



ROBERT FREESTONE

PROFESSOR
Planning and Urban
Development
Faculty of the Built
Environment

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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport
Airports Amendment Bill 2010

I attach several academic papers together representing a submission to the above Inquiry.

The principal intent is to convey to the Committee research work underway which is supportive of moves towards more effective cooperative and collaborative relationships between airport planning and broader local & regional planning processes.

These papers collectively highlight:

- (a) that airports are not 'islands' as highlighted by Minister Albanese in his second reading speech in Parliament on 30 September
- (b) the parallels between and at the same time the distinctiveness of the developments at Australian airports compared to the rest of the world
- (c) the appeal and legitimacy of non-aeronautical commercial development as a risk-minimisation business-diversification strategy by airports worldwide
- (d) the wide spectrum of planning-related issues surfacing in the national aviation policy review caused largely by inter-jurisdictional conflicts and needing to be addressed
- (e) the desirability of injecting a broader spatial planning framework into airport development issues

(f) the importance of a consultative approach, and the concomitant rationale for this to be facilitated by regulation.

(g) the importance of clarity in definition of prescriptive terms.

This research in progress is supported by the Australian Research Council Linkage Grant project 'The Airport Metropolis' project (LP0775225) headed up by Professor Doug Baker at Queensland University of technology. The work includes PhD dissertations on environmental planning (by Nicholas Stevens), governance (Timothy Donnett), and public participation (Robbie Kivetts). The opinions expressed in the selected materials attached, deriving from the 'spatial analysis' component of the study, are not necessarily those of the industry partners.

I am happy for these materials to appear on-line.

Rob Freestone

Documents following:

1. "Challenges in land use planning around Australian airports", by Robert Freestone and Douglas Baker, *Journal of Air Transport Management*, September 2010.
2. "Airports are not islands", *Contribution to the on-line journal Global Airport Cities*, by Robert Freestone and Douglas Baker, September 2010 (summary of the paper above).
3. "Urban planning consequences of airport privatization: The recent Australian experience", by Robert Freestone, *Paper presented to the ATRS Conference, Oporto. Portugal*, July 2010.
4. "Listen and learn", by Douglas Baker and Robert Freestone, Published in *Global Airport Cities*, September 2009.
5. Comments on the Draft Guidelines for Community Aviation Consultation Groups, by Robert Freestone, City Futures Research Centre, University of NSW, May 2010.

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Challenges in land use planning around Australian airports

Robert Freestone^{a,*}, Douglas Baker^b^a Faculty of the Built Environment, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW 2065, Australia^b Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

A B S T R A C T

The privatization of major Australian airports in the late 1990s unleashed an unprecedented development wave as corporate lessees implemented ambitious business plans. While planning and environmental regulations governing on-airport development were significantly enhanced, there has been national disquiet about a governance regime that remains under the auspices of the federal government and is not effectively integrated into state and local decision-making machinery. Tensions in major airport regions have been exacerbated by the building of highly conspicuous non-aeronautical developments approved with no determining input by local decision-makers as well as the growing pressures on off-airport locations for aviation-related development. This paper canvasses this context and overviews the evolving structure of planning controls for Australia's privatized federal airports. A range of issues surfacing through the National Aviation Policy Review process in 2008–2009 is described.

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Privatization

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1. Introduction

The development of airports and surrounding municipal regions poses considerable challenges for regional planning governance. The need for better articulation of spatial governance structures is apparent in Australian airport settings but has rarely been explicitly addressed in policy terms. An explanation lies in a federal structure of government which creates little space for robust regional and sub-regional strategies, a concentration in the political arena on localised 'across the fence' issues between airports and immediately surrounding jurisdictions, and the continuing skew in public debate toward noise as the dominant airport planning concern.

Against the backdrop of more than a decade's experience with a national privatized airport regime, airport-related land use planning in Australia has become an important public policy issue. Differences in planning goals between privatized airports and surrounding jurisdictions have created tensions with respect to compatibility of land uses and the delivery of infrastructure. Considerable controversy has ensued from airports developing non-aviation related land uses.

This paper provides an overview of the general structure and evolution of planning controls for federal airports and the development that has transpired on them since 1996. Drawing in part on data from a recent National Aviation Policy Review, the focus is on

the changing role of airports in Australia over the past decade and how this has challenged urban planning across an extensive range of issues. Highlighted is a continuation of an historical divide between airport and mainstream urban and regional land use planning, and the decision-making cultures and attitudes associated with them. Airports and planning authorities at various scales must cultivate more effective collaborative governance structures.

2. Background: planning structures and history

The tripartite arrangement of the Australian structure of government involves federal, state, and local tiers (Williams, 2007). Within this hierarchy, airports have been largely a national responsibility in Australia since the 1920s. Under the Australian Constitution of 1901 all land owned by the federal (or Commonwealth) government is immune from State laws. When a State law is inconsistent with a Commonwealth law, the latter prevails. Moreover, while some state controls have been accepted, the Commonwealth retains the right to pass its own laws to override State law on any Commonwealth-owned land. These provisions have caused sporadic conflicts over many years for different types of new developments especially when departing from historical use rights. The fact that ultimate control of major airport development to the present day remains with the Commonwealth has fundamental implications for appreciating the planning issues which have arisen.

The Commonwealth's direct role in managing airports has nonetheless been progressively reduced across the decades. A local ownership transfer program saw 170 federal airports in the late

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +61 2 9901 4505.

E-mail address: r.freestone@unsw.edu.au (R. Freestone).

1950s reduced to 81 by the early 1980s and in turn to just over 20 by 1988. Allied to the evolution of state-based planning systems, this has meant that the majority of airports, particularly in regional Australia, come under a combination of state planning controls and local area environmental/development plans. While not necessarily without controversy, this trajectory has simplified governance arrangements in regularizing many smaller airports under state government statutory land use regimes in line with the vast majority of other development.

Applying to airport land use, state planning plans and strategies cover four relevant types – general land use planning directives, regional planning aspirations and structures, aviation-related statements, and some airport-specific instruments. The first two types assume similar guises. General planning policies and directives relate to fundamental planning concerns from traffic to biodiversity, and impact on a range of land uses apart from airports. Regional strategies provide a higher degree of spatial resolution. Until the 1980s, major airports were conceived by most regional planning strategies as purely transport facilities. However, in metropolitan areas the most common designation is now 'specialised activity centres' in recognition of their status as significant employment clusters and gateways for economic growth. For example, the latest Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney (2005) designates Sydney Airport and environs as both a specialised centre generating 'metropolitan-wide benefits' with over 36,000 jobs (about a third at the airport itself) and as the southernmost hub of a so-called 'global economic corridor' anchored by the CBD and arcing through Sydney's job-rich inner, central and affluent northern middle ring suburbs. This status is intended to focus sustainable growth measures, infrastructure provision and transport planning by providing general guidance to State agencies, State-local government decision-making, and detailed local area planning. It is acknowledged by the airport but is not necessarily binding on its actions which ultimately are regulated by separate national legislation.

Aviation-related and airport-specific directives, the second pair of state planning instruments, are more targeted and usually relate to expressly securing adequate noise and safety buffers around airports. The overriding goals are to protect significant infrastructure assets from incompatible development which might adversely affect long-term safety and operational efficiency as well as protect the environment of nearby communities through noise mitigation. Examples of such planning instruments are Queensland State Planning Policy 1/02 on 'Development in the Vicinity of Certain Airports and Aviation Facilities' (revised 2002) and S. 117 Direction No. 3.5 'Development near Licensed Aerodromes' (2007) under the New South Wales Environmental and Planning Assessment Act. Airport-specific instruments are similarly concerned with minimising incompatibility. Three relevant examples are Western Australia State Planning Policy No. 5.1 'Land Use Planning in the vicinity of Perth Airport' (February 2004), State Planning Policy No. 5.3 'Jandakot Airport Vicinity' (March 2006), and the Melbourne Airport Environs Strategy Plan (2003) and Overlay (2007) to ensure curfew-free operations. These noise-based controls use the ANEF (Australian Noise Exposure Forecast) system as a land use planning tool with the line for acceptability of residential building construction drawn at 20 ANEF with noise mitigation required between 20 and 25 ANEF. There have been moves toward a more holistic approach integrating a fuller set of planning considerations through the concept of the 'airport environs planning zone' which could encompass the development of community visions such as 'airport-related economic centres' (Department of Transport and Regional Services, 2003). The main impact of this thinking has been declaration of wider buffer areas not based solely on exposure to aircraft noise. However, the most recent national statement

retreats to a more traditional spectrum of core concerns in planning for compatible development in terms of noise, protecting compatible airspace through height controls, and securing adequate public safety zones (Australian Government, 2009a).

All state government-based controls sit alongside and must be factored into statutory local environmental and development plans, the most ubiquitous instrument for land use planning nationally. Provisions differ across state boundaries, but the dominant recognition is of airports as 'special use' land use zones, with some schemes also differentiating between core, ancillary and airport business zones depending on the scale of the operation and with noise and airspace protection buffers overlain.

The situation of the federal airports is more distinctive. In 1988 the Federal Airports Corporation (FAC) was established to inject more systemic commercial management sensibility (Eames, 1998). However, the planning regime did not fundamentally change and the airports largely remained 'black holes' outside the normal ambit of state and local planning controls. The FAC's publication *Town Planning for Airports* (1993) underscored the importance of good cooperation between airport and town planning procedures but otherwise speaks to a different era. No formal requirements or procedures for airport master plans are identified other than following general ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation) guidelines. Public exhibition of proposals was recommended solely for public relations purposes because the plan 'should be capable of withstanding the same test of public scrutiny, comment or objection that is required for a local authority planning scheme', but there was no statutory requirement to do so. Non-aviation uses were conceived only in a minor supplemental way as noise buffers which need not necessarily be even taken into account in assessing economic impacts. The land use planning function as it affected nearby areas was thus conceived in narrow and traditional terms as serving two purposes only – providing for airport needs such as obstacle limitation surfaces and to ensure that airport operations cause minimal impacts on the environment and community (Federal Airports Corporation, 1993). It was left to airports, state governments, and local authorities to devise ad hoc consultative structures to promote actual alignment of airport and surrounding area planning.

This FAC era reflected the early influence of neo-liberalist thought and in retrospect can be seen as an interim step toward full privatization ushered in by the *Airports Act* 1996. The latter legislation, one of the boldest initiatives of its kind in international terms, envisaged a 'balanced' policy direction, in which the burden of new transport infrastructure would be transferred from government to the private sector but subject to new checks and balances to protect community interests. The leasehold sales, all with options for 99 years, were to mostly private consortia and were conducted in several stages between 1997 and 2003, raising \$8.5 billion (Hooper et al., 2000). While new planning and environmental protection requirements were set in place, ultimate approval still remained firmly with the Federal Minister for Transport.

3. A new approvals regime for federal airports

The *Airports Act* has been amended several times since 1996 but its basic provisions remain intact. In line with section 112 of the Australian Constitution, the Act prevails for airport land to the exclusion of State (and Territory) laws relating in particular to land use planning and the regulation of building activities. Key requirements of the planning approvals process are preparation of master plans for twenty-year planning horizons every five years, major development plans for any proposed work costing more than \$20 million (increased from \$10 m in 2007), and designation of building controllers for approval of minor development. Formal

public exhibition requirements are stipulated. Both master and major development plans must now address 'consistency' (or lack of) with local and state planning schemes, a provision that does inject some acknowledgement of the external planning environment. Development and plan approval rests with the Commonwealth Government in Canberra and specifically the relevant elected Minister, currently the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. Parallel processes have been put in place for the drafting of airport environmental strategies also updatable for five year planning horizons. These require the concurrence and ongoing scrutiny of a separate Minister administering the federal *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act* 1999.

In all respects, the new planning requirements are a significant advance on the evaluation and approval framework of the FAC era and earlier. For the airport operators, at least, it is far more demanding, more inherently consultative, and at times administratively burdensome particularly because of the additional demands of the EPBC Act. However, there has been national disquiet building for some years that the governance regime under the auspices of the federal government alone is not effectively integrated into state and local decision-making machinery. An exchange at the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport inquiry into the Airports Amendment Bill in early 2007 between the Committee Chairman and the Deputy Secretary of the then Department of Transport and Regional Services captures the introspection of federal law in relation to relevant off-airport matters:

CHAIR—Does your planning cease at the airport gate?

DEPUTY SECRETARY—It does, although, in reviewing master plans and major development plans, the act requires the airport to identify the consistency—or, where not consistent, the inconsistency—with state and local planning regimes. So we do look at that and, in our advice to ministers in relation to master plans and major development plans, we draw attention to and do an assessment of the consistency with state planning regimes and of where projects may or may not be consistent with those regimes.

....

CHAIR—I understand all that, but does your planning stop at the airport gate and does that make a lot of sense?

DEPUTY SECRETARY—There is no doubt that we have limitations. Our regulatory powers stop at the airport boundary. We can only advise in relation to where we see potential impacts off airport.

While there are informal coordinative mechanisms for some airport regions, these are usually not statutory or legally-binding arrangements. Intergovernmental communication and cooperation for major development and master plans and various strategic initiatives is thus handled by a variety of one-off forums, workshops and working relationships for sharing and discussing information with stakeholder groups, usually commonwealth, state and local representatives, airport and airport tenants, and community interest groups. Examples include the Adelaide Airport Consultative Committee (established by the airport in 1998), Canberra Airport Aircraft Noise Consultative Forum, Brisbane Airport Community Forum and the Sydney Airport Community Forum (established by the Commonwealth Government in 1996), the latter three bodies all concerned primarily with noise impacts. Increasingly sensitive to community concerns, in May 2007 the responsible federal department released guidelines for public consultation by airports. Without ceding any formal decision-making responsibility, these guidelines identified liaison with state/territory governments and local councils as critical because of

their roles in providing 'complementary off-airport infrastructure' and potential implications for regional planning (Department of Transport and Regional Services, 2007).

4. The impacts of privatization on airport development

Until the recent global economic crisis, the predominant trend in Australian aviation was growth. The number of passenger movements through all airports increased from 51.6 million in 1991–1992 to 104.9 million in 2005–2006, 80% of that traffic being through main capital city airports. The forecast national passenger traffic in 2025 is estimated at 227.9 million (Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, 2008). In parallel with these trends has been an unprecedented development wave as all privatized airports implemented ambitious business plans. Since 1997, over \$2.2 billion has been invested in leased federal airports with commitments for a further \$4 billion in the near future (Australian Government, 2008a). Privatized airports have been described as an economic 'jet engine' whose collective and cumulative contributions to GDP are making them a key sector in the national economy. Australia is said to lead the world in the development of 'air cities' (Tourism and Transport Forum, 2007). The contrast with general depictions of lagging investment in other transport infrastructure is stark (Atkinson et al., 2007).

Development around airports has intensified with the growth in passenger (and freight) traffic and in response to the accessibility and agglomeration advantages of an airport-oriented location. In Sydney, for example, conspicuous off-airport development has included new commercial car-parking and accommodation facilities, mixed use precincts (Discovery Point at Wollli Creek), and preparation for a large-scale business park (Cooks Cove). However, not only have millions of dollars on new airside and landside infrastructure been committed, airports have also aimed at maximising returns from commercial development to minimise the uncertainty of dependence on aeronautical revenues in line with global trends (Graham, 2008; Morrison, 2008). The prospect of market opportunities from property development and commercial initiatives was a key factor in the high prices secured for airport leases from the late 1990s (Freestone et al., 2006). An indication of the scale of commercial investment and the transformation of major airports into mixed use centres is provided by the inventory of major development plans at Australian airports between 2003 and 2008 listed in Table 1.

The turn to the commodification of airport land has played out differently around the nation's airports depending on a varied mix of land and locational opportunities. Brisbane Airport with Schiphol as a major shareholder has unsurprisingly embraced the 'airport city' philosophy. The airport has a large greenfield site of 2700 ha and has embarked upon a long-term development of specialised business, retail, industrial, and aviation educational precincts. In Canberra, between 1998 and 2008, the number of airport businesses increased from 70 to 180 and the Airport is similarly intent on maximising the growth of further business. Its showpiece Brindabella Business Park boasts landmark five star sustainable office buildings. At a smaller scale, Adelaide Airport is following suit with a discount factory outlet complex, business and export parks, and a flagship Ikea store at the airport main entrance. The brickworks on Perth airport were a particularly controversial development, as were proposals floated by the more land-locked Sydney Airport for either a cinema complex or retail business park late in 2005. Property development has become a critical part of airport business plans via a variety of implementation models as a way of diversifying risk and has underlined the importance of master planning in sustainable economic development (Reiss, 2007).

Table 1
Major Airport Development Plans approved by the Commonwealth Government 2003–2009.

Airport	Development	Approval date
Darwin	Home and Lifestyle Super Centre	18-May-09
Brisbane	Domestic Terminal Expansion	5-Feb-09
Darwin	Domestic Terminal Expansion	5-Feb-09
Brisbane	Roadwork upgrades to Airport Drive/ Gateway Motorway	7-Jan-09
Sydney	Runway End Safety Area	15-Aug-08
Adelaide	Airport Hotel Complex	15-Oct-08
Brisbane	Multi-level Car Park Domestic Terminal	14-Oct-08
Canberra	15 Lancaster Place – office complex	18-Apr-08
Hobart	Outlet Centre and Bulky Goods/ Homemaker Centre	08-Oct-07
Brisbane	Federal office building	28-Sep-07
Brisbane	Hotel Precinct – No. 1 Airport Drive	28-Sep-07
Brisbane	Parallel runway	18-Sep-07
Gold Coast	Terminal expansion	10-Sep-07
Perth	Linfox warehouse and distribution centre	8-Aug-07
Melbourne	DHL Danzas freight facility (MDP minor variation)	25-Jul-07
Melbourne	Mixed use development	13-Jul-07
Canberra	Southern office complex	26-May-07
Brisbane	Convenience centre	27-Mar-07
Hobart	Checked baggage screening facility	12-Feb-07
Brisbane	Northern access roads project	27-Sep-06
Brisbane	Gateway upgrade project	13-Sep-06
Brisbane	International terminal/concourse extension	5-Sep-06
Perth	Clay Manufacturing Plant	15-Aug-06
Perth	Coles Myer Distribution Centre	24-Jul-06
Brisbane	Multi-level car park	20-Jun-06
Canberra	Factory Outlet Centre	26-Apr-06
Canberra	Runway extension, minor variation	4-Apr-06
Melbourne	Reject Shop Distribution Centre	1-Mar-06
Melbourne	DHL Danzas Air and Ocean Freight Facility	1-Mar-06
Gold Coast	Tugun bypass	20-Feb-06
Essendon	Bulla Road, minor variation	13-Oct-05
Sydney KSA	Car park - international precinct	13-Apr-05
Adelaide	IKEA store	1-Feb-05
Parafield	Cross Keys works	19-Jan-05
Essendon	Bulla Road commercial - retail development	16-Dec-04
Melbourne	Office development	12-Nov-04
Gold Coast	Runway works	8-Nov-04
Canberra	Runway works	25-Aug-04
Brisbane	Direct factory outlet	25-Jun-04
Melbourne	International mail sorting facility	16-Jun-04
Brisbane	Virgin Blue hangar	11-May-04
Perth	Woolworths warehousing and distribution park	14-Nov-03
Canberra	Terminal expansion	4-Nov-03

Source: Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government's 2008–09 Annual Report.

Nevertheless, these development trends have thrown up a variety of planning challenges and problems which have been aired extensively through the popular media, inter-governmental dealings, and various public forums (Stevens et al., 2009). Submissions to the 2007 Senate Standing Committee Inquiry articulated an inventory of broader community concerns (Australian Government, 2007). Local authorities and business groups in particular highlighted issues including:

- Large-scale commercial developments taking place outside normal planning controls
- Documentation requirements less than for conventional development applications
- Lack of developer contributions for off-airport infrastructure upgrades
- Highly flexible and use-inclusive nature of generalised airport master plans
- Poor community and government consultation
- Role of airports as both proponents and approval authorities for some development

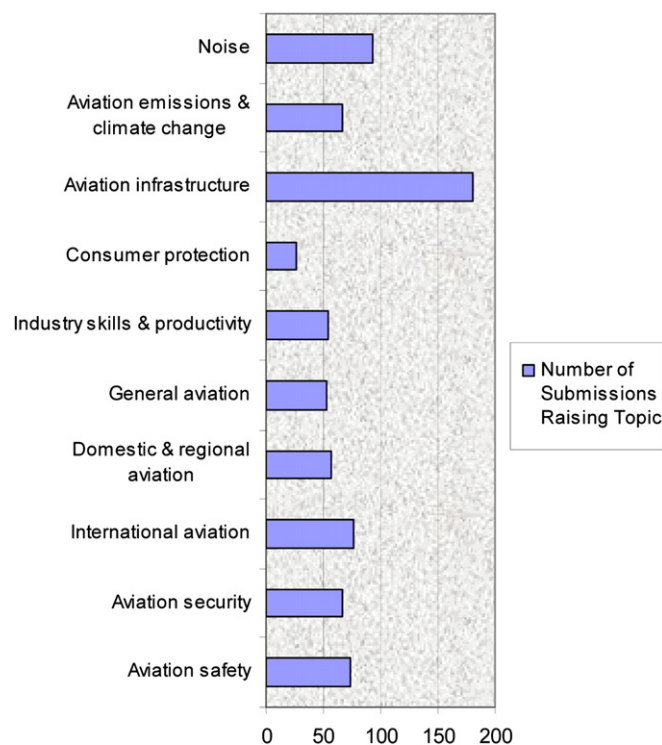


Fig. 1. Concern about airport Infrastructure and other Issues in Green Paper submissions.

- Lack of independent reviews or third party appeals
- The 'light-handed' regulatory approach by the federal government favouring governments
- Lack of urban planning expertise at the Commonwealth level.

5. Land use planning issues in the National Aviation Policy Review

A timely opportunity to stock-take community attitudes towards broader planning issues associated with Australian airports has arisen with the National Aviation Policy Review, initiated following a change in the federal government in 2007. In the British Westminster tradition, this Review produced an 'Issues Paper' (April 2008), a 'Green Paper' outlining preliminary proposals (December 2008) and a 'White Paper' with proposed policy reforms (December 2009). The Review had a wide remit encompassing ten key aviation issues: safety, security, international aviation, domestic and regional aviation, general aviation, industry skills and productivity, consumer protection, aviation emissions and climate change, airport infrastructure and noise impacts. Both the Issues and the Green Paper attracted a significant number of submissions (290 and 220 respectively). Fig. 1 shows the level of concern in submissions across the Green Paper's ten major headings of consideration. Aviation infrastructure attracted the majority of comment. The business sector (airlines, airports, aviation-related bodies, and general business groups including the property industry) provided 73 submissions or 40% of the total. Most remaining submissions came from community (27%) and government (22%) sources.

The primary focus in this paper is on issues raised under the banner of infrastructure, as these most directly correlate with land use planning matters for the federal airports. The Green Paper explicitly espouses a philosophy of balanced planning, stating that "a new level of cooperation is required between federal, state and

local government on airport planning and development, with clear consultation and decision-making processes". The rhetoric is what planning theorists might term "collaborative" planning (Healey, 2006), with keywords like "new partnerships", "improved coordination", "better integration", and "a greater sense of shared commitment to the development of the airport site". The thrust is toward forging a consensus in planning when different stakeholders bring different expectations and agendas to the table (Australian Government, 2008b). The level of detail about how to actually bring about a convergence of interests is limited, but several key elements of a more effective planning regime were outlined, including:

- processes for the approval of non-aeronautical and aeronautical development to be refined
- changed arrangements for assessing plans and development proposals
- better cooperative arrangements to integrate airport planning and development and regulatory oversight with local and state and territory planning and regulatory arrangements, possibly through advisory panels
- more consultative arrangements with communities
- a clearer framework for protecting airport operations from inappropriate development
- the Commonwealth to retain decision-making authority for land use planning and development.

The recent White Paper reiterates these directions but with detailed policy, regulatory and guideline development still to be undertaken (Australian Government, 2009b).

5.1. Methodology and overview

Submissions to the Issues and Green Papers were reviewed using a combination of content and discourse analysis techniques to uncover shared and conflicting ideas, concepts and contentions among and between the main stakeholders. The approach and aim is intended to better document any dimensions of conflict to underscore the drive toward collaborative policy-making (Butteriss et al., 2001).

A preliminary analysis was undertaken of planning issues raised in the nearly 300 submissions generated by the Issues Paper. A summary of these reveals that the stances largely echo those raised a year earlier in the Senate Inquiry (Table 2). The analysis of the Green Paper submissions was undertaken more deliberately. Some 220 submissions to the Green Paper were made by the deadline of February 2009, and 210 of these were made publicly available. Of the latter submissions, a total of 181 (86%) raised "airport infrastructure" concerns. The planning issues raised in these submissions were categorised into 16 specific topics derived from both the contents of the Green Paper and the recording of other airport planning issues raised in the submissions themselves. The discourse was analysed by recording, for each submission, positions or judgements on issues raised, arguments and proposals on issues, and emotional or rhetorical phrases used. Each submission was also classified according to participant type and according to the main airport discussed. The resulting database was then sorted, by participant, issue and airport, to identify competing discourses and potential discourse coalitions. Table 3 identifies and defines the sixteen specific issues identified in order of importance and conveying the broad canvas of opinion on planning-related matters.

Table 4 elaborates by showing the airport-related issues most frequently mentioned overall and their varying significance according to three broad stakeholder groups: business (including the airports), community and government (state and local).

Table 2

Planning issues raised in submissions to the Australian National Aviation Review Issues Paper.

State and local government:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of effective integration between federal, state and local planning regimes • Local communities having to meet off site infrastructure costs to support airport expansion in the absence of mandatory developer contributions • Competitive advantage gained by airports conducting non-aviation based activities over commercial rivals that are subject to jurisdictional planning controls • Master Plans and Major Development Plans lack specific detail and accompanying traffic and similar studies required for developments of a similar scale proposed for land outside airports. • Poor consultation with local communities over development proposals, especially for developments worth less than \$20 m
Airports:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The airports supported continuation of the 'light-handed' regulatory regime • Complications and delays caused by operation of the interaction between the Airports Act and the Environment Planning and Biodiversity Conservation Act • Greater coordination of off-airport land use planning to prevent residential creep and high-rise encroachment on airspace
Airlines and operators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aeronautical requirements of airports and airlines should take precedence over non-aeronautical developments of airports.

Regional airport concerns topped the list with 83 mentions, aided by a letter writing campaign organised by Tourism Tropical North Queensland that accounted for more than two dozen identical submissions from tourism businesses and groups. Regional airport concerns, also mentioned by local councils responsible for managing regional airports, included recognition of the role airports can play in regional development. Airport pricing was primarily a concern for the business sector, particularly airport companies and the airlines that pay to use their facilities. Similarly, the health impact of airport-related noise was raised mainly by community groups and individuals. This latter issue was also mentioned by two state governments, but not a single business or business organisation.

While the general heading of aviation infrastructure is inclusive of diverse but interrelated issues, the specific issue of "planning around airports", which can be used to organised a concern of 70 separate submissions, can be deconstructed into several major concerns (Table 5). The analysis of these submissions below, orientated to spatial governance issues, draws out significant contrasts between the airports and most other stakeholder views.

5.2. Planning around airports

The airport business submissions provide strong support for continued and singular Commonwealth control over airport planning, although there is nervousness about the application of untested measures such as mooted Ministerial "call-in" powers. Brisbane Airport suggested the Commonwealth should even extend its planning power to cover off-airport proposals compromising airport safety and efficiency. Canberra Airport provided a range of options for planning around airports including a "show cause" mechanism requiring developers to fully justify their proposals to the Commonwealth. The airports nonetheless provided some support for better inter-governmental coordination, particularly between Commonwealth and State Governments. In relation to the new idea of airport planning advisory panels (APAPs), many of the airports opposed their establishment, on the grounds that the groups were unnecessary. Adelaide Airport, with an effective consultative committee mechanism already in place, argued that

Table 3

Categorisation of airport planning issues raised in submissions to the Australian Government's Green paper on Aviation Policy, ranked ordered by the number of substantive mentions in submissions (in parentheses).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Regional Airports</i>: including significance of regional airports to regional development, international access to regional airports, desirability and cost of security measures, and funding programs for regional and remote airports (83). • <i>Planning Around Airports</i>: including risk-based planning of off-airport development to allow for airport operation & growth, public safety zones around airports, planning under flight paths and to manage noise exposure, and general planning of airport regions (but not off-airport infrastructure planning) (70). • <i>Airport-Related Noise Mitigation</i>: including desirability and operation of curfews, noise-insulation programs and industry funding for noise mitigation and compensation (65). • <i>Airport Community Consultation</i>: including desirability of establishing airport community consultation groups, compositions, roles and responsibilities, and procedural matters (64). • <i>Government Responsibilities in Airport Planning</i>: including desirability of Commonwealth control over airport planning, jurisdiction over non-aeronautical development on airport land, inter-governmental coordination for airport-related development and Local Government control of smaller airports (64). • <i>Non-Aeronautical Uses at Airports</i>: including potential impacts on aeronautical uses, desirability or need for non-aeronautical uses, and competition with similar uses outside airports (55). • <i>Airport Investment and Growth</i>: Including impacts on investment from global financial crisis, oil depletion, and proposed regulatory changes, significance of non-aeronautical revenues to investment, desirability of airport investment/growth & alternatives to airport investments (54). • <i>Airport-Related Noise Information Tools</i>: including adequacy of Australian Noise Exposure Forecasts as planning information tools, web-based flight path information tools, the Transport Noise Information Package and providing noise exposure advice to home-buyers (53). • <i>Off-Airport Transport and Community Infrastructure</i>: including extent of airport impacts on surrounding infrastructure, infrastructure funding responsibilities and integrating planning of on- and off-airport infrastructure (53). • <i>Airport Master Planning</i>: including accuracy and transparency of master plans, level of detail in master plans, and desirability of proposed changes to master planning including precinct plans (51). • <i>Airport Planning Advisory Panels</i>: including desirability of establishing panels, composition, roles and responsibilities, and funding (43). • <i>Second Sydney Airport and Sydney Airport Capacity</i>: including desirability of second Sydney airport, alternatives to a second Sydney airport and possible locations (42). • <i>General Aviation at Airports</i>: including significance of and provision for General Aviation (GA) at airports, noise from GA activities, location of GA airports (40). • <i>Airport Development Control</i>: including review of major development plan triggers, call-in power for sensitive developments and prohibition of incompatible uses on airport land (38). • <i>Airport Pricing</i>: including desirability of more extensive price monitoring, price monitoring of airport car parking, and proposed 'show cause' process for pricing misbehaviour (31). • <i>Airport-Related Noise and Health Impacts</i>: including health impacts of aviation noise, studies of health impacts, and use of health risk assessment for airport developments (14).

introducing APAPs carried the “very real risk” of conflict and confusion. Another said that they might foster “uncertainty”. Other airport operators, such as Bankstown and Australian Pacific Airports (Melbourne and Launceston), also expressed concern, arguing that membership of any new player must be independent of local and indeed State Governments. Airport views on augmenting community consultation proposals were mixed. Australian Pacific Airports suggested that the membership of such groups should include Federal and State Government representatives. The Australian Airports Association argued there must be “safeguards” against airport critics in the groups. Perth warned of the danger of the consultation groups being “hijacked”.

The property industry, government and community submissions were strongly, but not unanimously, opposed to continued

Table 4

Most frequently mentioned airport issues in submissions to the National Aviation Review Policy Green Paper (rank order of importance by stakeholder group).

Major airport planning issue	Business submissions	Community submissions	Government submissions
Regional Airports	1	13	1
Planning around Airports	2	9	2
Noise mitigation	7	1	6
Community consultation	10	2	10
Government responsibilities	4	5	4
Non-aeronautical uses	12	12	3
Airport investment and growth	3	4	13
Noise information	13	3	7
Off-Airport infrastructure	14	10	5
Airport master planning	8	8	9
Airport planning advisory panels	5	15	8
Second Sydney airport	9	11	12
General aviation airports	15	6	14
Airport development control	11	14	11
Airport pricing	6	16	15
Noise and health impacts	16	7	16

sole Commonwealth airport planning control, particularly in relation to commercial developments characterising the evolution towards the ‘airport city’ model. The Shopping Centre Council argued that “the most equitable approach” was for non-aeronautical developments to comply with state and local planning laws. Some government submissions indicated that if the planning approval role were to stay with the Commonwealth, non-aeronautical developments should at least be tested against state and local laws for consistency. In relation to the idea of a “national land use planning regime” for airport-related noise, the Western Australian Government said it opposed any shifting of off-airport planning responsibility to the Commonwealth. Almost all of the property industry, government and community submissions, however, supported the proposed APAPs. State government submissions generally said state representatives should be on the panels, while local government submissions predictably proposed council membership. In relation to complementary community consultation groups, state and local governments were supportive but warned of problems already evident with existing ad hoc airport groups. The community group submissions were remarkably even less enthusiastic for the same reason. While most supported improved community consultation, they were highly critical of existing airport community consultation groups and processes.

5.3. Airports and their regions

Although indirectly reflected in the interrelated scatter of specific concerns (Table 3), only a relatively small number of submissions explicitly commended integrated airport area development as a desirable Review outcome (Table 5). The strongest endorsements came from local government interests, of which three are representative. The Australian Mayoral Aviation Council said that “no airport exists only within the boundary fence” and that planning processes need to better coordinate conflicting objectives of airports and surrounding communities. The Australian Local Government Association maintained that “airports in urban areas are major generators of employment & traffic and therefore must be properly integrated into local and city wide plans”. Brisbane City Council specifically wanted a “well-balanced framework to enable an effective and sustainable integration of Brisbane Airport with the urban fabric of Brisbane City and the (South-East Queensland) region”. The Urban Taskforce, a national business lobby group, provided an expansive view of airport-related land use planning beyond noise considerations in arguing that “growth, commerce and industry must not be unrealistically restricted near

Table 5
Major concerns with planning around airports nominated in Green Paper submissions.

Issue	No. of comments
Safeguard against incompatible development important	28
Planning for noise attenuation important	17
Need for coordinated area planning and impact assessment in airport vicinity	15
Supports public safety zones	9
Supports review of ANEF standards	6
Supports risk based land use framework	6
Need to conserve natural environment	1

airports and it is the role of planning to facilitate the right type of development”.

This issue of rationalised spatial governance that goes to the heart of a more synergistic model of planning at the airport–city interface is barely touched upon. The issue is nowhere explicitly canvassed within the Policy Review, perhaps partly because of the inherited notion that the federal government avoids involvement in state and local land use planning issues except where operational matters are concerned. As a result, the Green Paper largely treats airports in a rather traditional fashion as entities disconnected from the broader metropolitan and regional fabric, despite emphasizing their importance for economic development and their potential disbenefits in environmental amenity terms. Beyond the airport boundary, and apart from the desire to see more consultative processes adapted to local circumstances, the formal interest conveyed by the Green and White Papers still narrows to noise, building height, and flightpath issues. In this sense it conveys an unbalanced or at least incomplete vision. The primary concern is negatively fixated on preventing incompatibility rather than more pro-actively promoting compatibility.

6. Towards new models of land use planning

The “balanced” philosophy of future aviation policy in relation to airport planning and development remains confined to the present 21 federal airports and hinges on several projected initiatives (Australian Government, 2009b):

- planning coordination forums for major airports and community consultation committees for all airports
- strengthening the Master Plan process, through providing more transparency and detail in master plans, and folding in transport impact studies and airport environmental strategies
- revising the triggers for Major Development Plans, by replacing the current single \$20 m threshold with a range of other “triggers” for smaller projects deemed to be have a “significant community impact”
- identification of non-compatible land uses which should be prohibited or restricted on airports
- conscription of departmental expert advisors to assist government appraisal of land use planning and integration issues
- closer scrutiny of non-aeronautical development, with requirements for more detailed precinct plans identifying and mitigating impacts on and off-airport
- a national framework to safeguard airports from inappropriate and encroaching development around airport sites
- better managing impact of aircraft noise on local communities, through a multiple stakeholder approach and drawing from better noise data.

Just how these will be translated specifically into specific guidelines or requirements of a new national policy framework and

how national-state-local stakeholders will be better managed is not yet clear. While the airports are concerned that the ‘devil may be in the detail’, the overall commitment to a balanced, more cautious and information-demanding planning regime had been flagged from early in the review process. While more room is being made for stakeholders, the Commonwealth has not ceded any formal planning powers for airports to the two lower tiers of government.

However, the absence of a spatial dimension to highlight the wider context of airport regions is limiting (City Futures Research Centre, 2009). Internationally, there is widespread disillusionment with conventional planning instruments that often lack integrative power in airport regions (De Jong et al., 2008; Van Wijk, 2008). New forms of area governance based on inter-governmental coordination and private-public partnerships lead the way towards more collaborative approaches to regulation and development that recognise the complex interdependencies of airport regions. The Schiphol Airport area continues to provide a benchmark with a regional spatial economic plan (RFVS) providing mutual guidance for forward planning on the nature and location of airport-related employment zones, metropolitan rail expansion, accommodation of mixed use development, and provision of regional open space (Schaafsma et al., 2008).

There are some extant initiatives of this kind of integrated area planning in Australia. Two examples are, first, in planning for a joint commercial-defence airport at Newcastle north of Sydney and second, the Botany Bay City portion of the Sydney Airport sub-region. At Newcastle, an innovative 100 ha Defence and Airport Related Employment Zone (DAREZ) recognised in a new local environmental plan for Port Stephens Shire is intended to provide opportunities for establishment of employment generating activities supporting airport and air force base whilst ensuring high environmental safeguards. It is the outcome of a systematic approach initiated by an economic opportunities study in 2003 followed by a land use development strategy undertaken in 2006–2007 which progressed from site alternatives through land capability assessments to a structure plan and development control framework guided by a reference group with representatives of all key public and private stakeholders (GHD, 2008). Implementation of the master plan will be facilitated by a single developer. Newcastle is not a federal airport and the approach here is testimony to a simpler governance arrangement under state legislation whilst still addressing national needs through the participation of the Department of Defence.

A recently released planning strategy for the City of Botany Bay adjacent to Sydney Airport identifies “maintaining Sydney Airport as a global gateway” as one of seven major sub-regional objectives (SGS Economics and Planning, 2009). The report comments on a “policy vacuum for offsite issues and impacts associated with the Airport’s continued expansion” caused by Commonwealth control of airport planning. For the immediate off-airport zone, it calculates a significant under-supply of land to accommodate future airport-related freight activity and documents other problems needing to be addressed, including poor amenity and urban design, uncoordinated development, lack of local amenities, limited office development, and the absence of a “gateway experience” – in effect the typical symptoms of brownfields airport fringe area. Within a spatial framework complementing State recognition of the airport areas as a specialised activity centre of metropolitan significance (NSW Department of Planning, 2005), various recommendations are made to protect existing employment zones, open up new employment locations to accommodate growth in demand for airport-related activity, develop a new transit-oriented mixed use centre, and enhanced public domain and streetscape improvements. A significant limitation is that Botany Bay is just one of three local councils contiguous to the airport – this

ultimately remains a single rather than joint stakeholder strategy. Moreover a new statewide template for local planning schemes to be introduced in 2011 does not include a category of aviation-related uses.

Such spatial frameworks are seemingly below the radar of national aviation thinking in Australia. Nevertheless, they signpost the kind of sub-regional approach desirable to fully realise the economic and social development of airport regions in ways that are not just about noise mitigation. Integrated spatial strategies building on these models could provide guidance to the new planning consultative bodies set to be established around the country. Indeed, such bodies could be actively involved in the preparation of such frameworks which would go a long way to more coherently addressing the many land use planning issues in the vicinity of airports (Table 3).

7. Conclusion

There are numerous challenges confronting land use planning around Australian airports. Although these are not unique, the extent to which current conflicts have their historical origins in a national basis of land ownership with its own planning regime largely independent of state and local controls appears to be a distinctively Australian manifestation.

There are two distinct discourses on airport planning evident. The airport businesses generally believe that existing airport planning is effective and they are uneasy at any major “moving of the (regulatory) goal posts”. They want a regulatory framework that provides investor certainty, and continued Commonwealth control, but do see some merit in better integration of on- and off-airport planning. They want state and local governments, however, to accept their fair share of responsibility for land use and transport planning with off-airport planning needing to be improved to ensure safe and efficient airport operations. On the other hand, the property industry, state and local governments, and communities believe existing airport planning is inadequate. They want a regulatory regime that is fair and consistent with state planning laws as applied to other land uses, including major infrastructure developments such as ports. They can see some merit in better integration of off- and on-airport planning to increase safety for airports and nearby residents. However they want new airport planning and consultation measures to reduce the risks from airport developments and noise. They argue such measures are necessary to increase certainty for surrounding businesses and communities.

The Australian Government's National Aviation Policy Review has attempted to steer a balanced course between conflicting aspirations. Whether the policy reforms that will flow from the White Paper of December 2009 will achieve this remains to be seen. But the opportunity should not be lost to recognise the broader planning implications and governance questions of airports in their spatial settings.

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Airports are not islands

Successful consultation and appropriate planning arrangements are essential if the airport city is to thrive, write Robert Freestone and Douglas Baker

A major challenge facing airports and the regions they serve is finding collaborative decision making structures that allow them to move forward together for mutual advantage.

Going it alone is neither an expression of corporate social responsibility on the one hand, nor public interest decision making on the other.

Airports are highly complex and specialised transport zones, their territorial borders are clearly defined with very different governance, logistical and security protocols inside compared to outside the perimeter fence.

But they are not islands and in a myriad functional ways are deeply embedded into the regional fabric. Progressive airport operators and governments recognise these interdependencies and have sought to build collaborative processes to promote synchronisation and balance between airport, local and metropolitan planning needs and policies.

Without effective dialogue, the land based and functional connectivity of the airport into its wider spatial context may be impeded and the economic leverage of coherent patterns of airport-related development compromised.

Mediating the land use and transport challenges thrown up in the airport region is the responsibility of urban planning systems. These are organised in a variety of templates but tend to assume three main forms with implications for airport operations and development: local/municipal, regional/state/provincial, and national (the latter relating primarily to air navigation and safety issues).

Planning regulations at different levels of government and even from the same government can sometimes frustratingly contradict each other and be at odds with airport aspirations and the reality of the immediate airport region as a vital economic zone.

Planning authorities – or elected representatives, for they are not one and the same – can be tied into an old-fashioned understanding of airports as solely transport infrastructure.

This perception, often against all the facts, denies the inexorable evolution of major airports into commercially oriented mixed-use enterprises and investment gateways with crucial spin-off and catalytic economic impacts responsive to emerging market opportunities.

Consultation is key

Consultation is crucial on both sides. While comprehensive consensus may not be feasible across all public and private actions because of different priority, resource, and constituency constraints, working cooperatively to determine acceptable timelines and tradeoffs is the way of the world.

Tensions in some jurisdictions are worse than others depending on the interplay of the nature and scale of airport operations, ownership and governance structures, the legislative

framework through which coordination can be affected, and the development history of the airport and environs.

Numerous stories about long approval delays for airport projects, failures to upgrade public transit access to the airport, and ad hoc development of the airport periphery all indicate that existing planning arrangements for many airport regions are in need of overhaul.

A more synoptic and integrated approach is necessary. As John Kasarda writes in *Global Airport Cities* (2010) 'most current airport area planning approaches ... tend to be politically localised, functionally fragmented, and often conflicted'.

Recent academic research has explored the idea of focusing on actors rather than places, replacing traditional land use plans with more dynamic and adaptive regional economic strategies, commissioning of sub-regional structure plans, and generally seeking better collaborative pathways to sustainable development.

There are no singular models to follow.

John Kasarda's aerotropolis concept certainly conveys the importance of visioning the role and function of airports within a broader urban setting.

Suggesting inspiration from gigantic hub airport regions like the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex, the model places the airport as the primary growth pole but highlights the spin-off development generated and the need for a more sustainable approach in dealing with the interdependence of airport and region.

Influenced by the Amsterdam Schiphol situation, Maurits Schaafsma in *Airport and City* (2008) puts forward the alternative idea of the corridor between centre city and airport as the logical linear zone for consolidating infrastructure provision and urban regeneration initiatives.

Two things are apparent whichever spatial model is chosen. First, the airport city notion is only a partial answer and must be framed within a broader understanding of regional governance.

Second, striving for optimal structures will be a long-term and indeed ongoing challenge. As John Kasarda writes, it will take many decades of 'future planning and coordinated stakeholder efforts' to effect greater alignment of airport and surrounding area planning.

The Australian experience

Australian airport regions have been spaces of conflict in recent years but better collaborative planning arrangements are being established to try and resolve differences.

A 2007 national parliamentary inquiry saw a variety of concerns expressed:

- Large-scale commercial developments taking place outside normal planning controls
- Documentation requirements less than for conventional development applications
- Lack of developer contributions for off-airport infrastructure upgrades
- The highly flexible and use-inclusive nature of generalised airport master plans
- Poor community and government consultation
- Role of airports as both proponents and approval authorities for some development
- Lack of independent reviews or third party appeals
- A 'light-handed' regulatory approach by the federal government
- Lack of urban planning expertise at the Commonwealth level.

The context for sentiments such as these when expressed by local councils, state governments and community interests is the privatisation program of major Australian airports from 1996.

This has been an outstanding success in delivering economic and social benefits through a shifting of the economic burden of airport funding from the public to the private sector.

Tourism and Transport Forum Australia in its report *Assessing the Impact of Airport Privatisation* (2007) reported major gains in operational efficiency, profitability and investment levels. It argued that Australia led the world in the creation of 'air cities' as 'economic jet engines' for the national and regional economies.

The concerns shadowing this success emanate from two sources. First, there is the separate federal planning system enacted under the *Airports Act* to deal with both strategic and development approvals planning outside of the existing planning systems which in Australia are generally organised at state and local government levels.

Second, conspicuous new non-aeronautical development such as office buildings and retail centres have been seen by critics as competing unfairly with commercial developments off the airport platform and disturbing the strategic priorities of planning authorities.

Along with many other issues impacting on the uncertainty of the aviation environment from global warming to global terrorism, these planning matters were taken up by the Australian Government in its National Aviation Policy Review, conducted in 2008 and 2009.

Recommendations with reference to planning and infrastructure made in the final report *Flight to the Future* (December 2009) were predicated on a 'balanced' philosophy of future airport policy. A raft of initiatives was announced, including:

- planning coordination forums involving state, local and federal government representatives for major capital city airports
- community consultation committees for all airports
- strengthening the airport master plan process, through providing more transparency and detail in master plans, and folding in transport impact studies and environmental strategies
- broadening the 'triggers' for major development plans to include projects deemed to have a 'significant community impact'
- identification of non-compatible land uses which should be prohibited or restricted on airports
- conscription of expert advisors to assist government appraisal of land use planning and integration issues
- closer scrutiny of non-aeronautical development, with requirements for more detailed precinct plans identifying and mitigating any impacts on and off-airport
- a national framework to safeguard airports from inappropriate and encroaching development around airport sites, and
- better managing impact of aircraft noise on local communities through a multiple stakeholder approach with better noise data.

A signpost for the future

The reforms have been welcomed by most stakeholders, although for airport operators they introduce yet more uncertainty into their decision making environment, on top of larger challenges faced over the past two years, notably the global financial crisis and its brake on both aeronautical and non-aeronautical development.

Recent political instability in Australian national politics has disturbed the smooth implementation of these initiatives through a combination of legislative amendment and new guidelines. However all indications are that a strong cross-party neo-liberal political consensus on airport policy remains intact.

The major drift is to recognise, as the Australian Mayoral Aviation Council stated in a submission to the Review, that **'no airport exists only within the boundary fence'** (possible pull quote) and that planning processes need to better coordinate conflicting objectives of airports and surrounding communities.

Although recent debate and pathways to airport planning reform in Australia are a response to a specific national governance regime, they nonetheless respond to problems that have surfaced in many airport regions worldwide. They signpost the kind of strategies which might be explored in different settings.

About the Authors

Rob Freestone is Professor of Planning and Urban Development in the Faculty of the Built Environment, University of New South Wales and Doug Baker is Professor of Planning in the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering at the Queensland University of Technology. This paper draws on research reported in the Journal of Air Transport Management (September 2010) and is supported by the Australian Research Council Linkage Grant project 'The Airport Metropolis' project (LP0775225).

**Urban planning consequences of airport privatization:
The recent Australian experience**

Robert Freestone

Faculty of the Built Environment

University of New South Wales

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ABSTRACT

The privatization of world airports is an established global trend. The implications of such ownership transfers have been assessed from various standpoints, most obviously operational and economic efficiency. This paper explores the urban planning implications of privatization. It focuses on the experience of Australia's major capital city, secondary and regional airports privatized by the federal *Airports Act* from 1996. The burden of aviation infrastructure investment was lifted from the state and evidence of improvements in efficiency, revenue growth, profitability, and value-adding investment are evident. Privatization saw the institution of a new planning approvals regime which mandates various requirements for preparation of master plans, major development plans, and environmental strategies. While these reforms have introduced more demanding reporting standards for airports, they remain part of an approvals regime still tightly controlled by the national government and thus separate from normal state and local government planning requirements. This has created significant tensions particularly as airports have undertaken major non-aeronautical commercial development. This paper will investigate these issues and draws from submissions made to the Australian Government's National Aviation Policy Review in 2008-09. The controversies highlight the broader community planning repercussions of privatization and help to explain the adjustments to the national planning model for Australian airports being introduced from 2010. How these reforms will actually improve the planning of airports – the most fractious and controversial of all urban facilities – remains to be seen.

KEYWORDS

Privatization, urban planning, Australian airports

1. Introduction

Commercialisation through profit-seeking opportunities, globalisation of airport investment and management, and privatization of ownership and management platforms are intertwined processes in the recent history of airports (Graham, 2003). As Doganis (1992, 5, 28) has noted, the close ties between governments and airports have been 'progressively loosened' in Europe and elsewhere and 'privatization may be the ultimate step in setting airports free'. The advantages and disadvantages of privatization continued to be debated, usually across a raft of economic, political and social concerns (Kapur, 1995). Less well covered in this burgeoning literature are the implications for urban planning arrangements and how these have, or have not, been significantly impacted if not improved by or through the privatization process. This is a crucial dimension because planning mediates the multiple relationships between airports and surrounding territories at a variety of scales.

This paper examines the urban planning aspects of privatization with reference to the recent Australian experience where a federal government-driven program involving privatization of 23 major capital city, regional and general aviation airports was accompanied from the late 1990s by a significant reconfiguration of urban planning arrangements. Closer integration of urban and airport planning systems has been sought for many decades in diverse jurisdictions. The Australian case shows that while privatization introduced a more rigorous development and environmental approvals regime for airports, it also exacerbated relations between all levels of government on planning matters. Despite the revolution in airport ownership and management, the federal government did not relinquish ultimate responsibility for planning and environmental approvals. Hence, over a critical period of airport governance marked by a transition to more entrepreneurial behaviour in tune with the airport city business model (Jarach, 2001; Kasarda, 2009), the course of airport development has had little oversight by conventional state and local planning agencies.

The paper has five main sections. The first explores privatization as a politically contested process and an apparent lack of correlation with changed planning arrangements. The second briefly contextualizes the privatization of airports in Australia. The third summarises the evolution of planning arrangements for federally owned and leased airports in Australia. The fourth identifies the planning controversies which have accompanied the privatization of Australian airports, drawing on a content analysis of submissions to the Australian Government's National Aviation Review in 2008-09. The fifth section considers some recent recommendations for planning reform arising from this Review. The approach in this paper acknowledges the growth of interest in airports as important socio-spatial phenomena in the urban environment. While recent research has stressed airports as essentially self-contained spaces, here the concern is with their liminal properties (Salter, 2008). It draws on the paradigm of 'interfaces' to situate airports at the intersection of broader economic, infrastructure, land use, and governance sectors (Stevens, Baker and Freestone, 2010). The major focus is on the imperfect fit between airport and broader spatial planning.

2. Airport privatization and planning

Airport privatization is an international trend driven by national governments (Frost and Sullivan, 2006). The pace has been uneven both temporally and spatially, with a variety of models being adopted, including:

- Public (national, regional or local, or coalition) ownership in the form of a government trading enterprise or long term management arrangement
- Mixed public and private ownership (with public or private majorities)
- Private ownership

Until the late 1980s, most airports were owned by central or local government. The radical 1986 British Airports Act privatised the airports of the British Airports Authority (BAA) and began the transformation of municipal airports into commercial enterprises. The British lead, an iconic initiative of Thatcherist neo-liberalism, has been subsequently paralleled in more than 20 countries accompanied by a significant liberalization of the airline industry. Only the Middle East and the United States remain circumspect, the latter with a devolved governance model which already tacitly inculcates market sensitivity through the power of private interests, especially airlines (de Neufville, 1999). There is a growing case book of studies of different national responses (Costas-Centivany, 1999; Galeana, 2008; Hooper, 2002; Lipovich, 2008; Lyon and Francis, 2006; Yang, Tok and Su, 2008).

Privatization advocates claim a range of gains in greater efficiency, cost savings, competitiveness, infrastructure investment, and financing capacity (Oum, Adler and Yu, 2006). The introduction of new management regimes has underpinned a more entrepreneurial, marketing-based and consumer-oriented approach. The bottom line is that privatization 'is all about growth and profitability' (von Dörnberg, 2009, 47). Transfers of ownership still remain controversial. In some countries this remains a politically sensitive issue for what are regarded as national or regional assets; private interests are seen to be privileged over the public stakehold (Graham, 2001). Writing of the Spanish experience, Costas-Centivany (1999, 221) notes that opponents of privatization highlight the risk of 'monopolies, loss of service, reduced flexibility and inequity among users' with lack of safeguards for consumers and employees. A broader issue is the contention that competition rather than ownership is the key to efficiency (Veijanovski, 1987).

Privatization has been successful in certain aims. Humphreys (1999) account of British trends picks up some recurring strands in recording the transformation of loss-making entities into financially self-sufficient, autonomous profit-making businesses. Different criticisms have surfaced in different national settings and include a lack of transparency and accountability in decision making, diversification away from traditional aeronautical uses (Yang, Tok and Su, 2008), and evidence of higher charges underlying increases in profitability (Gaeleana, 2008). There have been claims that the safety regulatory system has become less rigorous (De Bruijne, Kuit and Heuvelhof, 2006).

The urban planning impacts of privatization have played out in different ways, although the independent influence of ownership is not always easily disentangled from the complex spatial and economic impacts which all large airports engender as dynamic 'metastable' forms (Fuller and Harley, 2004). Gerber (2002, 30) argues that the initial privatization of European airports represented an overall withdrawal by the state from 'active regulatory participation'. Where there has been a retreat from direct engagement with government administration, the links with planning regimes have inevitably weakened. Some national authorities have nonetheless twinned privatization with broader governance reform and put in place new regulatory provisions. These have stemmed partly from governments concerned about abuse of monopoly powers and there is a variety of frameworks for managing the pricing behavior of privatized airports. These requirements have spilled over into the planning and development arena when new owners have been obliged to comply with pollution management and environmental reporting (Zakrewski and Juchau, 2006). New regimes for privately owned airports have posed challenges for governments in shifting from owner-operator to landlord-regulator roles. They have had to mediate the grey area between promoting efficiency and policing environmental policy aspirations (Forsyth, 2007) and privatized airports have had to address the same tensions (Humphreys, 1999).

In urban development terms, usually a sub-national planning scale, problems of noise, congestion and incompatible development have continued or been exacerbated. In the majority of cases, new ownership and management regimes (even those requiring more robust internal planning procedures) have had to be accommodated within existing planning systems. As a result, negotiating the interface with wider territorial planning controls and policies has remained problematic (Humphreys, 1999). Airport managers have been left with the problem of securing planning consents and establishing working relationships with the relevant planning authorities. Raghunandan (2009) is critical of recent Indian experience across the board, describing 'a total disconnect' between airports and off-airport issues of connectivity, urban planning and infrastructure.

In western democracies, large scale airport developments invariably pose almost intractable problems for the planning system in reconciling community and national interests. The privatization of British airports has not been matched by efficiencies in their dealings with the planning system. The celebrated case is the saga of the new British Airways terminal five at Heathrow. The planning application lodged by BAA early in 1993 became the subject of a public inquiry which ran for nearly four years and cost the applicant over £64 million (UK Competition Commission, 2008). The initial application eventually required 37 separate applications across at least seven different pieces of legislation (Eddington, 2006). Partly in response to this problem, the UK Government in 2009 belatedly established an Infrastructure Planning Commission as an independent body to determine applications for nationally significant infrastructure projects.

3. The Australian case

Australia was the third country in the world to privatise its major airports. The process carried out between 1997 and 2003 still represents one of the largest and most lucrative transfers of ownership within the global aviation sector. The federal government raised over \$8 billion through the sale of long-term leases for 50 years with an option of renewal for another 49 years for 23 airports. About half of this revenue came from the sale of one airport alone: Sydney, the major international gateway to Australia. Hoxton Park, one of the smaller airports in the Sydney Basin, has since closed and will be comprehensively redeveloped as a commercial and industrial precinct, leaving just 22 airports within the federal network. Although only a fraction of the total number of airports in Australia, they collectively account for the lion's share of passenger and freight throughput.

The Federal Government's privatization program has been documented (Forsyth, 2002; Hooper, Cain and White, 2000). It was driven by several factors (TTF, 2007, 8), including:

- Desire to increase economic efficiency in the provision of aviation services, including investment and pricing reforms and removal of cross-subsidies among airports;
- Desire to improve managerial efficiency and flexibility at Australia's airports to reduce costs and increase global competitiveness of the Australian aviation industry and its users.
- Desire to avoid the large capital investments required by airports and make resources available for other public programs;
- Understanding that the private financial market was capable of funding major transport and infrastructure investments and had the appetite for that investment; and
- Removal of disincentives to the deployment of new technology and working practices in airport management and operation.

This program needs to be set against a broader program of sales and disinvestment in public assets affecting many other sectors of the Australian economy including telecommunications and banking. It has been driven by neo-liberalist ideologies unifying both major sides of politics that aim at privileging the role of market mechanisms in service provision. The impacts of this global turn have been carefully scrutinized (Harvey, 2006) with planning critics like Sclar (2000) lamenting the rise of the market economy as 'master rather than servant'. Australian critics of privatization include Walker and Walker (2006) who identify the potential for massive redistributive wealth transfers, conferring of privileged market information on insiders, net loss of employment, creation of new private oligopolies, and erosion of institutional arrangements for public sector accountability. Unease at the spatial impacts of neo-liberalism has been a theme of recent urban studies research (O'Neill, 2010).

In economic terms, the airport privatization process in Australia is generally lauded. A major review on behalf of the peak industry group Tourism and Transport Forum in 2007 concluded that the privatization objectives of the federal government had been achieved overall. An analysis of the performance of eight airports across a range of economic indicators (operational efficiency, profitability, investment levels, traffic

diversity and ‘systems resilience’) declared the program a major success (TTF, 2007). Privatised airports were depicted as economic ‘jet engines’ whose collective and cumulative contributions to GDP were making them a key sector in the national economy. Since 1997, over \$2 billion has been invested at leased federal airports with commitments for a further \$4 billion in the near future from the seven largest airports (Australian Government, 2009). This impressive commitment contrasts starkly with lagging investments in public infrastructure (Atkinson et al., 2007). Since 2002 the privatization process has moved hand in hand with a ‘light handed’ regulatory regime intended to monitor pricing policies to mitigate any abuse of market power, especially in relation to commercial agreements with airlines. Schuster (2009, 121) argues that this approach has ‘facilitated market outcomes with strengthened commercial relationships between airports and their airline customers, which in turn have delivered enhanced investment, increased responsiveness and value for money for airport users’. Other studies point to improved overall efficiency (Abbott and Wu, 2002; Assaf, 2010). Zakrzewski and Juchan (2006) acknowledge an increase in the volume of corporate social reporting and sustainability initiatives through annual reports and other documentation.

At the same time, airport privatization in Australia has not been without critics. King and Pitchford (1998) are critical of a process which represented the systematic disassembly of an integrated network of assets that might have best been conserved. Smaller companies with leases on federal airports have complained loudly about exorbitant rent increases and legal action has been launched in some cases to honour leases inherited from earlier administrative regimes. The popular press routinely carries stories of price gouging by some airports for the high cost of car parking and terminal food. The Federal Government’s most recent price monitoring report provides some validation for these criticisms (ACCC, 2010). Sydney Airport is singled out for increased profits while its service quality levels have fallen ‘below that which could be expected in a competitive environment’. The report also documented car parking charge increases at all airports in 2008-09 consistent with ‘an element of monopoly rent’ whereby airports can control landside access and the conditions for alternatives to on-airport parking. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has officially expressed its concern to the federal government at the high fees and service charges imposed at Australian airports (Easdown, 2010). State and local governments have also had concerns that despite privatization, it is federal law which still prevails on the airport platform meaning that their policies and regulations have no purchase. This is important from a planning standpoint, as elaborated below. One continuing problem for contiguous local authorities has been that federal status absolves the airports from local taxes under the Australian Constitution of 1901. While this has been addressed by negotiating *in lieu* payments, for many councils there has been a ‘bitter struggle’ to secure an adequate compensatory revenue stream (Hoenig, 2009).

A comprehensive evaluation of privatization is hampered by the complexity of the airport business. In the first of a series of state ‘report cards’, Engineers Australia (2010, 47) gives the recent performance of airports in the state of Victoria a ‘B’ rating. This recognises considerable improvement in quality of infrastructure on the one hand but an ‘unsatisfactory’ level of integration between commercial developments on and off the

airport. Zakrzweski (2008) has constructed a complex matrix of stakeholder interests all concerned with different key performance attributes: airlines (for example: baggage handling, terminal design, charges); passengers (cleanliness, retailing choice); regulators (air traffic growth); environmental interests (corporate social responsibility); and the community (traffic congestion, employment). She concludes that corporate shareholders and airport operators are the stakeholders who have benefitted most. A complementary evaluation of urban planning aspects of privatization expands on a variety of community concerns (Freestone, Williams, and Bowden, 2006). These are further explored below in the context of the evolving urban planning regime.

4. Evolution of planning controls for Australian federal airports

The principal enabling federal legislation for privatization, the *Airports Act* of 1996, introduced progressive new planning requirements which represented a notable improvement on the situation to that time. Some broad brush historical context enables an appreciation of this point. Leading up to the privatization program, three distinct phases of governance can be identified: the protracted ‘Departmental’ era from the 1920s to the mid 1980s; an overlapping ‘Devolution’ era from the late 1950s to the mid 1990s; and a transitional ‘Commission’ phase from 1986 to 1997.

The ‘Departmental’ era saw responsibility for Australia’s airports vested initially in the Civil Aviation Branch of the Department of Defence when aviation became a formal federal government function following passage of the *Air Navigation Act* 1920 (Meyer, nd). Air navigation and safety remain a federal function with land use planning implications in relation to noise attenuation and preventing obstacles for safe landings and take-offs. The initial legislation involved the licensing of aerodromes. Responsibility later transferred to a separate Department of Civil Aviation (1938), then Department of Aviation (1982) and Department of Transport and Communication (1987). By 1927 there were 45 Commonwealth aerodromes, 12 private licensed aerodromes, 2 private fields and 91 emergency landing grounds in the country. Slowly and steadily the federal government assumed control of hundreds of airports nationwide as aviation was recognised as a national responsibility.

Even into world war two, Australia’s major metropolitan airports were a mix of grassed fields and lightly gravelled runways, often in then-fringe locations. Through much of the ‘Departmental’ era, no formal urban planning legislation at any level of government was in place. Even when states took on this task starting in the mid-1940s, airports were quarantined from anything other than federal law under the Australian Constitution. Hence, their ‘island’ status was confirmed early on. Airports were run bureaucratically as branches of a big government department. While there was consultation with state governments over development plans and infrastructure provision and connections, the federal government could act autonomously. Moreover, until the 1970s no environmental legislation had been enacted. The greatest but still selective transparency into decision-making was through proposals referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Public Works, one of the oldest investigative committees of the

Australian Parliament. There was a total of 46 inquiries between 1930 and 1986 into new airports, airport buildings, expansions and related issues.

The 'Devolution' era saw a drastic reduction in the number of airports actually owned and operated by the federal government, even while aviation regulation remained in the federal sphere. This policy was forced by the rising and unsustainable financial burden of having to develop, maintain and operate all of the nation's 634 aerodromes. The Local Ownership Plan introduced in 1957 saw local authorities offered ownership of local aerodromes where these were considered to serve local rather than national interests. Transferral thus meant that most airports gradually came under the jurisdiction of a combination of state planning controls and local area environmental/development plans. By 1963 some 144 aerodromes were locally owned and operated. Twenty years on, the federal government had divested itself of the majority of Australian airports. A total of 23 remaining airports, including all the major capital city gateways, were transferred to a new body, the Federal Airports Corporation (FAC) in 1988-89.

The FAC decade from the late 1980s saw a shift from departmental organisation to a commercial enterprise framework and was a prelude to privatization (Eames, 1998). The primary functions of the *Federal Airports Corporation Act 1986* were to enhance the efficiency of airport operations, encourage innovative and commercial use of airport terminals and property, and reduce the overall cost of the aviation system to the industry and the taxpayer. The idea for a separate airports authority had its origins in the precedent of the British Airports Authority. As a government business enterprise, the FAC had no explicit environmental remit, although the intention was for each airport to be 'a good neighbour to the communities it serves' (Senate, 1989, 15). This meant at least a putative commitment to 'environs planning' (Kiel, 1991) which acknowledged the need for airport operator and town planner to 'work in harmony to achieve the best possible balance between airport utilization and legitimate community expectations - between the economy and the environment' (FAC, 1993, 3).

The mechanisms of the 'Commission' era were an advance on the earlier periods but still lacked comprehensive integration with state and local planning systems. The main legislation was the *Commonwealth Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974*. Under this Act environmental assessments were undertaken in-house through consultants or referred to the Department of the Environment (DASETT) if considered significant enough to trigger a formal environmental impact statement (EIS) although Ministerial waivers could fast track development in the interests of the aviation sector. Master plans and their public exhibition were considered desirable (FAC, 1993) but there was no statutory imperative to prepare such plans. Although the FAC encouraged them, by 1989 only half the federal airports had them in place (Senate, 1989). The first ever master plan for Sydney Airport was not prepared until the early 1990s. Despite enhanced environmental assessment requirements, the urban planning regime did not fundamentally change. The Sydney-based FAC continued a centralised property and development function and the airports remained largely 'black holes' outside the normal ambit of state and local planning controls.

Privatization introduced a new approvals regime for federal airports. The *Airports Act* has been amended several times since 1996 but its basic provisions remain (Table 1). Key requirements of the planning approvals process are preparation of master plans for twenty-year planning horizons every five years and major development plans for any proposed work costing more than \$20 million (increased from \$10m in 2007). Formal public exhibition requirements are stipulated. Both master plans and major development plans must now address ‘consistency’ (or lack of) with local and state planning schemes, a provision that does inject some acknowledgment of the external planning environment. Development and master plan approval following public exhibition of draft documents rests with the Federal Government, specifically the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. Parallel processes have been put in place for the drafting of airport environmental strategies also updatable for five year planning horizons. These also require the concurrence and ongoing scrutiny of a separate Minister administering the federal *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act* 1999. Independently-appointed airport building officers and environmental officers oversee day-to-day activities.

In all respects, these new planning requirements are a significant advance on the evaluation and approval framework provided for under the FAC and earlier. For the airport operators, at least, it is far more demanding, more inherently consultative, and at times administratively burdensome particularly because of the additional demands of the EPBC Act. Airports have concerns at how timelines for planning approval can be extended by various ‘stop the clock’ mechanisms unpredictably calling for further information. The smaller, general aviation airports also face exactly the same compliance regime as the better-resourced international airports. Notwithstanding the increased environmental reporting and accountability set in place, there has been disquiet for some years that the governance regime under the auspices of the federal government alone is still not effectively integrated into state and local decision making machinery. This is explored further in the next section.

5. The impacts of privatization on airport development

The privatization era has been marked by a dramatic increase in the demand for air services, with the total number of passenger movements through all Australian airports more than doubling between 1992 and 2006. Airports have committed not only millions of dollars on new airside infrastructure but have aimed at maximising returns from commercial development to minimise the uncertainty of dependence on aeronautical revenues. The prospect of market opportunities from property development and commercial initiatives was a key factor in the high prices secured for airport leases from the late 1990s (Freestone, Williams and Bowden, 2006). New owners had clear early intentions of capitalising on prime development land. The capping of aeronautical charges when airports were privatised was an inevitable catalyst for exploring other revenue streams such as property development (West, 1999). This has become a critical part of airport business plans via a variety of implementation models (Reiss, 2007).

The turn to the commodification of airport land has played out differently around the nation's airports depending on a varied mix of land and locational opportunities (Freestone and Baker, 2010). Brisbane Airport led the way for the major capital city airports. The mission was to turn 'a regional city airport into a truly global airport city' (Rooijmans, 2003, 44). Its Number 1 Airport Drive development was the first mixed-use airport concept of its type in Australia. It opened following an unsuccessful Federal Court action in 2003-05 by the major retailer Westfield Corporation, a favourable outcome for the development intentions of other federal airports around the country. Many of the landmark projects which ensued have attracted political controversy. In Canberra, between 1998 and 2008, the number of airport businesses increased from 70 to 180 transforming the airport into a major office and retail zone competing with established centres. At Adelaide Airport, a flagship Ikea store was sited directly at the main airport main entrance. In Perth, a brickworks continues to attract criticism because of heavy truck movements, contested land clearance, and perceived drops in ambient air quality. A Direct Factory Outlet at Essendon Airport has been criticised for inadequate vehicle, pedestrian and public transport access. A proposal to develop a similar facility at Hobart Airport sparked ongoing political controversy because of its assessed negative impacts on the established retail hierarchy (Stratford and Wells, 2009).

These development trends have thrown up a variety of planning challenges and problems which have been aired extensively through the popular media, inter-governmental dealings, and various public forums. Submissions to a 2007 Senate Standing Committee inquiry into the Airports Amendment Bill articulated an inventory of broader community concerns with the approval mechanisms for airport development under federal control and their disjuncture with wider state and local processes. Local authorities and business groups in particular highlighted issues including (Australian Government, 2007):

- Large-scale commercial developments taking place outside normal planning controls
- Documentation requirements less than for conventional development applications
- Lack of developer contributions for off-airport infrastructure upgrades
- Highly flexible and use-inclusive nature of generalised airport master plans
- Poor community and government consultation
- Role of airports as both proponents and approval authorities for some development
- Lack of independent reviews or third party appeals
- The 'light-handed' regulatory approach by the federal government favouring governments
- Lack of urban planning expertise at the Commonwealth level.

The Australian Government's National Aviation Policy Review conducted in 2008-09 captured these and more concerns against the backdrop of a wide raft of issues including security, safety, industry training, air traffic management, consumer protection and climate change. The Review progressed from an initial Issues Paper (April 2008) through a Green Paper canvassing possibilities for change (December 2008) to a White Paper announcing preferred policy reforms (December 2009). Submissions to the Green Paper were analysed for their treatment of planning issues, with details of the content

analysis methodology reported elsewhere (James and Freestone, 2009). A total of 210 submissions were made publicly available by the closing date of February 2009. Of these, 181 (86%) raised ‘airport infrastructure’ concerns. The planning content raised in these submissions can be categorised into 16 specific topics. Table 2 identifies and defines the issues identified in order of importance.

The weighting given to these various issues differed according to who made the submission. Figure 2 shows the proportional contribution of business, community, government and other sectors across the 16 airport-related issues. Community submissions concentrated on amenity and noise impacts; government issues on governance; and business representations on pricing and development prospects. The spread confirms the complexity of airport planning because of a multiplicity of stakeholder interests (Zakrzweski, 2008).

6. Recommended planning reforms

The Australian Government has pledged a ‘balanced’ philosophy for future aviation policy in relation to airport planning and development, The Green Paper foreshadowed a variety of reforms (Australian Government, 2008), including :

- better coordinative mechanisms for airport planning and community consultation
- strengthening the Master Plan process, through providing more transparency and detail in master plans, and folding in transport impact studies and airport environmental strategies
- revising the triggers for Major Development Plans, by replacing the current single \$20m threshold with a range of other “triggers” for smaller projects which might nonetheless of significant community interest
- identification of non-compatible land uses which should be prohibited or restricted on airports
- closer scrutiny of non-aeronautical development, with requirements for more detailed precinct plans identifying and mitigating impacts on and off-airport
- a national framework to safeguard airports from inappropriate and encroaching development around airport sites
- better managing impact of aircraft noise on local communities, through a multiple stakeholder approach and drawing from better noise data.

These aspirations have been substantially carried through into the White Paper recommendations, which are summarised in Table 3. They represent a cautious and pragmatic response which inevitably seeks a middle ground between stakeholder interests (Hoenig, 2009). However, the foreshadowing of greater advisory and consultative requirements, and increased scrutiny of non-aeronautical development, demonstrates the impact of submissions and lobbying by local councils, state governments, and community interests. Despite the greater complexity and probably uncertainty for the approvals pipeline, the federal government retains unequivocally ultimate decision making powers. This position affirms the government’s political commitment to a level playing field for market-driven airport developments dispersed across so many different local-state federal

government settings in addition to acknowledging the development aspirations for them locked in when the airports were first leased.

The Government acted on some of the issues flagged in the Green Paper even before the White Paper was released in late 2009. For example, a discussion document on a more coordinated approach to ‘safeguarding’ airports from inappropriate development around airports and under flight paths as well as defining public safety zones and developing other strategies to address airport related issues such as aircraft noise was released in June 2009 with submissions factored into the Aviation White Paper. Also, prompted by reports of a possible Islamic school at Bankstown Airport in Sydney, in September 2009 a new regulation was appended to the *Airports Act* to ‘specify’ several actions as ‘major airport development’ automatically triggering ministerial scrutiny, namely building or extending a residential dwelling; community care facilities; pre-schools; primary, secondary or tertiary educational institutions (not including aviation education); hospitals; and child care facilities (other than for airport employees).

The White Paper has more than 100 individual recommendations and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, and Local Government is now developing a systematic approach towards implementation. Amendments to the *Airports Act* will be required. Many proposals lack detail (Table 3) such as procedures for the establishment, membership and work of planning coordination panels and community consultation groups as well as the definition of ‘significant community impact’ as a new trigger for preparation of major development plans. The overall response to the planning recommendations of the White Paper has been muted. Media reaction nationally when the document was released was dominated by other issues such as relaxation of airport security arrangements and removal of restrictions to additional foreign investment ownership of the national carrier QANTAS. Some community interests felt that the promised reforms do not go far enough. Reflecting this mood, a private members bill was submitted to the Federal Parliament in March 2010 calling for an airport development ombudsman as ‘an independent authority with the power to investigate residents’ concerns fairly and impartially’ (Hansard, 2010). Industry reaction has been guarded. In some quarters the White Paper has been characterized as a non event (Freestone, 2010). The Australian Airports Association surveys a different institutional landscape to that in the 1990s when the airports were first privatized (McArdle, 2010). It recognizes the need for airports to develop better and ongoing relationships with a larger range of stakeholders, e.g. local government, state planning ministers, other state entities like tourism and why this will be crucial in developing a national land use regime affording protection from encroachment and over-development. At the same time, it remains concerned at the hostility to airports at the local government level, the weight attached to ‘squeaky wheels’ for political reasons, and the need for policy sensitivity to the diversity of airports. All await ‘the devil in the detail’ and especially just what recommendations will be developed legislatively through regulatory requirements versus those that will be the subject of guidelines and more discretionary policy protocols.

7. Conclusion

Important planning issues are confronted as the ownership and management of airports shifts from public to corporate control. The preliminary contextual survey undertaken for this paper suggests that the variety of governance models has been matched by a diversity of planning arrangements. In some jurisdictions these have been strengthened on-airport; in other instances, they may have been liberalized to accommodate the freer reign of market forces. In neither case is there much evidence of a substantial improvement in how airports and surrounding territories negotiate the planning divide lying between them.

While it is true that the close ties between governments and airports are progressively loosening, the actual experience of privatization has thrown up a variety of problematic governance issues which still entwine stakeholders in various and complex ways. If anything, and contrary to the ideological imperative of neo-liberalism, as the state responds to these new challenges and contradictions, planning regimes become ever more complex. This is one reason why we see increasing calls for more effective governance of airport regions (Schaafsma, Amkreutz, and Guller, 2008).

The Australian experience of airport privatization has been to strengthen the planning and environmental regime since 1996. Through the same period, airports have attracted an increasing level of community concern and anxiety not only because of the traditional concerns of noise and safety but because of their transformation into world-leading commercial 'air cities' (TTF, 2007). The paradox exemplifies the conundrum of airports as a 'complicated mix of positive and negative externalities' (Short, 2004, 71). Their broader contribution to economic development is counterbalanced by their negative impacts at the local level. Climate change and aviation security add to the negative headlines. The distinctiveness of the Australian case in world terms is arguably the way in which the development of major airports is controlled by a planning system separate to that of almost all other land uses. The reasons for this, as we have seen, are largely historic and go back to the federal government's original involvement in aviation in the 1920s for defence and nation building purposes. The outcome of the recent National Aviation Policy Review is not to fundamentally challenge that situation while at the same time other political stakeholders have to be accommodated. The inevitable prognosis is an increased complexity of airport management and development involving more layers of government regulation when the very model of privatization was to simplify governance. But will the planning get any better?

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Table 1

Overview of the planning framework for federal airports

Process	Purpose	Decision Maker	Public Consultation	Assessment Timeframe
Master Plans	20 year strategic vision for the airport site, including future land uses, types of permitted development, and noise and environmental impacts.	Commonwealth Minister	60 business days	50 business days
Major Development Plans	Approval for proposed major developments, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > specified developments above \$20 million; > significant new terminal capacity and other aeronautical developments; > certain road and rail developments; and > developments with significant environmental impact. 	Commonwealth Minister	60 business days	50 business days
Development Applications	Approval for buildings, activities, construction of works and demolitions with regard to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > building code requirements; and > conformity with the Master Plan and Major Development Plan, if required. 	Airport Building Controller (contractor appointed by the Commonwealth with the consent of the Airport Lessee Company)	None required	28 calendar days

Source: Australian Government (2009)

Table 2

Categorisation of airport planning issues raised in submissions to the Australian Government's Green paper on Aviation Policy, ranked ordered by the number of substantive mentions in submissions (in parentheses).

Categorisation of airport planning issues raised in submissions to the Australian Government's Green paper on Aviation Policy, ranked ordered by the number of substantive mentions in submissions (in parentheses).

- *Regional Airports*: including significance of regional airports to regional development, international access to regional airports, desirability and cost of security measures, and funding programs for regional and remote airports (83).
- *Planning Around Airports*: including risk-based planning of off-airport development to allow for airport operation & growth, public safety zones around airports, planning under flight paths and to manage noise exposure, and general planning of airport regions (but not off-airport infrastructure planning) (70).
- *Airport-Related Noise Mitigation*: including desirability and operation of curfews, noise-insulation programs and industry funding for noise mitigation and compensation (65).
- *Airport Community Consultation*: including desirability of establishing airport community consultation groups, compositions, roles and responsibilities, and procedural matters (64).
- *Government Responsibilities in Airport Planning*: including desirability of Commonwealth control over airport planning, jurisdiction over non-aeronautical development on airport land, inter-governmental coordination for airport-related development and Local Government control of smaller airports (64).
- *Non-Aeronautical Uses at Airports*: including potential impacts on aeronautical uses, desirability or need for non-aeronautical uses, and competition with similar uses outside airports (55).
- *Airport Investment and Growth*: Including impacts on investment from global financial crisis, oil depletion, and proposed regulatory changes, significance of non-aeronautical revenues to investment, desirability of airport investment/growth & alternatives to airport investments (54).
- *Airport-Related Noise Information Tools*: including adequacy of Australian Noise Exposure Forecasts as planning information tools, web-based flight path information tools, the Transport Noise Information Package and providing noise exposure advice to home-buyers (53).
- *Off-Airport Transport and Community Infrastructure*: including extent of airport impacts on surrounding infrastructure, infrastructure funding responsibilities and integrating planning of on- and off-airport infrastructure (53).
- *Airport Master Planning*: including accuracy and transparency of master plans, level of detail in master plans, and desirability of proposed changes to master planning including precinct plans (51).
- *Airport Planning Advisory Panels*: including desirability of establishing panels, composition, roles and responsibilities, and funding (43).
- *Second Sydney Airport and Sydney Airport Capacity*: including desirability of second Sydney airport, alternatives to a second Sydney airport and possible locations (42).
- *General Aviation at Airports*: including significance of and provision for General Aviation (GA) at airports, noise from GA activities, location of GA airports (40).
- *Airport Development Control*: including review of major development plan triggers, call-in power for sensitive developments and prohibition of incompatible uses on airport land (38).
- *Airport Pricing*: including desirability of more extensive price monitoring, price monitoring of airport car parking, and proposed 'show cause' process for pricing misbehaviour (31).
- *Airport-Related Noise and Health Impacts*: including health impacts of aviation noise, studies of health impacts, and use of health risk assessment for airport developments (14).

Source: Freestone and Baker (2010)

Table 3

Major recommendations in relation to current planning requirements

Current requirements	White Paper Proposals
Master Plans	
<p>Reviewed every five years.</p> <p>Map out a 20-year planning cycle, including airport development objectives, an assessment of users' and others' future needs, and intentions for land use.</p> <p>60 business day consultation period.</p> <p>Minimal restrictions on non-aeronautical development.</p>	<p>More detail on proposed land uses in the next five years.</p> <p>A 'planning envelope' for each non-aeronautical precinct, including information on the number of jobs likely to be created and anticipated traffic flows.</p> <p>Ground transport plan that details on-airport transport strategy (including road network details and public transport strategies) and linkages with and implications for the vicinity's transport network.</p> <p>Detail on how the Master Plan aligns with state and local government planning laws and reasons provided for any variances.</p> <p>Airport Environment Strategies to be incorporated.</p>
Major Development Plans	
<p>Must be submitted for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – new runways or runway extensions; – significant new terminal capacity; – any new non-aeronautical building costing over \$20 million; – developments with significant environmental impacts; – aeronautical developments significantly increasing airport capacity and costing over \$20 million. <p>Must be consistent with Master Plan.</p>	<p>New community impact trigger for proposals with significant community, economic or social impacts.</p> <p>Environmental impact trigger retained.</p> <p>No specific trigger for aeronautical developments that do not alter runway configuration.</p> <p>Minister can shorten consultation period where a proposal is within the Master Plan 'envelope' and raises no new material issues.</p> <p>Requirement for consistency with Master Plan retained.</p>
Incompatible Developments	
<p>Requirement for Major Development Plan for specified developments likely to be incompatible with the long-term operation of an airport as an airport.</p>	<p><i>Prima facie</i> prohibition to be placed on developments likely to be incompatible with the long-term operation of an airport such as long-term residential, hospitals, schools, nursing homes, aged and community centres, subject to Ministerial approval in exceptional circumstances.</p>
Community Engagement	
<p>Airports must consult with and have regard to views of planning authorities and the public in preparing Master Plans and Major Development Plans.</p> <p>Draft Master Plans and Major Development Plans must be made available for comment for 60</p>	<p>All federal airports (except Mt Isa and Tennant Creek) to establish Community Consultation Groups according to mandatory minimum requirements, but with flexibility to tailor arrangements.</p>

<p>business days and stakeholders consulted.</p> <p>No public notification requirement for non MDP developments.</p> <p>No requirement to consult outside Major Development Plan and Master Plan processes.</p>	<p>Airports to publish all applications for building approval.</p> <p>General consultation requirements for Master Plans and Major Development Plans retained.</p>
<p>Better Planning Integration</p>	
<p>Airports required to use consistent terminology in plans but not to integrate substance of plans with state/territory or local planning regimes.</p> <p>State/territory and local governments not required to have regard to airports in their planning provisions (except for CASA and Airservices Australia safety requirements in limited circumstances).</p> <p>No national framework for prevention of incompatible off-airport development.</p> <p>No formal mechanism for the Minister to access expert advice on planning integration issues.</p>	<p>Main capital city airports to be required to establish a Planning Coordination Forum for regular strategic dialogue with planning authorities.</p> <p>Minister to have the option of seeking independent expert advice on Master Plan and Major Development Plan matters.</p> <p>Consultation with state/territory and local governments on development of a safeguarding framework to protect airports and the communities around them.</p>

Source: Australian Government (2009)

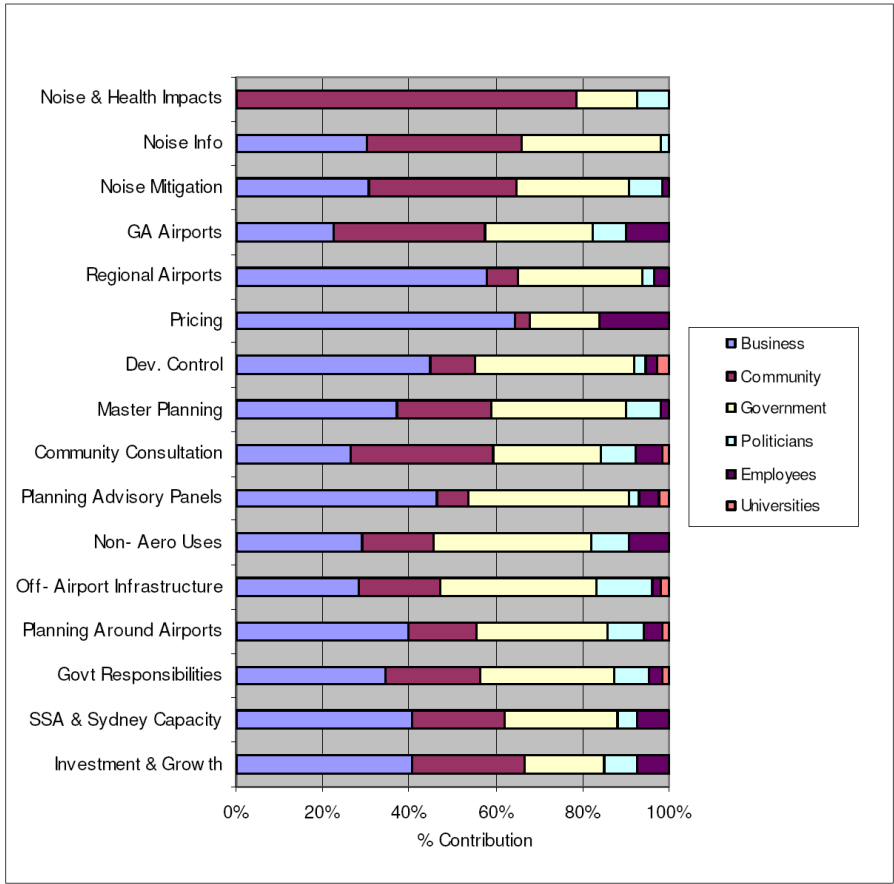


Fig. 1. Airport planning issues raised according to interest group
 Source: James and Freestone (2009)

Listen and Learn

Douglas Baker and Robert Freestone reflect on the importance of good communication between airports and local communities.

The communities located adjacent to and around the Airport City are composed of diverse interests and cultures that often have little to do with the airport and its global service functions. Yet, as most airport managers know, these communities can have a significant impact on airport operations and land use. Community engagement is an essential element to airport planning and management that is often underplayed and given only a token effort. In order for Airport Cities to realize their full potential in global and national markets as well as assume an appropriate level of corporate responsibility there needs to be a strong and enduring connections to local and regional communities.

Through a series of nationally held workshops throughout Australia and internationally, we have reviewed the complex relationship between airports and their surrounding communities. We argue the following engagement elements improve both communication and relationships with local communities and must be actively nurtured, developed and pursued by airport managers: connectivity, collaboration and citizenry.

Connectivity - Linking the Airport City to the City

In the Airport City connectivity is most often characterized as consisting of technological elements such as transport modes and communications networks that serve to link people and places. These are vital but connectivity is considerably more than facilities. Focusing only on the physical elements misses the essential interdependencies between the Airport City and its social context. Connectivity is a human necessity. People rely on personal interactions to build and maintain social bonds, access knowledge and mobilise resources. The Airport City has a role to play in connecting its resources to local surrounding communities.

How does the Airport City connect with the surrounding communities with both hard and social infrastructure? First, as Airport Cities are often linked with the best infrastructure in the city, it is important that this benefit not be quarantined from surrounding communities. Financial and in-kind contributions to provision of infrastructure benefiting both airport and region are vital here, and often little recognised. Second, collaboration with adjacent communities on issues of environmental quality and sustainability, local transportation, and commercial development provide the bases of partnerships that can enhance the quality of life of local residents and the vibrancy of the Airport City.

Ultimately, both hard and soft connectivities which facilitate the multi-faceted connection of citizens to place and opportunity have the potential to deliver

airport benefits beyond the airport itself and more fully integrate communities into economic, cultural and social life.

Collaboration - New Forums for Dialogue and Shared Planning

Often, gaps between regional and local planning regulations and the master planning of airports are significant. In many countries there is very poor integration between airport master planning and surrounding city planning. Airport and urban plans may acknowledge but often ignore each other; and are frequently at odds. Despite very plausible arguments in favour of airport-centred development, already well underway in diverse global settings and forms, the assumptions and ramifications of the economic and functional aspects of this trend are poorly understood.

The consequences of the conflicts and gaps can include inadequate multi-modal interconnections, duplication of roads and rail lines, congestion, inefficient land use, piecemeal and unintegrated investments in infrastructure, diminished competitiveness, and draining legal challenges.

The planning of airport regions is of growing international concern in providing the key to genuinely sustainable development. In the US, models for intergovernmental coordination include mandated coordination, special airport computability planning entities, extra-territorial zoning, joint airport zoning boards and voluntary cooperation. There is even more diversity internationally, with new patterns – and complications - emerging with privatisation. Airport regions lie “in the crossfire of differing ambitions” from numerous players including airport owners and operators, investors and developers, local authorities, infrastructure providers, and regional and national agencies.

Thus, new approaches are required to improve planning between the Airport City and the metropolitan region. The changing role of the Airport City needs to be matched with changing planning approaches for the wider urban regions in which they are embedded – where shared objectives and future visioning can be facilitated. Regular forums that provide opportunities to identify mutual priorities and pathways to facilitate cooperation, coordination and collaboration are essential. Joint planning approaches can transcend the administrative limitations of narrowly-focused master planning. The scale and involvement of planning tools can vary from small neighbourhood partnerships to strategic planning committees and special initiatives onto wider community forums and public-private partnerships.

Citizenry - The Airport as Responsible Societal Stakeholder

Many corporations have extended their role beyond the business function to provide social leadership in areas of community health and sustainable development. Airport Cities are presented with numerous opportunities to support local community initiatives. This often takes the form of traditional philanthropy to diverse causes, charities, and local community and area sporting

groups. Such financial commitments are often expected of large private and quasi-private corporations.

The broader frame of reference for the Airport City is involvement in activities which reinforce mutual benefits deriving from “triple bottom line” sustainability objectives. These can include support for local area skills training which can be especially vital when the Airport City is contiguous to disadvantaged and distressed areas, involvement in educational and research initiatives across the student spectrum, and advancement of environmental awareness and stewardship through monitoring and biodiversity conservation and regeneration projects.

Conclusion

Connectivity, collaboration and citizenry for the Airport City are interrelated dimensions which underpin the evolution of airports towards more complex, sophisticated and responsible urban land uses. Our workshops indicated that many exciting initiatives are already happening around progressive airports. Building bridges into surrounding communities, immersion in collaborative planning activities, and commitments in line with the philosophy of corporate social responsibility are indispensable realities for 21st Century Airport Cities. This engagement is not “business as usual” and requires new ways of thinking and behaving, and the establishment of alternative relational performance measures.

Douglas Baker is Professor in the School of Urban Development, Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, Queensland University of Technology, Queensland, Australia.

Robert Freestone is Professor in the Planning and Urban Development Program, Faculty of Built Environment, University of New South Wales, NSW, Australia.



Comments on the Draft Guidelines for Community Aviation Consultation Groups

**For the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional
Development and Local Government**

Robert Freestone

25 May 2010

COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY AVIATION CONSULTATION GROUPS

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City Future Research Centre
Faculty of the Built Environment
University of New South Wales
Sydney NSW 2052
www.cityfutures.net.au

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**Comments on the Draft Guidelines for Community Aviation
Consultation Group**

CITY FUTURES RESEARCH CENTRE

City Futures is a University Research Centre dedicated to developing a better understanding of our cities, their people, the policies that manage their growth, the issues they face, and the impacts they make on our environment and economy.

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THE AUTHOR

Robert Freestone is Professor of Planning and Urban Development, Faculty of the Built Environment, University of New South Wales. He is a co-Chief Investigator on The Airport Metropolis Research project (ARC LP 0775225).

E-mail: r.freestone@unsw.edu.au

General

The guidelines are a welcome follow-up to one of the key recommendations in the Aviation White Paper released in December 2009. They convey the essence of the White Paper's overview of the formation, roles, composition and procedures for community advisory groups being flexible and adapted to their particular context.

As far as they go, the guidelines read as a realistic translation of the general intent of the Community Aviation Consultation Group (CAVG) recommendations. However, by sticking to a 'hands off' approach leaving the CAVGs to largely chart their own course – albeit backed by the relevant airport – questions can be asked about their sustainable independence and the appropriate role of the Department in supporting this initiative.

The diversity of the airport sector is appropriately recognised, expressing the philosophy that 'one size doesn't fit all'.

However, this desire for flexibility does come at the expense of concrete guidance on certain matters that would better ensure consistent standards of representativeness, independence and accountability across the federal airports.

The concern is that in pursuit of a framework adaptable to varied circumstances, the situation which may evolve is for groups with diverse agendas, no comparability of membership, different reporting standards and styles, and uneven resourcing.

Much will depend on the goodwill of the airports and their commitment to the kind of collaborative governance being foreshadowed here. A little more concrete guidance and support from the Commonwealth seems to be desirable.

The comments below relate to specific parts of the draft guidelines. These relate only to sections which were considered or raise issues and questions of concern or comment.

Selected Comments on the Guidelines

Introduction

Uncertain is the status of consultative forums already in place, and whether these will be disbanded, reconstituted or sit alongside the new, required CAVGs.

For example, what becomes of the Sydney Airport Community Forum? From many reports this seems to be an unrepresentative and at times dysfunctional body. It opened its submission on the 2009 Sydney Airport Draft Master Plan with the comments that this plan “should be ringing alarm bells for a new Sydney Airport. Instead, like its predecessor five years ago, this document invites little more than complacency by virtue of both what it says and what it fails to say”.

Role and purpose of Community Aviation Consultation Groups

The fact that CAVGs will not assume independent decision making or enforcing responsibilities might be explicitly recognised here by an extra bullet point to this effect (top of p. 2).

Terms of reference of the Community Aviation Consultation Group

Should the exact terms of reference be at the discretion of the Community Aviation Consultation Group itself? It might be preferable if these were made more generically applicable, using the list on p. 2, i.e. that the ambit of the issues to be covered would generally include, but not necessarily be limited to these matters. On the list of indicative issues, Major Development Plans should be added.

The concern here is that a CAVG might define its scope too narrowly or find itself unable to discuss key issues through the restricted definition of its role.

The difference from and possible relationship to Planning Coordination Forums might usefully be clarified. CAVG deliberations might be an input to the Forums, just as there might also be an opportunity to comment on outputs. (Separate guidelines for PCFs desirably need to be developed).

Composition and business of the Community Aviation Consultation Group

A simple ‘default’ template for constitution and procedural arrangements should ideally be specified in these guidelines.

Independent Chair

One model is to appoint the chair separately then assemble the group, or have the group itself appoint the chair from its own number – this might be the more democratic approach. An indicative appointment period should be specified in the guidelines; suggested two years. Will the appointment be sanctioned by the Minister or are these procedures purely worked out at the local level? Does independence mean, just not an airport employee?

The tasks of the independent Chair (p. 3) might formally include their reporting roles.

Secretariat

It is not clear where this will be based. The implication is that it will be housed in the relevant airport and be assimilated into general corporate services. It would be desirable if there was a dedicated CAVG secretary or liaison officer appointed to provide continuity, assist with in-between meeting affairs, and give more direct support to the Chair than indicated (on p. 3).

While the Secretariat retains such a close connection to and integration with the airport there will be questions about its independence. Locations for meetings need to be determined - on or off airport?

It's also not clear what level of resourcing is anticipated. If as it seems this is the sole or primary responsibility of the airports, then there needs to be some guarantee that the flow of support will be sufficient and ongoing.

Membership

Although their attendance at all meetings might be problematic, local and state parliamentarians might also be included.

On the size and composition of the CAVGs: more explicit guidelines on the size of these groups needs to be indicated; too small and it is not representative, even for a small airport; too large and it becomes a big discussion forum which may give everyone a say but impede any meaningful consensus or at least sense of direction. Perhaps this guidance could be split by type of airport. As a guide, the 27 members of SACF seems on the very high side. Sponsoring 'town hall' meetings is a way of importing the broader range of opinion on sensitive issues.

Some guidance on the selection and appointment of these members is desirable – a public notice calling for expressions of interest seems most appropriate. But is the airport expected to manage this process totally and make the appointments? It might be useful to convene a small steering committee of airport, local and state government from the start to steer what could be a sensitive process satisfactorily. Smaller airports might justifiably complain that their higher relative costs of supporting a CAVG. A concern is that 'community' can be defined very differently – for large capital city airports it can virtually mean 'metropolitan'. Some clearer guidance on this would be welcome.

Additional comments

These comments and questions relate to what is not said in the draft guidelines regarding important issues of protocol raised in the White Paper.

“a record of the outcomes of key discussions is to be published”

The nature of the record and the location of publication need to be specified in the Guidelines. The location presumably could be a dedicated web page. Would this be linked to the airport web page? Will minutes of meetings be available? It is not clear what confidentiality provisions apply to Group meetings; there should be consistency across the sector on these matters. The White Paper suggests that regular group meetings might not necessarily be opened to the public. Some guidance would be welcome – either they should or shouldn't be; I would suggest that they should not, but that a record of discussion is publicly released.

“a report on the group's work is to be reviewed as part of the annual lease review”

This suggests a kind of annual report, which would be desirable, and should be publicly available.

“the activity is to be funded by airports”

Securing the right balance of both support and independence from airports will require some political finessing and informed corporate social responsibility. The level of support from the Department is not clear. Some greater degree of Departmental 'central' assistance might assuage perceptions that these Forums are set to either be too pro-airport or descend into an anti-airport body (which the airport will not be too happy about supporting). If no funding is envisaged, perhaps there might be in-kind support through a web page which records at least the membership and annual reports of the Forums in the same way that the present website supports the SACF.