feedback members are getting from their communities is that there is the perception that there is no information available on these issues. Many in the community have not heard of Airservices Australia and it is not widely known that Airservices Australia has a website to track aircraft movements (Webtrak) and a noise enquiry service.

Due to lack of knowledge, many of the community complaints have been directed to local government rather than Airservices Australia. This has been disruptive to local government in having to redirect resources to handle these complaints and therefore local government business operations have been compromised in order to manage a situation that is not a function of local government.

The City's of Bayswater and Swan, and the Shire of Mundaring have been hit particularly hard with community discontent over Airservices Australia's management of the WARRP review. Local residents severely impacted by flight path changes fall within the suburbs of Guildford, Noranda, Beechboro, Chidlow, Stoneville and Glenforrest. The east west flight paths were formally further north over the industrial areas of Malaga and the vacant land areas of Whiteman Park but are now over more densely populated residential areas.

Local residents may have been more accepting of the WARRP changes if they had been told the reasons why it needed to be altered or had been given the chance to comment.

2. *Whether Airservices Australia engages with industry and business stakeholders in an open, informed and reasonable way;*

Response

Airservices Australia has been more proactive recently, but prior to the outcomes of the WARRP review, there was very little contact with the PAMG members.

3. *Whether Airservices has adequate triggers for public consultation under legislation and whether procedures used by Airservices Australia are compliant with these requirements;*

Response

The PAMG does not have sufficient information on this issue and therefore is unable to provide comment at this time.

4. *Whether Airservices Australia is accountable, as a government-owned corporation, for the conduct of its noise management strategy;*

Response

The community finds it difficult to determine which organisation or authority is responsible and accountable for aircraft related noise management, associated community engagement, flight path management, technical and safety advice (health complaints because of noise), political or policy decisions (e.g. curfews) and enforcement of relevant regulations.

It is understood that there are various parties involved i.e. Airservices Australia, Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, airport operators and the airlines, and that the demarcation lines may at times be blurred, however the production of a brochure and/or other forms of publication which are readily accessible to the community outlining the responsibilities of each party would go a long way to improving the understanding of noise and other aviation related issues within the community.

It is suggested that Airservices Australia conduct information sessions and rollout educational, promotional and other initiatives to effectively convey this information and the noise management strategy to stakeholders and the Community.

Local Government officers have the same difficulties as the local community in obtaining accurate and detailed information from Airservices Australia in relation to local noise issues at Perth Airport. It is considered that Airservices Australia should be made much more accountable and transparent for the conduct of its noise management strategy.

One thing that has been highlighted by the outcomes of the WARRP review for Perth and as admitted by Mr Richard Dudley General Manager Corporate & International Affairs for Airservices Australia just because there is not a response to any consultation process does not mean that the matter is accepted. In this instance it was identified that the information being disseminated was too technical for the audience it was directed to.

5. Whether Airservices Australia 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;

Response

From a community perspective, with the outcomes of the Perth WARRP review and the impacts on the residents of Noranda, Beechboro, Chidlow, Stoneville, and Glenforrest, the residents would obviously prefer a more equitable noise-sharing arrangement to what they have now. Mr Dudley has advised in his presentation to the PAMG that some "tweaking" over the hills area may be required and would be subject to one year's worth of data from a mobile monitoring unit being analysed.

It is acknowledged that now some areas have actually improved by change in flight paths with a reduction of noise levels and the height of aircraft going overhead and it could be said this in itself has led to noise-sharing among the community. However again, the community, without knowing the reason for the review in the first instance do not take kindly to just having aircraft noise imposed on them without having some input into the process.



6. Whether Airservices Australia requires a binding Community Consultation Charter to assist it in consulting fully and openly with communities affected by aircraft noise;

Response

The PAMG is supportive of Airservices Australia having a binding Community Consultation Charter. This would provide for a full, transparent and informative consultation process and assist to ensure informed dialogue with the stakeholders. Community engagement is a proactive, ongoing process and can help local residents become more informed of airport noise related issues. This is particularly important given current and predicted future increases in air traffic.

7. Any related issues

Response

A proactive approach to informing the community on which parties (i.e. Airservices Australia, CASA, Airport Operators, Airlines, Government Departments) are responsible for each aspect of aircraft noise and environment matters such as legislative (regulatory) enforcement, monitoring and reporting, air safety and community updates on technological advancements which will reduce noise.

In summation, the PAMG membership is of the view that Airservices Australia needs to:-

- Align the information provided for consultation to each level of the target audience;
- Undertake better marketing during the consultation phase to ensure it has the attention of the right audience;
- Provide historical background information as to why WARRP reviews or any noise management review is being undertaken so that informed decisions can be made by stakeholders; and
- Hold educational/information forums to the community and stakeholders prior to the implementation of the outcomes of a review.

Thank you for the opportunity to have input into this inquiry. The PAMG considers public and stakeholder consultation critical to ensuring mutually acceptable outcomes for the local communities the Group represents, State and Commonwealth agencies and our Airport Operators in Perth. We look forward to the outcome of the Senate Committee's inquiry.

Should you have any enquiries or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact the PAMG's Secretary, Lesley Howell on (08) 9477 7293 or email lesley.howell@belmont.wa.gov.au.

Yours faithfully

Cr Glenys Godfrey
PAMG CHAIRPERSON &
MAYOR OF THE CITY OF BELMONT