

## Proposed VFR Route - Station Pier to Laverton

An amendment to the Point Cook Danger Area D319 and to the VFR flight path for traffic to and from the west of Melbourne over Laverton and Station Pier has been proposed.

The amendment will move the northern boundary of the Point Cook D319 slightly (less than 2nm) south, reducing the size of D319 by a small amount. The new VFR flight path will be shifted south from its present position by up to 2nm.

### **Analysis of Proposal**

1. The proposed VFR flight path is from Station Pier, across the Williamstown Peninsula, coastal to the Altona Golf Course, thence to Laverton and points beyond. The current VFR flight path is from Station Pier, passing north of Laverton and thence west. This path passes over the Mobil refinery.
2. The proposed path avoids overflights of the Mobil refinery, but will result in a greater number of people being subject to overflights by low level aircraft.
3. The following table details the number of people who may be subject to overflights by aircraft on both the current and proposed flight paths. The number of people was determined by applying a 1km buffer to the nominal flight path and finding the number of people within that area. The 1km buffer was used as it is representative of the tracking tolerance of a significant majority of VFR flights, as determined by the Noise and Flight Path Monitoring System.

Route	Status	People within 1km of Route
SNP - North Laverton	Current	19400
SNP-Coastal-Altona GC-Laverton	Proposed	27200

4. The change to the Point Cook D319 boundary should not in itself cause any significant change in traffic flow or traffic levels.
5. There is no indication of any community consultation having taken place. Due to the expected impact of the proposed changes on the community, such consultation may be necessary. An advertisement in the local newspapers detailing the changes and the reasons behind them, and inviting comment should be adequate to keep the community informed. Melbourne area operators should also be informed.
6. Environment Branch considers that aircraft tracking to the west may overshoot the turn at Station Pier and pass over the refinery in any case. Consideration could be

given to tracking from Point Ormond to the southern tip of the Williamstown Peninsula, then direct to the Altona Golf Course and Laverton. This has the added benefit of avoiding the refinery by an adequate margin and also causing overflights of a reduced number of people (ie 17000, compared with 27200 or 19400 in the above table). This suggested track is shown on the attached map.

7. Environmental issues other than noise have not been considered.

The change to the VFR route is being proposed for safety reasons, ie to avoid overflights of the refineries by low level VFR traffic. The following points must be considered:

- a. The new track passes close (within a few hundred meters) to the eastern refinery and oil tanks.
- b. The track keeping ability of VFR traffic is probably inadequate to prevent further overflights of the refineries while on the proposed VFR flight path.
- c. The proposed VFR flight path will cause an approximate 40% increase in the number of people exposed to low level overflights.

Therefore it is the opinion of Environment Branch that as the proposed VFR flight path is unlikely to fully achieve its stated aims while having the potential to upset many people, consideration should be given to another flight path for VFR traffic tracking to the west over Laverton.

**Conclusion**

The proposed VFR flight path will cause an increase from 19400 to 27200 (approximately 40% increase) in the number of people subject to overflights by low level VFR traffic.

There is some doubt whether the proposed track is a sufficient distance from the refineries to prevent further overflights from occurring.

**Recommendations**

Environment Branch recommends that:

- i. the proposed flight path NOT be implemented for the reasons outlined above.
- ii. consideration should be given to alternative proposals for a VFR flight path further from the refineries and with less potential environmental impact.
- iii. the change to the Point Cook D319 boundary proceed as planned.

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