

EAST MELBOURNE NEIGHBOUR NETWORK

A GROUP OF EAST MELBOURNE RESIDENTS WHOSE FOCUS IS TO ENCOURAGE A FRIENDLY NETWORK FOR MUTUAL SUPPORT.

18th May 2018

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

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Air Services Amendment Bill 2018

This submission is made by the East Melbourne Neighbour Network. It is in strong support of the above Bill. The Bill provides very important protection for communities affected by aircraft, which is currently not available under existing legislation.

Our community is negatively affected by air traffic over our area, which has significantly increased without any consultation with us. The aircraft issue started at the beginning of 2013 because of deregulation and residents were not even informed that joy and training flights would be allowed to happen without any control. Noise measurements done in East Melbourne have shown that at times the noise is as bad as living next to an airport. While community groups are consulted near airports, there is no mechanism for our community's voice to be heard, despite the severe impacts.

Aircraft fly over East Melbourne throughout the week and even at night but the frequency increases on weekends, with up to 150 light aircraft and helicopters flying over the area on some days. In addition, there are frequent low helicopter flights over our area and these aircraft often hover for extended periods to film events at the MCG or for traffic reporting and news. The noise and vibration caused by helicopters impact on people both outside and inside our houses, not enabling us to enjoy being in our suburb. We hold a weekly Tai Chi class in the Powlett Reserve and participants have difficulty hearing the instructor due to hovering helicopter or light aircraft noise.

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To make things worse, now for over a year, large aircraft are flying over our houses 4-5 minutes before landing at Tullamarine. On some days we have large aircraft passing overhead every few minutes, adding up to well over 100 per day. Many people in our community have chronic health issues and some are having palliative care at home and must endure the noise from joy and training flights.

We are very concerned about the safety and security issues of unregulated air traffic over such a significant central area. On Derby Day 2014 there was a helicopter crash near the MCG. The threat of terrorism is a big issue, and there is no regulation of flights over such a densely populated area with large sporting venues. The Bill would provide controls to address this situation.

East Melbourne residents have tried many courses of action including meeting with Air Services Australia, writing to the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman and writing to the operators and the airports. All these approaches have fallen on deaf ears – the authorities are only interested in the commercial aspects of aviation, not the impact on residents and the current legislation ignores us. When freeways are built, it is normal for affected communities to be consulted and for noise barriers to be constructed. The impact of aircraft is even worse, but these processes do not apply. Therefore, we need the protection provided by the Bill, which will require us to be consulted and will provide us with representation by establishing an independent Aircraft Noise Ombudsman and an independent Community Aviation Advocate.

In addition to the consultation provisions in the Bill I also strongly support the requirement for Air Services Australia to prepare a plan for management of flight paths and air space in central Melbourne, as this will give us some protection.

Senators, all we are asking for are our basic rights to be able to live in our homes and gardens without the severe impacts of aircraft, which have been imposed on us without us ever getting a say. I therefore strongly urge you to support the Bill.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Henderson
Convenor