

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates 2023 - 2024

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Committee Question Number: 178

Departmental Question Number: SQ23-003908

Division/Agency Name: Agency - Airservices Australia

Hansard Reference: Spoken, Page No. 118 (23 May 2023)

Topic: Airservices Australia - Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) recommendations

Senator Bridget McKenzie asked:

Senator MCKENZIE: We'll see, Senator Sterle. Recommendation 2 was that Airservices Australia review the effect of its managerial separation of flight path design, environmental assessment and community engagement and implement a management structure that includes these functions under the same manager or demonstrates how effective community engagement is incorporated into the flight path change process under the current structure. Keep doing it how you're doing it and justify it or make some significant changes. Can you give us confidence about that?

Mr Curran: Yes. The ANO has closed that recommendation. I'm happy to provide on notice a detail of exactly what Airservices Australia has undertaken to do that. In general terms—

Senator MCKENZIE: I want to be really super specific. Are you still doing it like you were?

Mr Curran: No. We've made a number of significant changes, including the way in which we engage communities. We've done work on our flight path design principles. We've since developed a community engagement standard, which we're consulting communities nationally on at present. I can confirm that the ANO has closed that recommendation. We can provide the further and better information on the specifics of that.

Senator MCKENZIE: For the sake of those following along on at home, on what grounds can the ANO close the recommendations?

Mr Curran: On the basis that we have provided—

Senator MCKENZIE: They are satisfied they are completed?

Mr Curran: Correct. Documentation that explains how we have responded in detail to that recommendation. The ANO has—

Senator MCKENZIE: We do Senate committee reports. We present them to the Senate. The government responds to these Senate reports. It doesn't mean they are going to do everything the Senate committee particularly recommends at any given time. When the ANO close this, is it a bit like noting your response, or do they accept that your response is an adequate response?

Mr Harfield: The ANAO will not close it until they are satisfied that it has met the intent.

Senator MCKENZIE: Perfect. I look forward to that answer on notice.

Answer:

Airservices has made significant changes to its processes which were detailed in its response to the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) recommendation 2 of its *Investigation into complaints about the flight paths associated with the Brisbane Airport new parallel runway (October 2021)* on 29 April 2022. The changes include enhanced procedures and mechanisms put in place to ensure ‘community-by-design’ consideration in flight path change planning.

Airservices’ response to the ANO is provided at **Attachment A**.

The ANO *Quarterly Report July-September 2022* stated that “the ANO considers that the intent of this recommendation has been met, and as a result can be closed.”

Attachment:

A: Brisbane Multiple Complaints Investigation Recommendation 2

Brisbane Multiple Complaints Investigation Recommendation 2

Airservices review the effect of its managerial separation of flight path design, environmental assessment and community engagement, and implement a management structure that includes these functions under the same manager or demonstrate how effective community engagement is incorporated into the flight path change process under the current structure.

Response

Airservices has reviewed how we manage and deliver flight path changes taking into consideration learnings from recent Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) investigations, best practice reviews including work conducted by UK firm Trax International, learnings through Post Implementation Review (PIR) feedback, and the experience of our people. We are of the opinion that our new process means that we do not need to have flight path design, environmental assessment and community engagement under the one manager to ensure effective collaboration and consideration of community impacts. Applying a value chain model, the various teams work together in a collaborative manner to achieve the best outcome possible for the change proposal, applying our Flight Path Design Principles.

Some of the elements of this new approach include:

- **Airspace Governance Group** – comprised of Head representatives from operations, customer engagement and community engagement, this group is tasked with reviewing all change proposals to determine if they should enter the change program, access environmental screening outcomes, and to discuss customer and community impacts and associated engagement requirements. This ensures all key players in the airspace change process are aware of the interests and issues of each practice area and that collaboration on the most appropriate approach can occur.
- **Change Prioritisation meetings** – comprising the managers of Flight Path Design, Environmental Assessment and Community Engagement, these meetings are used to discuss and status all changes in the change program, confirm the priority of various proposals and discuss any emerging issues relating to any particular change proposal, including community impacts.
- **Change Program meetings** – involving all personnel from the above groups to discuss current change proposals and to collaborate on issues of concern and possible solutions.
- **Change proposal allocation** – each change proposal is allocated to a team member from each of the above groups and these people meet regularly as the proposal is designed and assess to consider community impact and how this can be reduced. Designs that appear to directly affect communities are questioned and designs reviewed to reduce impact.
- **Design review sessions** – used for Flight Path Design to brief Community Engagement on the purpose of the change and to discuss the design and its impacts. Requests for further design consideration or additional environmental assessment can be made to ensure full consideration of community impact.
- **Flight Path Design Principles reporting** – a report is prepared by the flight path design team as they progress design, recording how the competing interests are being addressed through the design process. This is updated during environmental assessment and subsequent design review and published at the commencement of community engagement.
- **Environmental Assessment** – the environmental assessment (EA) of each change is shared in draft across the team involved in the change proposal's development. Any impacts identified in the EA are commented on and further work requested where appropriate. The Head of Community Engagement approves the Environmental Assessment, and the change proposal cannot proceed to community engagement or implementation without this endorsement.

We have provided examples of how this process is working to reduce the impact of flight path changes on communities.

Shellharbour RNP-Z RWY 34

Concept

The original concept design was created to allow Baro VNAV to the existing RNAV procedure to RWY 34 at Shellharbour.

Preliminary Design meeting – Community, Environment, ATC and Flight Path Design

Preliminary design had the procedure located over Kiama township and multiple coastal communities. During this review meeting, the Community Engagement team requested the procedure designer investigate whether this could be moved to the West, with a particular focus on avoiding the beachside community.

Final Design

The flight path was moved approx. 1.8km Southeast. This involved negotiation with Defence due to the proximity to restricted areas. As a result, this leg of the flight path no longer directly overflies residents between Easts Beach and Loves Bay, it now tracks to the West over greenspace.



Red = flight path from concept design

Green = re-design following Preliminary Design meeting

Scone RNP RWY 29

Concept

The concept was to amend an existing procedure so it could still be used while nearby military restricted airspace was in use.

Preliminary Design meeting – Community and Flight Path Design

The preliminary design moved a holding pattern turn over Muswellbrook. During the meeting Community Engagement requested other locations be considered to minimise community impact.

Final Design

Other locations were investigated but were not possible. The procedure designer identified another solution to reduce the impact on this community and reversed the turn at the holding point. This moves the flight path so aircraft turn away from Muswellbrook, rather than over-flying it. This design moved the holding pattern approx. 3km East, and approx. 1.2km away from the closest residential dwelling.



Red = flight path from concept design

Green = re-design following Preliminary Design meeting

Gold Coast ILS STAR

Concept

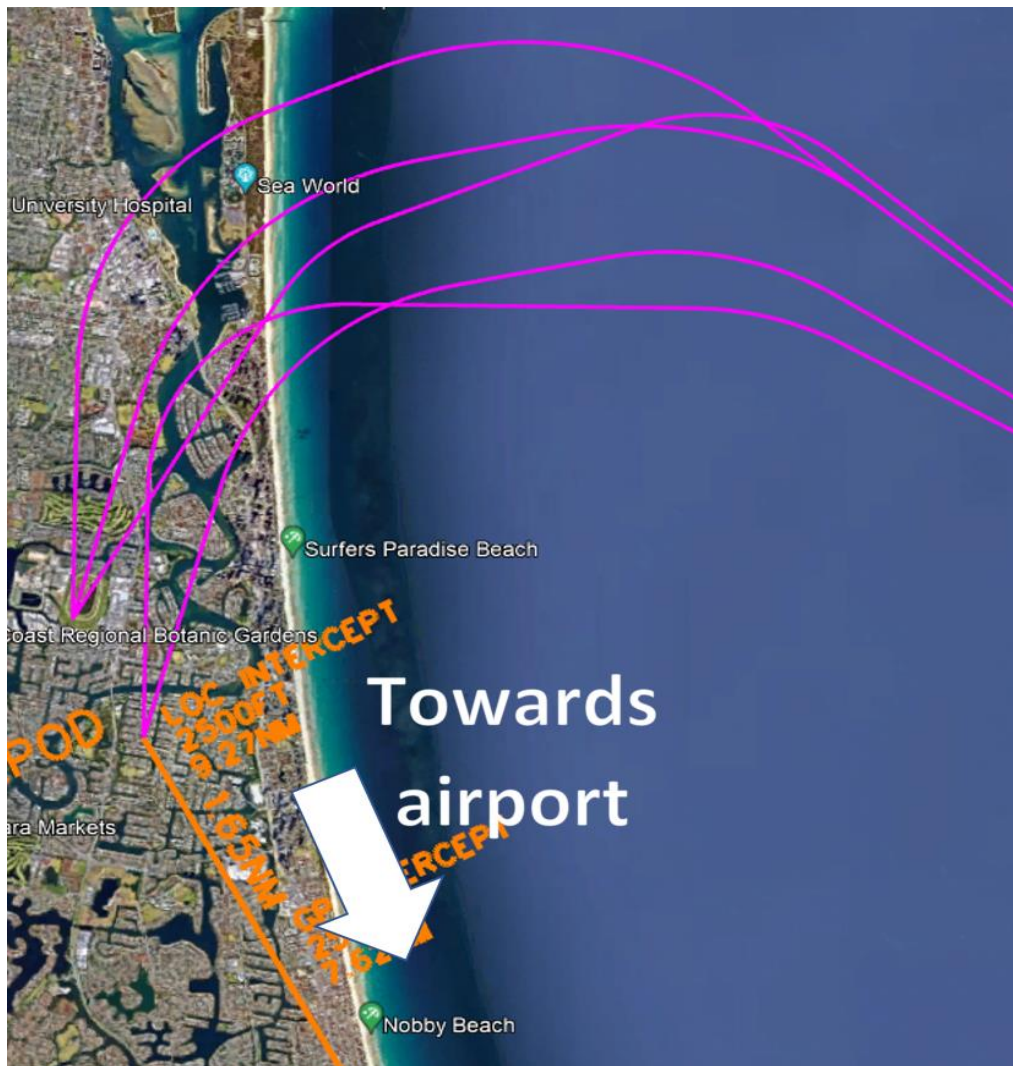
The proposal is to introduce a STAR to the RWY 14 ILS to replace the current radar vectoring approach.

Preliminary Design meeting – Community, ATC and Flight Path Design

Flight Path Design presented 5 possible concept options in the design session. Community Engagement requested the Environmental Assessments team complete a population count on these flight paths so the lowest impact option could be identified.

Final Design

The population count was presented to Community Engagement and the two lowest impact designs were identified. Environmental Assessment was requested for both options and the outcome will inform the decision on which design should be implemented. Depending on the outcome of the Environmental Assessment, both options may be taken to the community for engagement to determine a preference.



Purple = New flight path options
Orange = Existing flight path (unchanged)

OFFICIAL

In addition to this new collaborative process, our Community Engagement practice area has developed several tools and processes over the past two years to ensure we implement effective, transparent community engagement that supports the community in influencing the final decision. This includes:

- **Community Engagement Framework** – establishes our commitment to engagement and the approach we will take to engaging communities on flight path changes.
- **Early engagement** – for larger projects with potentially significant impacts, we engage ahead of design commencing to identify key areas of interest or concern to the community so these can be considered in developing the preliminary design. This process has been applied to the Williamstown Airspace and Flight Path Review and will also be applied to the upcoming Launceston SIDs and STARs change.
- **Options development** – we have recently introduced a new process, whereby multiple options for a change are developed for engagement with the community. This is applied to changes where there are different ways the airspace could be designed, but all are safe and operationally feasible. The community is then engaged to determine the preferred option. This is about to be applied to the Hobart PIR suggested improvements and to the upcoming Launceston SIDs and STARs change.

We would be pleased to provide further information on our improved processes and the outcomes it is achieving in a Teams briefing if this would be helpful.

