

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural
and Regional Affairs and Transport
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Inquiry into the effectiveness of Airservices Australia's (ASA) management of aircraft noise

I would ask that the Committee take the time to read this extensive letter in its entirety, as there is a great deal of history for us in relation to this topic. That history being, the ineffective way in which ASA have managed aircraft noise in our area.

As you may be aware, Minister Albanese recently approved the operation of a 24 hour freight hub for the Canberra International Airport as part of his general approval for their 2009 Draft Plan. This decision, I believe, has completely removed any value that I once had in my residential rural property. You will need a little history to understand not only my own, but many hundreds, if not thousands of other people's issues in my district.

I have been living at Old Cooma Road for 25 years now, which is located about 15klm south of the Canberra International Airport. In that time my family have grown up here and still call this house their home. I have one disabled son to whom I have left all my capital in my will.

When I first moved here in 1986 there were planes flying over us, but they were also flying over other suburbs of Queanbeyan and Canberra. In 1995 (apparently with extensive public consultation by the Canberra Airport and Air Services Australia), the policy of noise sharing was abandoned and a high noise corridor (ANEF areas) as well as noise abatement areas were established. *At no time were the residents of this area ever informed of what was happening*, so naturally we had no chance to express an opinion or have any opportunity for recourse. The consultation was not effective, if it was, our family and all of our

neighbours would have known about the high noise corridor or ANEF areas being established.

I believe it was a deliberate ploy just to slip this policy in without anybody knowing about it. Regardless, you would expect the Airport and Air Services Australia should have contacted all residents directly, given the great impact and affect on our lives out here. All of this activity went unnoticed until I was recovering from 2 open heart surgeries in 2008. As I was home recuperating, I noticed an increase in the amount of aircraft activity over our home and then through further investigation, found out about the 2008-09 draft policies relating to the Canberra Airport.

I undertook a letter box drop within our local area of Googong, Fernleigh, Little Burra, Royalla and Mount Campbell and then organised a petition. We obtained approximately 440 signatures objecting to the Airport's draft policies. It was evident during this process that none of my neighbours new anything about what the Airport was trying to put in place. We formed the Googong Residents Group and since this time have spoken with many local politicians such as Mike Kelly and Steve Whan.

Both have told us that they oppose the expansion of the Canberra Airport, especially the 24 hour freight hub. I even attempted to make an appointment to see Minister Albanese to personally provide him with a copy of the petition so that he could see the faces of some of the people that have been affected by this decision. His reply was he was just too busy. What a disgrace in our democratic society.

I cannot understand Minister Albanese's decision. Most of the submissions to the Airport's 2009 Draft Policy were **not** in favour of the Airport's unrelenting expansion and it was only business who wanted it. I believe that his decision was based purely on the economical benefits it will give to Canberra without the consideration of the cost to the affected community.

I have outlined below just a few of the detrimental ways that the existence of a 24 hour freight hub will affect us:

1. I believe that this decision has made my house and land (as well as many other residents) unsellable. Who would live in a residential rural area with aircraft flying over 24 hours a day with noise recorded up to 83db? If my house and land is now worthless, what am I suppose to leave my disabled son when I die, so that he may have a future?
2. Regarding having aircraft coming over us 24 hours a day. What happens to our quality of sleep? Sleep deprivation is a form of torture in some countries, so what affect will it have on us? Let me put this scenario to you. If you put all of the

community's household rubbish on to the front lawn of just a few people without their consent, what do you think their response would be? Why is it possible for the Canberra region to dump all of its noise pollution on a selected community, without our consent or right of appeal? In Canberra and Queanbeyan noise laws protect the community. This does not seem to be the case here.

So as you can see, we have a serious problem out here and the Canberra International Airport states that the **aircraft are only flying over rural land with little or no impact. This is clearly wrong**, but they still want people to believe this, including the Australian and ACT governments. They also state in their own draft plan that *"it is unacceptable for residential development to be under a flight path"*, (in reference to the Tralee development). Well, there is already a residential development under a flight path – us! Many hundreds, if not thousands of us.

If the community expects us to suffer so that they may become more affluent, then what has happened to us as a society? Is the next step, a minority group such as people with disability, just forget about them as they are also a burden on our society by making the general community poorer? This is not just about aircraft noise; this is about as the Prime Minister said in his recent debate with Tony Abbott where he reiterated the concept of 'the Australian Fair Go'? If we cannot look after the disadvantaged in our society, how can we expect to look after the rest!

I have on many times tried to contact people in Air Services Australia and try to get information on their future and present public consultation process. I have even gone into the offices, but no matter what I do, nobody knows anything or can pass me onto some body that can help me. Once I got the number to public relations officer and I phoned him. His response was, "how did you get my number?" and then referred me back to the front desk. That is the closest I have gotten. Yes you can ring their complaints line and they do get back to you. I have spoken to Jack several times, but all he can do is referring the complaint to his superiors. Then nothing gets done and Air Services Australia states they do not get many complaints? I would be on the phone many times a day if I were to complain every time aircraft noise affected me and that is just not practical.

My main complaints of Air Services Australia I believe are that:

- they are not an open organisation and do not appear to be acting impartially; and

- the public consultation that was undertaken, was extremely poorly done. It was mainly left to the Airport and ASA seemed to just accept the conclusions and propaganda that the airport fed them.

Even with the latest flight path change, moving from the ILS path to the RNP path, which move the aircraft away from Jerrabomberra but put even more over us, we were not consulted. **Again where is the extensive public consultation?** May I say this, the 15 degree offset for landing and taking off gives us much needed relief and I believe at the moment nobody lives is living in this area as it is just a proposed development

Conclusion

My main concern is that supposed extensive public consultation should be done with the people who will be most affected by the proposed changes in aircraft approaches, not just the parts of the community that want aircraft noise taken away from them. Of course they will agree to such changes. The airport claim that 99.5% of residents that live in Canberra are not affected by aircraft noise; well it seems that the rest of us get it all and we were never informed about the whole process. So much for extensive public consultation?? I even have a news paper article where the Airport state that they could have done more with public consultation, however they did a lot of the consultation for Air Services Australia!

Most other airports have curfews and noise sharing; we seem to be doing the opposite. That is concentrating the noise over one area and burdening a select group without recourse. Even with this last round of public consultation for ways of minimising aircraft noise on existing residents, we were completely left out. They know we are here, but leave us out of everything. We are the forgotten and ignored people are expected to just lie down and except the unreasonable expectations of the community for the sake of the community's economical benefits - money. What a disgrace!

I may have lost complete value in my only large asset because I was not made aware of what the Canberra/Queanbeyan community expected of us, absorb most of the aircraft noise without the ability to object, and the Airport still states that the aircraft are flying over Greenfields with little or no affect. I cannot talk to anybody, politicians, bureaucrats, news papers, they don't care as they say you built under a flight path, however, when I built here the flight paths were all over Canberra and Queanbeyan and the sneaky way it was changed is what upsets and possibly destroys me. Therefore the sooner we get a completely independent body with complete public input the better. It's time we got the fox away from the hen house!

I believe that Air Services Australia have not and still do not manage processes around aircraft noise competently as I personally and it seems all my neighbours were never consulted about any changes to flight paths or aircraft noise, ever ! Again it is supposed to be extensive and effective public consultation, not as it has been, secret public consultation that leaves out the people that their decision will affect the most!

Please help us out here!!!!