

SUBMISSION BY MARRICKVILLE COUNCIL
TO THE SENATE INQUIRY INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
AIRSERVICES AUSTRALIA'S MANAGEMENT OF AIRCRAFT NOISE

29 JANUARY 2010

Introduction

With regard to aircraft noise, the Marrickville LGA is one of the most affected council areas in Australia. Council has a long history of opposing the operation and expansion of Sydney Airport, largely on the basis of aircraft noise. It follows that Council supports any initiative from this Inquiry's that may lead to the improvement in the management of aircraft noise by Airservices Australia. Whilst Council has at this stage no specific issues to raise about Airservices Australia, it would like to submit to the Inquiry a broad overview of aircraft noise related arguments previously raised by in Council submissions to the *National Aviation Policy* and *Sydney Airport Masterplan*. These arguments are relevant to the Inquiry's deliberations as they highlight the nature and extent of the aircraft noise problem as it applies to a densely populated urban community adjacent to a busy international airport.

Need for a second Sydney airport

Development of a second airport is a critical long-term noise abatement action and is considered by Council to be the only 'permanent' solution to the long-standing, ongoing issue of aircraft noise in the Marrickville LGA and across Sydney.

Council has acknowledged that airports are Australia's economic and social gateways to the world and that investment in airports should continue. However, Council shares the Government's concerns about pressure on Sydney Airport, now approaching capacity. Council is pleased that the Australian Government proposes to begin a process for identifying additional capacity for the Sydney region as part of its policy of support for a second airport for Sydney. This is consistent with Council's view that a suitably located second airport is needed to reduce unacceptable aircraft noise impacts from Sydney Airport now and into the future. Importantly, Council is of the view that the new second airport should become the primary airport, with the existing Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport becoming the secondary airport, with reduced capacity and catering for smaller aircraft.

Aircraft noise impacts

Council has argued for many years that existing aircraft noise impacts from Sydney Airport are intolerable and unacceptable. Council is seriously concerned about proposed increases in aircraft movements into the future, as outlined in the current *Sydney Airport Masterplan*. Council believes aircraft movements at the existing Sydney Airport should be reduced overall as a second airport for Sydney is developed and operated.

Although Council is pleased the Australian Government recognises there is broad community support for the maintenance of the existing legislated curfew and cap on movements at Sydney Airport, it follows from the above argument that Council would like to see the curfew extended and the movement cap reduced as the second Sydney airport is developed and operated.

Specifically, Council would like the Australian Government to:

- limit the total aircraft movements at Sydney Airport to no more than 300,000 per year;
- reduce the hourly cap at Sydney Airport from 80 to 70 flights per hour; and
- extend the curfew at Sydney Airport from 11:00pm-6:00am to 10:00pm-7:00 am.

Council supports the Australian Government's proposal to limit the operation of noisy aircraft and to phase out marginally-compliant older aircraft. Council acknowledges the noise amelioration benefits

of larger and quieter aircraft but remains concerned that these benefits will be far outweighed by additional noise from the substantial increase in aircraft movements forecast over the next 20 years.

Council has agreed with the Australian Government that a more balanced approach to aircraft noise management is required to ensure quality of life for communities. Council is however concerned that careful management of noise impacts could be seen by some as a means of further relaxing constraints on future airport development. In the case of Sydney Airport, quality of life for the thousands of people in the long-established, densely-developed communities surrounding the airport should assume greater importance than 'unconstrained' operation of the airport. It is for this reason that Council has argued for *increased* constraints on the existing Sydney Airport and the development of a suitably located second airport for Sydney.

It is apparent from the *Sydney Airport Masterplan* that Sydney Airport's noise footprint will increase over the next 20 years. This prompted Council to write to the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government in December 2008 advocating the expansion of the Sydney Airport Noise Amelioration Program. According to this program, residential buildings within the 30 Australian Noise Exposure Index (ANEI) contour and public buildings within the 25 ANEI contour are eligible for insulation. The Australian Government has advised that the original program has been completed.

Council supports the Australian Government's proposal to consider industry-funded noise amelioration programs where airport operations and air traffic changes place residences into high noise exposure zones. This implies that the Australian Government is committed to expanding the program as Sydney Airport's noise footprint increases and new buildings fall within high-noise zones. Council would also like the Australian Government to expand the program into marginally affected areas by providing partial insulation, such as insulation of bedrooms, of houses and other buildings that fall just outside high-noise zones.

Council has agreed with the Australian Government that access to transparent and easily-understood aircraft noise information has been lacking in the past. Council has been pleased with some recent moves by Sydney Airport and the Australian Government to improve clarity, transparency and access to this information. In particular, the Sydney Airport Community Forum (SACF) continues to provide a valuable forum for exchange of this kind of information. Council supports the Government's continued support for the development of a new noise information framework.

Council has also stated to the Australian Government that it would also like to see greater acknowledgement and assessment contribution of aircraft ground running to total aircraft noise impacts.

Impact of aircraft noise and airspace restrictions on land use planning

Council has expressed support for the Australian Government's stated commitment to responsible development of aviation infrastructure. Council agrees that this can be achieved by ensuring airport planning is more integrated with planning for surrounding areas and that community interests are given proper consideration in airport planning and development.

Council has argued that Sydney Airport's planning instruments and development proposals are not compatible with local and State instruments and proposals. Council maintains the view that this issue can only be resolved if Sydney Airport is subject to NSW Government and local council planning controls.

Council expressed concern about the open-ended nature of land use zones on Sydney Airport land. Although in most instances the zone titles are appropriate, an examination of the list of permissible uses within each of the zones has revealed a wide range of permissible uses which would not be permissible in equivalent zones in State and local planning instruments. This adds further weight to the argument that Sydney Airport land use planning should be subject to State and local controls.

Council agrees it is important that state and local governments meet their responsibilities to establish zoning policies, in consultation with airports, that ensure development near airports and under flight

paths are compatible with noise exposure. Council continues to attempt to meet its responsibilities in this regard, but has encountered two difficult issues in developing a new Local Environmental Plan (LEP) for the Marrickville LGA. With a gazettal date for the LEP scheduled for early 2010, acknowledgement and resolution of these issues is an imperative.

The first issue is the impact on urban development of Sydney Airport's Obstacle Limitation Surfaces (OLS). The OLS limits building heights in parts of the Council area, making it difficult for Council to meet mandatory residential dwelling targets set by the NSW Government. The OLS is in addition to a Ministerial Direction under the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 that limits residential development in aircraft noise affected areas. Apart from the impact of the OLS itself, Council has experienced difficulty in obtaining accurate information on the OLS from Airservices Australia – necessary to allow Council to set building heights within the LEP.

The second issue is the NSW Government's requirement for retention of industrially zoned land, which aims to provide for a range of businesses that service key industries such as Sydney Airport. This prevents the residential rezoning of some industrial sites, further limiting Council's ability to meet the NSW Government dwelling targets.

Stakeholder participation

Council has agreed with the Australian Government that a new level of co-operation is required between Federal, state and local government on airport planning and development, with clear consultation and decision-making processes. Although Council raised issues in the past with Sydney Airport over its inadequate consultation processes and practices, it is apparent there has been some improvement in this area recently.

As stated above, Council sees the Sydney Airport Community Forum (SACF) as a valuable and effective forum for information exchange between stakeholders, and Council strongly supports its continued operation. Council has joined with other SACF members to advocate reinstatement of funding for SACF's part-time Aviation Community Advisor position – and eventually to expand this position to full-time status.

Council has expressed support for the Australian Government's intention to work with state governments to refine proposals for effective working arrangements. In particular, Council supports the proposed establishment of Airport Planning Advisory Panels across Australia and improved assessment of the impact of airport development on surrounding infrastructure, including how airports might contribute to this infrastructure. Council also supports the strengthening of the airport Master Planning process and review of the airport Major Development Plan process to ensure there is proper consultation.

Further strategic issues

Council has questioned the assumption that appears to have been adopted by higher levels of government, Sydney Airport and the airline industry of 'unconstrained' growth in aviation activity into the future. It is understandable that such a conclusion would be reached based solely on growth trends to date, but Council has questioned whether the sustained growth assumption was overly optimistic given peak oil, greenhouse emission constraints and the need aircraft noise reduction. Council has suggested that it may be appropriate in the future for governments to apply a demand management approach to air travel as is increasingly applied to the energy, water and ground transport sectors.

Council has supported the general intent of the Australian Government's National Aviation Policy initiative. Council has agreed with the Australian Government that a broadscale debate on the future of aviation has been lacking and has welcomed the debate generated by the development of the policy.