

Submission to the 2024 Senate Inquiry into the Impact and Mitigation of Aircraft Noise

5th April 2024

Tess Bignell – AAB Community Representative

Introduction

My name is Tess Bignell and I reside with my family at Cedar Creek since 2012 which is serviced by the area of Samford Village/Valley. My husband and I are self-funded retirees who have made a significant investment in our five acre property providing a home for our grown children, grand children, our animals and native flora and fauna.

Prior to July 2020, we led a quiet rural lifestyle, foregoing the modern conveniences of Brisbane city living like street lighting, footpaths, road networks, public transport, schools, hospitals and shopping etc. We provide our own rainwater capture tanks, waste water treatment plant and backup solar electricity. We enjoyed the sights and sounds of our animals and the native fauna and flora, including koalas, wallabies, and platypus. We have a Koala Overlay over our property. We enjoyed very low ambient noise with the nearest busy road some three kilometres away. We had **zero flight paths over our home**. We would notice the odd aircraft at high levels to and from New Zealand, Amberley activity on occasion, the odd aircraft from Brisbane and suburban airports in the distance.

That was up until the new Parallel Runway opened at Brisbane Airport. We all knew a new runway was being built but had no idea the nightmare and disruption it would bring to our lives. We are approximately 35 kilometres from the runway as per the flight paths and experience **24/7 aircraft activity on most days and nights to and from Brisbane Airport**. Highest aircraft activity count over my area is 144 aircraft in one day. This is a massive intrusion on our lives.

Airservices and Brisbane Airport had shifted the existing flightpaths and introduced **nine flights paths and way point** to and from the north and northwest of Brisbane directly over our home tracking a fine GPS guided corridor through our community. This meant not only do we get Jet traffic, but general aviation transverse at low altitudes over our home with some now choosing to fly under controlled airspace. (less than 1,000 feet) **This now amounts to nine levels of traffic. All without any consultation. All in contradiction to the Major Development Plan approval** for Brisbane Airport.

After copious amounts of research, attending and responding to the Post Implementation Review process, attending meetings, writing various complaints and submissions I am most disappointed to discover:

- Dismissive attitude of Minister Catherine King
- Lack of regulatory oversight and protections from all levels of government
- Airservices Australia and Brisbane Airport Corporation dishonest practices without consequence
- AAB's role in furthering biased conduct towards industry over community

I recognise the aviation industry has an important role and contribution to Australia. Worlds best practice and balance must be achieved to operate in a safe and sustainable manner for both those in the air and communities overflown on the ground.

I advocate not only for my community of the Samford District, but hold a Committee position on the Brisbane Flight Path Community Alliance and Board Position on the Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board AAB.

I would like to bring your focus to this part of my Submission to the experience and the functionality of the Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board AAB as an elected AAB Community Representative.

Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board (AAB)

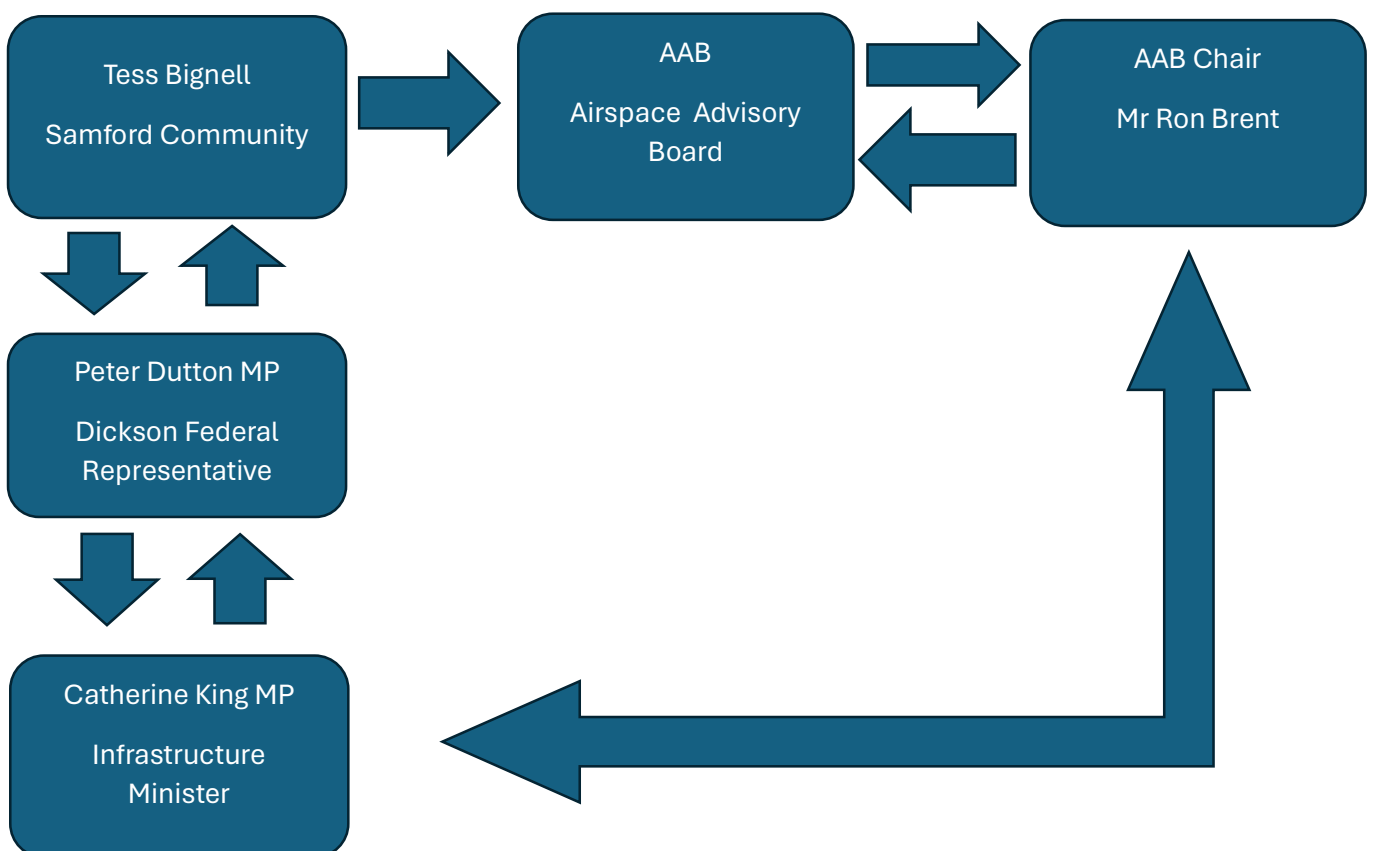
Introduction

I met with Mr Peter Dutton MP, Member for Dickson as he is my Federal Government MP. Mr Dutton then requested a meeting with the Minister Catherine King to present the concerns for my community.

- High range aircraft noise (see Noise Monitor data enc.)
- Sleep Deprivation
- Health Impacts
- Loss of home based employment
- Loss of home amenity

Mr Dutton met with Minister King which was followed up by a letter (see enc. Catherine King letter Enc1.0)

My aim for applying for a Board Position as a Community Representative on AAB was to have direct access to Brisbane Airport Representatives, Industry Representatives, but ultimately Minister Catherine King through the Chair, Mr Ron Brent.



I was under the impression AAB would be an Independent Board and members would be able to have full, frank and honest discussions and be involved in positive outcomes for community. **After a 1.25 years of meetings this has not been my experience. Not one positive permanent outcome has eventuated for the community.**

Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board (AAB)

Role

The Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board (AAB) is an ongoing, independent community-based consultation body that provides an opportunity to share information and advice to and from the community to better manage consultation on aircraft noise around Brisbane Airport.

AAB oversees the implementation of changes identified in the Airservices Australia (Airservices) Post Implementation Review, and in the long-term facilitates community input and feedback on proposed changes to flight paths and airspace changes associated with Brisbane Airport' Noise Action Plan (NAP4B).

Purpose

AAB provides an opportunity to share information and advice to and from the community on:

- the management of airspace and flight paths at Brisbane Airport against the Noise Action Plan, which is initially represented by the Final Report on the PIR;
 - The Noise Action Plan is a living document maintained by BAC and Airservices;
- the implementation of the recommendations identified in the PIR; and
- potential and possible noise abatement procedures and airspace improvement measures, with the exclusion of curfews, movement caps or other operating restrictions.

My Experience

Although AAB has been an interesting experience, it lacks independency and authenticity. Members are there solely for the Noise Action Plan for Brisbane with a small window of time being a few minutes to ask questions or make presentations on behalf of community. When issues are raised, they are often settled out of session by email without further rebuttal. Issues appear to have a foregone conclusion. **Thus far, not one issue raised has resulted in a positive outcome for community or Industry concession for community.** Issues impacting community are often held as **Unauthorized for distribution.**

Noise Action Plan for Brisbane NAP4B

Community Representatives have been used to basically check Airservices presentations and software prior to presenting to the Brisbane Community. Any suggestions that are of a technical nature are often not included like for example NAP4B Phase Two. Error found in Actual overflow heights vs modelled heights over the Samford area were rejected. Therefore, resulting in inaccurate actual exaggerated overflow heights presented to community.

Minutes

The Minutes do not summarise the actual discussions, but are results driven only. Therefore, this does not give the community the full spectrum of discussions and leaves a lot of questions in the community unanswered as to how these results were obtained. Minutes are not delivered in a timely manner. NAP4B Phase Results are not Miniated as there is a delay when Airservices publishes results.

Noise Reductions Metrics

The words "noise reduction" for community does not directly form part of the NAP4B. Community expect their lives to return to some or new normalcy. Without noise reduction, this will not happen.

The only outcome Airservices is prepared to look at is noise sharing. Airservices cannot give community an amount in decibels for what reduction in noise they can expect over their homes.

Noise Abatement – Intersection Departure Trial

Community Representatives and ex Industry employees are of the opinion this trial was set up to fail. Airservices failed to design and implement a new SID including higher Way Points for this trial, therefore airlines and pilots did not input new instructions into their FMS.

Airservices also failed to trial instructions to airlines and pilots to use the ICAO preferred Noise Abatement Departure Procedure one NADP1. Airlines prefer and use NADP2 and intersection departures because of shorter taxi time, less wear and tear and saves the airlines money. But also inflicting more noise on community.

If the Chair was truly independent, why was a submission not made to the Minister to redo or issue a Ministerial Directive to redo the trial using new parameters? Airservices simply taking instructions from BAPAF for the trial is a copout. Given Airservices is the expert in their field, surely more professional input would have been offered.

Airservices have come up with noise modelling to try and prove their case if the Way Points were moved higher and power mode changed to say the ascent degree would be too great for aircraft. The lived experience of Community has proven that Airservices are unreliable when it comes to height and noise modelling, therefore a trial would be more prudent.

Qantas / Jetstar A320 Fuel Vent Cover Retrofit – Bias?

The Community has been asking for the Jetstar A320 Fleet post 2015 to be retrofitted with Fuel Vent Covers to stop the high-pitched scream community experiences on arrivals over land ever since the NPR opened. Many Airline owners of A320 fleets have retrofitted their aircraft over ten years ago. After months of conflicting information from the Qantas Industry Representative at AAB, Brisbane Airport announced the Retrofit resulting in more confusion. Community Representatives were disappointed to receive an email from the Chair out of session outlining that Qantas had undertaken a Business case not to retrofit these aircraft. No official Qantas Business Case was presented to AAB. I feel it is not the Chair's responsibility or position to communicate on behalf of Industry as it creates a perception of bias.

Cedar Creek Noise Monitoring- Information Ban

Brisbane Airport using the company Envirosuite (same as to whom Airservices use) placed a Noise Monitor on my roof at Cedar Creek for a period of three months. This was just as international aircraft started flying again after COVID but included the A380 overflight. I was able to obtain the raw data from the Noise Monitor. The raw data in fact proved that my community this far from the airport suffer enormous aircraft noise at all times of the day. (Encl 2.0. and 2.1)

An expert from Envirosuite did a presentation at AAB on the functions of Noise Monitors. The noise monitor picks up four types of noise levels, the expert said the noise level closest to what the community experiences in their homes is the Sound Exposure Noise Level SEL. **The Sound Exposure Level of noise is not weighted or averaged as per the published noise volumes by Brisbane Airport or Airservices. Both levels of noise must be made public for Community to make an accurate assessment of the noise impacts in their homes.**

I presented a copy of the Raw Data to AAB. Airservices advised me the Noise Monitor trial was inaccurate for various reasons which is not the case. This was then disputed and sent to Brisbane Airport for comment. **I received an email trail from the Brisbane Airport Representative supporting my experience but have been barred from disseminating such information.**

Environmental Assessment 2018 – Bias?

Most communities along the north-western corridor of flightpaths are outside the original 2007 Environmental Impact Assessment. No aerial photographs in the application to the Federal Government for approval of the second runway feature our area. Yet Airservices chose to concentrate flight paths over us in both directions to and from the airport. When quizzed on this during the PIR, mainly in detriment to the tank water issue, Airservices Representative said it was not in Airservices remit which is dishonest. After the closure of the PIR, It became apparent through FOI that there had indeed been a 2018 EA of our areas.

When I raised these two assessments at AAB, the **Chair said it was no longer relevant**. Airservices said the 2018 EA was not made public because “we don’t have to, we don’t make everything public”. There is a question on the timing and the triggering of the EPBC Act. Once again, I believe this demonstrates a bias by the Chair not to pursue any action. Given there will be new Environmental Assessments done for new flight paths arising from the NAP4B, it will be interesting to see if any EPBC triggers or Airservices own Flight Path Design principles are met given we know the impact of the noise to 224 communities around Brisbane.

AAB Confidentiality / Information Ban

At AAB we are privy to information provided by Airservices and Brisbane Airport that require official confidentiality. I understand the reasoning behind this. But it does not sit well with me and other members given the length of time we are requested to suppress such information. This information directly impacts the community.

Brisbane Airport discussed some information at AAB in early March 2024. It is due to be announced to the public in late May 2024. With introduction in June 2024. This Agenda Item is also not detailed in the draft Minutes of AAB at time of writing this submission.

Airservices has also presented at the March 2024 AAB Meeting relevant information and Outcome Options for Phase two and three of the NAP4B. None of this information is permitted to be shared or conveyed to the community. None of this information is detailed in the draft Minutes of AAB at time of writing this submission.

Therefore, Community Representatives are being gagged and not fulfilling our obligations under our AAB Appointments.

Health Impacts as a symptom of Noise – Banned Subject

It is well documented by science and the BFPCA’s own research that aircraft noise is harmful on a range of levels from the young to aged. On many occasions I have requested the Chair address Health impacts as a symptom of Noise. Particularly after a co AAB Community Representative was diagnosed with a brain tumor which they believe is directly associated with stress from stress on the family unit, financial hardship from moving and renting residences, due to incessant noise and ongoing sleep deprivation. The enclosed email (enc. 3.0) will demonstrate this request and its denial. How can the Aviation Industry, Airservices and the Minister through the AAB Chair turn a blind eye to this impact, which is a symptom on noise, which is included in the Terms of Reference for AAB?

Conclusion

In my opinion AAB is a toothless tiger. The Chair needs to be completely Independent. Not one concession has been made by the Airlines. The Noise Action Plan for Brisbane from a community perspective is in disarray. It is not being implemented in a transparent and timely manner. Airservices has kept the Community limbo. The Board has been meeting for over 1.25 years now and what has it accomplished actually; nothing!

Airservices has met with community on Phases one, two and three. Only Phase One results have been released to the community in over twelve months. Now we are told that TRAX is looking at Phase two, three and four because they have the technology and resources to look at the Brisbane Airspace wholistically. Have Airservices wasted the last nearly four years, if not namely the whole of 2023 of the community's time, stress and energy? Community feel they are the brunt of Airservices Air Traffic Controller shortages, but also feel they have been managed by delay tactics of Airservices only to be worn down and made to accept substandard service from Airservices? Airservices NCIS Department is useless.

Families in 224 suburbs around Brisbane are living in a heightened level of stress. They want to sleep. Their health is suffering. Kids are overtired and not studying. They don't know whether their tank water is poisoned. Their employment is suffering. The Chair's comments by bringing the harm to the forefront, we are making it worse for community is demeaning for those suffering. (Enc 4.0)

Airservices Australia requires drastic reform.

AAB requires true independence from the Aviation Industry, its representatives and consultants. Where the key performance aligns with the Airservices Act 1995 where Community comes before Industry.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours faithfully

Tess Bignell C.Dec

Samford Area Aircraft Action Group SAAAG Supported by Samford District Progress & Protection Association Representative	Founder Community
Brisbane Flight Path Community Alliance BFPCA Representative	Treasurer Community
Archerfield Airport Community Aviation Consultation Group AACACG Representative	Community
Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board AAB Representative	Community



The Hon Catherine King MP

**Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local
Government**

Member for Ballarat

Ref: MC23-067752

The Hon Peter Dutton MP
Leader of the Opposition
Member for Dickson

Dear ~~Mr Dutton~~

Peter

Thank you for meeting with me on 13 September 2023 to raise the concerns of your constituent Ms Tess Bignell regarding Brisbane Airport and her request that I meet with the Brisbane Flight Path Community Alliance.

As discussed, the Australian Government appreciates the genuine concerns that communities hold regarding the impacts of aviation noise.

In the lead up to the last election, we promised to create a new a new permanent independent community consultation body titled the Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board (AAB). This body is now in operation and is headed up by Mr Ron Brent, who previously served as the inaugural Australian Aircraft Noise Ombudsman.

In appointing members for this body, I specifically appointed Ms Bignell as a member due to her very strong history of community engagement, including as an active member of BFPCA, as well as her ability to represent a critical demographic of communities further from the airport than those more immediately impacted by aircraft operations. Additionally, two other members of the AAB are actively involved in BFPCA. These members are able to directly present the views of this community to Brisbane Airport, Airservices Australia, airlines and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts through their participaton in the AAB.

I thank Ms Bignell, as well as her fellow members, for their work on the AAB, particularly as it focuses on enhancing the quality of information provided to the community on airspace operation improvements being considered under the Noise Action Plan for Brisbane.

More broadly, Airservices Australia continues to work through four packages of works through the Noise Actoin Plan to improve Brisbane airspace arrangements. This work

includes maximising flights over water and minimising the frequency and concentration of flights over communities.

As part of this work, Airservices continues to trial extended hours for Simultaneous Opposite Direction Parallel Runway Operations (SODPROPS – sending flights over Moreton Bay) until the impacts of the 12-month trial have been fully evaluated.

I encourage other concerned members of your community to engage with the work of the AAB and to make full use of that forum, as well as taking part in future Airservices process as they occur throughout the implementation of the Noise Action Plan.

Thank you again for your engagement on this important issue.

Yours sincerely

Catherine King

14 / 9 / 2023

10 October 2023

The Hon Catherine King MP
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board – matters raised by representatives outside the scope of the Terms of Reference

I am writing as Chair and on behalf of the Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board (AAB). As you are aware, the AAB is an independent community consultation body established to facilitate information and advice to and from the community on the implementation of changes identified in the Post Implementation Review of Brisbane Airspace and proposed changes to flight paths and airspace through the Noise Action Plan for Brisbane.

The AAB has met three times since its establishment in March 2023. In each of these meetings, the community, through the AAB members, has raised concerns on a number of issues that fall outside the scope of the AAB's responsibilities as set out in the Terms of Reference.

Issues that have been raised by community members are:

- concerns about the health and social impacts of aircraft noise on residents;
- compensation for residents impacted by aircraft noise;
- concerns about contact handling processes within Airservices Australia's Noise Complaints and Information Service (NCIS) and what action is taken by the NCIS on complaints; and
- concerns about growth in aviation activity without protection of surrounding community interests.

While these issues cannot be addressed through the AAB, they are a cause of significant concern to the community. I seek to draw these important issues to your attention and request that they are considered through the appropriate channels.

In addition, community members have expressed concerns that the time commitment associated with AAB membership is higher than originally anticipated. I note, for example, that Airservices Australia has offered AAB community members multiple opportunities to attend deep dive sessions on the Noise Action Plan, which have been held outside AAB meetings. As a result, AAB members have formally requested that they be remunerated for their time by the Australian Government.

I thank you for your consideration of these matters. If possible, a response by the next AAB meeting, scheduled for 22 November 2023, would be very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Ron Brent
Chair
Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board



The Hon Catherine King MP

**Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
Member for Ballarat**

Ref: MS23-004665

Mr Ron Brent
Chair
Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board

Dear ~~Mr Brent~~, *Ron,*

Thank you for your letter of 10 October 2023 providing an update on the activities of the Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board (AAB) and matters raised by representatives that fall outside the scope of the Terms of Reference (ToR).

Managing the impact of aircraft operations on communities around airports is a challenging issue and I acknowledge that some residents of Brisbane are concerned about aircraft noise. The Australian Government recognises the need to balance the impacts of noise on communities near airports with a strong aviation industry that can meet demand for movement of passengers, workers and high-value, time sensitive freight.

Significant work and ongoing community consultation are underway to improve aircraft noise outcomes for Brisbane communities. However, in major Australian cities such as Brisbane, some level of aircraft noise is unavoidable. It is not possible for aircraft to avoid flying over residential areas altogether, nor can any particular area or community expect to have zero aircraft operations overhead at all times.

The AAB was established by the Government to better facilitate engagement and sharing of information with the community on this challenging issue, with a particular focus on improving aircraft noise outcomes through the Noise Action Plan for Brisbane.

Reflecting this, the ToR for the AAB were designed to focus on feasible improvements to airspace operations and noise mitigation opportunities that can be implemented now and in the future. My expectation is that the AAB is forward focussed, engaging constructively with industry and government advisors supporting the work of the Board on the Noise Action Plan.

The issues included in your letter that are not related to the Noise Action Plan and, therefore outside the scope of the ToR, may be able to be discussed in other engagement forums, such as the Brisbane Airport Community Aviation Consultation Group.

AAB community members may also be interested in contributing to the Aviation White Paper, which is considering long term policy options on issues such as airport planning and better mechanisms to consult and engage on the impact of aviation on communities, including noise. Consultation on the Aviation Green Paper - which will inform the development of the Aviation White Paper - closes on 30 November 2023. Further details on providing feedback on the Aviation Green Paper is available at www.infrastructure.gov.au/have-your-say/aviation-green-paper.

I note that your letter includes a request from community members for financial remuneration for their participation in the AAB. The Government values the important contribution community members make in consultation groups across Australia on a wide range of issues. However, the Government does not financially compensate community members in these voluntary positions.

Going forward, I would appreciate your guidance of the AAB to focus on future operational improvements and subsequent noise mitigation outcomes that can be delivered through the Noise Action Plan for Brisbane. This focus is the mostly likely to improve the efficiency of the group and reduce the time commitment requested of community members to more manageable levels.

With that in mind, I would appreciate the AAB's advice as to whether SODPROPs should be designated as the preferred operating mode at Brisbane Airport, when weather, safety and traffic levels allow, and whether I should issue a directive to Airservices to that effect.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me on this matter and for the continued engagement of the members of the AAB.

Yours sincerely

Catherine King MP

27 / 10 / 2023

From: Ron Brent
Sent: Friday, March 1, 2024 4:51 PM
To:
Cc: AAB Secretariat
Subject: Fwd: Some questions for the next AAB meeting

Hi Tess

See below for the Jetstar/Qantas responses to your questions for the airlines. I don't have the Virgin response yet but I think it is safe to say that they will have very similar answers.

Given that we now have answers to all the questions would you be happy for me to circulate your questions and the answers to all members of the AAB?

I continue to agonise over the health issues. The Minister and Department are very clear that it is not an AAB issue which leaves me in a difficult position even if I only have an informal 'out of session' discussion with the members. I am also at a loss as to where the issue can take us.

In the context of other airports such as the Perth airport I have previously done a very extensive literature review. It is somewhat out of date now but I have followed more recent articles and research closely. That research has made clear to me that there are health issues but much of the discussion of the issue is causing unnecessary stress by suggesting the health problems are much more widespread than they actually are.

I will send you a separate email with more thoughts on where we can go with that issue.

Cheers

Ron

Begin forwarded

On 1 Mar 2024, at 2:33 pm, David Mccutcheon

wrote:

Hi Ron,

The answers to both are fairly straight forward.

1) What measures have you taken to reduce noise over community and fly neighbourly?

For descent and approach we plan/aim to fly:

1. **Continuous descent arrivals and approaches that result in lower thrust setting (normally idle till just 90 seconds prior to landing) and hence produce less noise.**

2. Reduced drag approaches, which involve low/idle thrust being maintained on approach from outside of 10nm till approximately 3nm from landing and allowing speed and aircraft energy to decay slowly between the listed distances as the aircraft is configured for landing. From approximately 3nm to landing then we are in landing configuration with approach thrust set. This reduces noise between 10nm and 3nm verse flying a configured approach from 10nm with approach power and full landing configuration set for the whole approach.

Please be aware that the above two items are advocated and preferred by most airlines and pilots, though if Air Traffic Control imposes a speed or altitude constraint then the above is often not possible.

2) Are you being compensated by Airservices for extra track miles introduced in the NAP4B and Airspace closures?

No we definitely are not.

Happy to discuss further if desired.

Kind regards,

David McCutcheon
Senior Manager Flying Operations (Fleet Operations & Regulatory Affairs)
Flying Operations
Jetstar Airways

From: Ron Brent
Sent: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 8:04 PM
To: David Mccutcheon

Cc: AAB Secretariat
Subject: Some questions for the next AAB meeting

Hi Michael and David

In the lead up to the next AAB meeting I am raising with you some questions for you both, that one of the community members has put to me. I would prefer to deal with the questions before the meeting so that we can use the time at the meeting to discuss the core issues of the implementation of the Noise Action Plan. Before I put the questions to you I must emphasise that you are not obliged to answer these questions. On the other hand I suspect that you have a positive story to tell in response to the first question and a very simple answer to the second.

Please let me know if you have any response that you would like to make, and whether you can give me some words to distribute to members of the AAB before the meeting on 6 March.

The two questions are:

- 1) What measures have you taken to reduce noise over community and fly neighbourly?
- 2) Are you being compensated by Airservices for extra track miles introduced in the NAP4B and Airspace closures?

Thanks in advance for any information that you can provide, or equally thanks for letting me know that you do not wish to respond to one or both of these questions.

I had intended to phone you to discuss these questions but time has raced away from me. I am very happy to talk about them and am available on 0418 479 487 for most of tomorrow and some of Thursday. If you call or SMS me with a time that suits you I will make sure I find a suitable time to make myself available. But I thought I should get the questions to you sooner rather than wait until we could connect on the phone.

Thanks again.

Ron

This e-mail is intended only to be read or used by the addressee. It is confidential and may contain legally privileged information. If you are not the addressee indicated in this message (or responsible for delivery of the message to such person), you may not copy or deliver this message to anyone, and you should destroy this message and kindly notify the sender by reply e-mail. Confidentiality and legal privilege are not waived or lost by reason of mistaken delivery to you.

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