

Dear Sir/Madam,

I attended a public meeting last night with ASA, organised by the Shire of Mundaring. As a result of this, I would like to add to my previous submission below (It was announced at the meeting by Ms Dullard, Shire President, that the deadline for submissions had been extended beyond the 29 Jan – I hope this is the case?).

- ASA accepted their failure in consulting the residents affected by the changes in Perth BUT, other than improving the process in future cases, they offered no options for revising the decisions made in the absence of this consultation. To put it simply, they were willing to accept they had done wrong but they were unwilling to implement a process to put it right. Why not?
- As part of their very slick (and no doubt expensive) presentation they showed a video that confirmed my suspicion outlined in my second bullet point below i.e. that they have decided that annoying a few people a lot is better for them than annoying a lot of people a little. Obviously that's not exactly what their video said. How they put it was : "the reduction in flight paths will obviously result in a greater concentration of traffic and noise for the residents being overflown" – a spin on the same basic concept, if you ask me. How does this tie in with their obligation to distribute the noise nuisance "equitably" – surely that's the "annoy a lot of people a little" option? I believe the ASA's interpretation of minimising noise impact is purely to minimise the number of complaints/complainants – this is not what they are supposed to do!
- The ASA went on at length about the need for change at Perth airport, especially the need to separate jets and turboprop aircraft. Why they spent so much time on this is unclear – this isn't an area of dispute. I don't know anyone who is against changes to the flight paths. However, ASA seemed to suggest that our only options were the old unsafe flight paths or their new flight paths. Surely there are alternative safe options which also distribute noise disturbance more equitably? Perhaps if they had consulted residents, these options could have been explored? The implication was that these decisions were too technical for ordinary people and that we should just leave it to the experts and trust ASA to come up with the best option. Well, I for one don't trust ASA and I want the opportunity to question them on the decisions they made and have them defend their dubious decisions – hence the need for consultation.
- At the meeting they made frequent reference to the noise being below the 70dB level which they considered "acceptable". I questioned them on where this figure came from but they gave no definite answer to this apart from stating that there is no legislation covering it. I explained that the WHO guidelines (see the link in my third bullet point below) gave a recommended limit for undisturbed sleep of 45dB (peak) in the bedroom or 60dB outside (based on a 15dB difference between outside/inside levels when sleeping with a partially opened window). The speakers from ASA did not dispute the WHO figures but merely ignored them and continued to use their 70dB level throughout their glossy presentation ("This is the level of normal speech" as their spokesperson so helpfully explained). Unfortunately my printed copy of a scientific report couldn't really compete with the expensive graphic simulations and graphs used by ASA. In short, if ASA get to choose the threshold level and get to do the monitoring, it's little wonder that they produce results that show that aircraft noise is at "acceptable levels".
- One further point on ASA's monitoring of aircraft noise is that they use trigger levels set unreasonably high. Because of this, they do not measure the ambient background noise, an important factor in assessing noise disturbance as explained in the WHO report.
- More seriously, I believe ASA also used a diagram last night showing actual flight paths for 2007 and 2009 in a deliberate attempt to deceive. It showed arriving and departing paths in yellow and red and apparently demonstrated that planes were flying in and out of Perth in all directions or "through all points of the compass", to quote the ASA spokesperson. This deception relied on the fact that one red line shows up the same as 10,20 or a hundred red lines overlaying each other – it should be obvious to whoever produced it that it does not reflect the reality of flight concentrations. Therefore I assert that it was a deliberate attempt to mislead people into believing that flights are spread equitably over the Perth area which is NOT the case. Such dodgy practice should not be tolerated from a government-funded organisation. This highlights the need for an independent body to assess these matters fairly – not one with competing interests.

There was a general feeling of helplessness among us hills residents after the meeting last night. These ASA guys hold all the cards – we are the little guys and have no power to stop them. However, there was also a feeling of anger at the injustice of it. There may only be a few hundred of us, but Martin Luther King famously once said that “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” – I hope the committee consider this when making their recommendations.

Yours Faithfully,
Tom McNaughtan