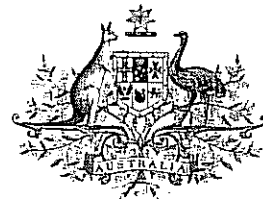




# Steve Irons MP

Federal Member for Swan



28 January 2010

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

**RE: Inquiry into the effectiveness of Airservices Australia's  
management of aircraft noise**

This Inquiry focuses on the consultation processes of Airservices Australia and the overall way it conducts its business on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia.

As the Federal Member for Swan, I base this submission on the experience that my community has had with Airservices Australia since I became a Member of Parliament in December 2007.

This experience revolves around the changes to Perth Flight Paths which were made in November 2008 as part of the Western Australian Route Review Process.

In making these changes, Airservices Australia did not properly consult with the community and did not even properly inform the community of the changes. To date it has attempted to avoid major scrutiny of its decisions.

As such Airservices Australia has failed the people of my electorate and there needs to be some recompense and an assurance that flight paths will never be allowed to be changed again without a level of consultation that is acceptable to the community.

Ascot  
Beckenham  
Belmont  
Bentley  
Burswood  
Cannington  
Carlisle  
Cloverdale  
Como  
East Cannington  
East Victoria Park  
Karawara  
Kensington  
Kewdale  
Lathlain  
Manning  
Queens Park  
Redcliffe  
Rivervale  
Salter Point  
South Perth  
St James  
Victoria Park  
Waterford  
Welshpool  
Wilson

## **Western Australian Route Review Project (WARRP)**

In January 2009 my office began receiving phone calls from constituents who had noticed changes to airport traffic and noise above their homes.

The electorate of Swan contains Perth Airport and also some of the busiest flight paths in the Perth Metropolitan Region.

At the year's first meeting of the *Perth Airport Aircraft Noise Management Consultative Committee* (PANMCC), it became clear that other community representatives were hearing similar concerns.

At the meeting it emerged that flight paths had been changed in November 2008 as a result of the Western Australian Route Review Project.

The changes had been implemented by Airservices Australia at the direction of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, without appropriate community consultation.

Although I was not an MP and therefore not a member of the committee when the changes were being discussed in 2006 and 2007, I understand that other committee members were given the impression that there would be no significant changes to the then current flight paths.

I will leave it to other submissions to discuss these past meetings of PANMCC in more detail. I will focus on the evidence I have been collecting from the community over the last 12 months on this matter, which supports claims that WARRP led to significant changes.

### **Airport Noise Surveys**

With Airservices Australia initially reluctant to provide any information on the nature of the changes, I decided to contact members of my electorate to ask them if they had noticed and changes and if so, what.

I included a range of other questions to also assess attitudes to Airport Noise in general. The survey is ongoing but I will present some results here.

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)
Have you noticed a change in aircraft noise since November 2008?	68	32
Do you think a curfew should be introduced at Perth Airport?	59	41
Do you use Perth Domestic/International Airports to travel?	82	18
Would you be prepared to pay for better noise insulation for your household if there were a Government subsidy?	42	58
Do you think the airport should be relocated?	31	69

68% of respondents reported noticing changes to noise since November 2008. The examples below show how widespread these have been:

According to a Belmont resident:

*"The planes fly directly overhead constantly. Yes, I now have more air traffic over my house and vibration and windows rattling as a result. When I bought this house 13 years ago, it was specifically because it wasn't in the flight path".*

A Cloverdale resident said:

*"Yes straight over my house now and can smell the kero fuel. Used to fly over Leach Highway".*

A Ferndale resident said:

*"There was never any consultation or warning. At least a 100% increase of aircraft taking off and landing in the last 12 months right low over our houses".*

I have had many other similar responses from suburbs such as Beckenham, Queens Park, Manning, Lynwood and Langford.

These responses from the community have been supported by data I subsequently managed to obtain from Airservices Australia.

It is clear that there have been significant changes to aircraft traffic and noise since the flight paths were changed in November 2008.

Given this, Airservices Australia must answer some serious questions about why a proper consultation process was not undertaken.

When flight paths were changed in Sydney and Adelaide, there was sufficient public uproar to establish noise insulation schemes and strengthen curfews. Airservices Australia was even involved in the administration of these noise insulation schemes.

With Airservices Australia not properly informing the community about the flight paths, Perth has been denied the opportunity to have a public debate, which could have earned the city a similar right to noise insulation schemes.

In this way, Airservices Australia's decision not to consult in Perth must be treated very seriously as a lack of duty to the community.

As the Commonwealth Government has said it will not reopen the Western Australian Route Review project and allow this debate, I have suggested insulation compensation for Perth residents along the line that programs in Sydney and Adelaide have implemented. A large proportion of respondents to my survey indicated that they would even be prepared to pay if there was some sort of Government subsidy.

I would like to make one final point on the surveys. The fact that 82% of respondents said that they use Perth Airport to travel and 69% are against the relocation of the airport shows that my constituents understand the competing demands of air travel and local residents. The community just wants a fair go and compared with the Eastern States, Perth has been badly let down by Airservices Australia.

### **Section 160 Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999**

Section 160 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 states that before a Commonwealth agency authorises *'the adoption or implementation of a plan for aviation airspace management involving aircraft operations that have, will have or are likely to have a significant impact on the environment'*, the plan must generally be referred to the Environment Minister for advice.

I understand that there is a precedent for matters pertaining to aircraft noise to be referred to the Environment Minister under this act – the Brisbane Parallel Runway proposal was referred in 2005.

After writing to the Minister for the Environment, Hon Peter Garrett MP about this matter, I have received notification that he did not receive a referral under section 160 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 from Airservices Australia to seek advice regarding the changes to Perth Airport Flight Paths.

In his correspondence the Minister says that he has asked the Department to examine this matter and inform me in due course of the outcome of their enquiries.

I have not received a response yet but believe the outcome of this internal investigation will be of interest to the Senate Inquiry.

If Airservices Australia has failed in its obligations as a Commonwealth Agency to refer this matter, which given the significant nature of the changes is possible, then there would be serious implications for the legitimacy of the Western Australian Route Review Project.

## **Conclusion**

Most of Perth does not have to pay the price for having a close and convenient airport but my constituents do.

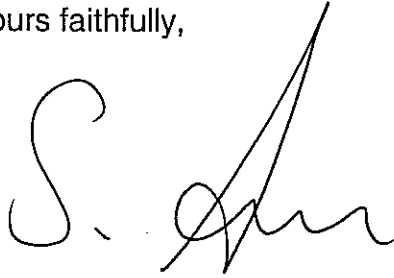
In its conduct of the Western Australian Route Review project Airservices Australia has failed to consult properly and as a result has cost Western Australia the chance to have a proper debate about the future of Perth Airport with all stakeholders involved.

There are also concerns that Airservices Australia might have failed in its obligations to refer this matter under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

There must be recompense for the people of my federal electorate of Swan and consequences for Airservices Australia.

Should you require further clarification, please contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Irons'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'S' and a long, sweeping line extending upwards and to the right.

**STEVE IRONS MP**  
**Federal Member for Swan**