

## National Office

---

GPO Box 5427  
KINGSTON ACT 2604  
Telephone: (02) 6175 2108  
Facsimile: (02) 6262 9970  
Web: [www.planning.org.au](http://www.planning.org.au)  
ABN: 95 567 716 728

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

Email: [rrat.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:rrat.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Ms Radcliffe

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

I refer to your invitation to provide comments on the Inquiry into the effectiveness of Airservices Australia's management of aircraft noise. As the peak body representing around 4600 urban planners and related professions in Australia, the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) has long been interested in the role of airports and the relationship to surrounding development, both on and off airport land. These concerns were expressed in our previous submissions of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2009 to the *Safeguarding airports and the communities around them* discussion paper, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2009 to the Aviation Green Paper and 27<sup>th</sup> June 2008 to the Development of a National Aviation Policy Statement.

PIAs interest in the matter of aircraft noise relates to the impact of airports and airport development on surrounding existing and future land uses. Our previous submissions have addressed this issue, in particular, the more recent submission on the *Safeguarding airports and the communities around them* discussion paper. The following comments from that submission relate directly to aircraft noise and may be of interest to this Inquiry – a full version of the submission is available at [www.planning.org.au](http://www.planning.org.au).

*The paper [Safeguarding airports and the communities around them] discusses widening the scope of areas for considering aircraft noise for new development. It seeks stronger arrangements for protection of corridors under flight-paths, including avoiding residential and other noise-sensitive development. With airports as the sole focus in mind this is a reasonable objective however, placing limitations on*

*established areas may have significant impacts on individuals and communities.*

*Introducing new restrictions on development is likely to be problematic, particularly if those restrictions seek to reduce the existing development prospect of various sites. Property owners currently have certain opportunities to develop their land. Reducing these opportunities may give rise to calls for compensation or may cause some areas to become dilapidated over time as building stock is not updated or replaced.*

*In the case of new development in existing zoned land affected by aircraft noise, an appropriate response is to require new development to employ design, construction methods and materials to provide greater noise protection for future occupants / users. The impact on housing affordability must also be considered given increase costs of treatments such as double glazing. In newly noise affected land, grants to achieve noise protection of existing buildings may well be appropriate. The airports themselves should contribute to mitigating the impact they cause.*

*Regarding land currently zoned Rural or equivalent, it may be more appropriate to resolutely (this requires State government agreement) prevent affected areas / corridors from being rezoned to allow greater density or intensity of noise-sensitive development, rather than rezoning or placing other land use controls over the extended areas. This approach would not limit existing (rural) development rights enjoyed by property owners but would prevent changes that may increase the amount or type of development that may be noise-sensitive. An alternative approach, used by NSW in regard to the impacts of mining operations on adjoining properties, would be to require the airports to acquire a 'buffer' of land to protect their flight paths from intrusion by more intensive development.*

*It is the Institute's understanding that such measures could only be achieved through State and Territory legislation. In turn this is potentially the quid-pro-quo where airports, in order to protect their long-term aviation needs, may have to accept greater levels (as envisaged in the Government's Green paper) of scrutiny of the non-aviation development activity that occurs within their boundaries and make appropriate contributions to off-site infrastructure works where airport development contributes to the need to increase capacity.*

- The use of more conservative criteria for preventing noise-sensitive development under flight-paths on greenfields sites is a reasonable approach. In addition to restricting development, it is also possible to require new development to employ design, construction methods and materials to provide greater noise protection for future occupants / users. Again, the impact on housing affordability must also be considered.*
- The discussion paper calls for special arrangements for State and local government consultation with the Commonwealth government on proposed developments around Federal airports so that the impacts on airport operations can be fully assessed and taken into consideration in decision-making. PIA supports this principle and encourages greater cooperation and integration of planning in relation to airports and areas affected by airports. What should be resolved, however, is at what scale such consultation/referrals should take place to reduce unnecessary delays to applications, particularly for minor development such as additions to existing dwellings.*

*It may be more appropriate, rather than a blanket referral requirement, that only development over a certain scale be referred to the Commonwealth, noting that*

*many jurisdictions are moving to exempt and complying development for the types of development applications being considered here.*

- *In light of the comments above, this consultation should also extend to any policy changes in areas potentially affected by aircraft noise, rather than just focusing on development. This could address noise issues at the policy development stage and prevent future noise-sensitive development from occurring.*

The issue of Air Services' approach to consultation and its effectiveness in engaging with communities surrounding airports is an important one, however PIA is not in a position to respond in this regard. PIA recommends that the Inquiry ensure that the various Local Government areas adjacent to key airports are consulted as part of this Inquiry process. Affected Councils are most likely to have a clear perspective on how well their local communities have been consulted by Airservices Australia.

It is also recommended that the approach to consultation is considered against the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum (available at [www.iap2.org.au](http://www.iap2.org.au)) to ensure that the language and actions used are consistent with the promise to the public for the level of involvement in the process. Clarity and transparency of process are vital, and it is important that the Inquiry recommendations reflect the need for Airservices Australia to deliver a quality consultation process and approach to dealing with surrounding communities.

PIA welcomes the opportunity to comment on this Inquiry and seeks the opportunity to make future comment on further matters that may impact more directly on urban and regional planning matters.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Johnston  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
29 January 2010