

Thank you Chair and Senators.

My name is Rob Sharp, I am the Interim Chief Executive Officer of Airservices Australia.

While I've only been at Airservices for a little under two months, my 20+ years in the Australian aviation industry, gives me a deep understanding of the sector, and I appear here today to participate in this hearing.

My brief tenure has reinforced my respect for the team's commitment to the aviation sector and its efforts to address community concerns about aircraft operations. Each year, Airservices manages domestic and international air traffic operations for more than 150 million passenger movements across almost 4 million aircraft arrivals and departures. These flights connect Australians to the world and support economic growth.

Aircraft noise complaints, while significant, are relatively low compared to flight numbers. In 2023, there were 5,035 complainants about aircraft noise. Notably, the number of actual complainants has decreased by more than 15% since 2019, despite total complaint numbers rising due to frequent submissions by some individuals.

Our approach to designing flight paths balances safety, community impact, and environmental efficiency. We strive for transparency and community engagement in the design process, which involves iterative consultations to find the optimal solution.

Our engagement also looks to help residents understand the constraints that things like airport locations, runway alignment, communities overflowed and safety requirements can place on our ability to minimise aircraft noise.

On Saturday 31 August I personally attended a morning community engagement session in Brisbane, listening to the personal experience of several community members. I have also reached out to community group leaders seeking to meet with them. As the Interim CEO this has been a priority for me and is a priority for Airservices.

The community engagement group members I spoke to understood that aircraft noise cannot be eliminated but were keen to explore ways that aircraft noise can be shared more equitably. They also raised concerns about the consultation processes. Airservices acknowledges that we haven't always got consultation right however significant progress has been made, developing an Airservices Community Engagement Standard, a framework for our ongoing conversations with locals about the steps we can take to manage the impact of aircraft noise. I live in the inner city area of Brisbane under the flight paths and have a lived experience of the impacts from aircraft operations.

The recent Aircraft Noise Ombudsman report, when referencing Hobart flight path changes, highlighted that we can improve our final decision-making processes when considering community feedback. We are implementing enhanced decision-making processes to improve this stage of the process.

Airservices' commitment to improvement is that we will work to find the best solutions that are within our power to deliver.

Thank you for your time and we are happy to take your questions.