

Virgin Australia

Impact and Mitigation of Aircraft Noise

Senate Inquiry – Monday, 15 April 2024
Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee



RUN SHEET

TIME

3:00 – 3:45 PM

VIRGIN AUSTRALIA WITNESSES

Stephen Beckett

General Manager Government &
Industry Affairs

Scott Mitchell

Partner Performance Manager

LOCATION

Colmslie Hotel

Catalina Room
Corner Wynnum & Junction Roads,
Morningside Queensland 4170



About Virgin Australia

- VA's facts:
 - Australia's value carrier. We operate a world class service that's about connecting Australian both here at home and abroad.
 - We offer a value service to price conscious leisure and business passengers.
 - Offer customers a range of service options, from a competitively priced lite fare with carry-on luggage, to an option for extra leg room in the main cabin through to our all-inclusive Business Class product.
 - For the 6th year in a row, we are proud to win the award for best cabin crew.
 - Carried **19.3M guests in FY23**, and approximately **8,800 tonnes of cargo**.
 - **Serve 38 ports across Australia, Asia, and the Pacific**, with an additional **547 global destinations** serviced through airline partnerships.
 - **Directly employ over 7,600 people**.



AIRCRAFT NOISE – OPENING REMARKS BY STEPHEN BECKETT

- As we know aviation plays a crucial role in connecting people, businesses, and economies. Aviation is a key economic, social and cultural enabler, and for an island nation the size of Australia, aviation is an essential service.
- However, Virgin Australia understands the need to strike a balance between the benefits of air travel, air cargo and the well-being of flight path communities.
- We do acknowledge the genuine disruption aircraft noise can cause and understand just how important it is that Virgin Australia's operations are efficient, sustainable and minimise the impacts to local residents and the wider community where possible.
- Both Scott and I live locally in communities under the flight path.
- The Colmslie Hotel where we meet today is my local. I live just a few hundred metres about from here.
- Since 2003 and well before I started a career in aviation my family and I have lived under direct final approach of the legacy runway, and both my children go to schools often overflown by aircraft.
- Scott is from the other side of the river, and lives under a flight path of Brisbane's new parallel runway.
- We both know what it is like to be woken at night by planes and there are occasions we need to rewind Netflix to catch bit of a program we were unable to hear.
- As you may know VA regularly collaborates with industry partners, such as Airservices, airports, the Department of Infrastructure and Transport, and organisations and groups representing community and environmental protection interests.
- We are represented, often by Scott, on a range of airport Community Aviation Consultation Groups across Australia, including at Brisbane and Western Sydney Airports and the Sydney Airport Community Forum.
- We were very active in the development of Noise Action Plan for Brisbane via our role on the Australian Government's new Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board.
- Here in Brisbane, we believe two of the best ways to give flight path communities the relief they deserve is by getting more planes arriving and departing over water, and by investing in newer, quieter, more efficient aircraft.
- That is why VA provided technical and specialist input into Airservices Safety Case submission to the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) to safety increase the tailwind allowance at BNE Airport to enable more flights to arrive and depart over the uninhabited waters of Moreton Bay.
- For almost 30 years BNE had an allowable tailwind allowance of 10 knots which was reduced by CASA in about 2016 to 5 knots. This despite BNE operating incident free and passing any safety audits.
- A higher tailwind allowance means a greater likelihood of enabling more departures over the water.
- Virgin Australia is investing in newer, more fuel efficient, quieter aircraft as part of our transformation.



- We have taken delivery of four new generation 737-8 aircraft, with one arriving just a few weeks ago.
- According to the manufacturer the new aircraft are 40% quieter compared to our legacy fleet (737-800 NG fleet).
- In addition to these new aircraft being much quieter when taking off, landing and in the air, they are also much more fuel efficient. 15% reduction in fuel burn.
- VA has a further 36 new generation aircraft on order.
- We are very focussed on enhancing our environmental and noise management practices to ensure Virgin Australia continues to operate responsibly while delivering exceptional travel experiences for our customers.
- Our commitment to responsible aviation practices is reflected in our recent comprehensive Green Paper submission via the Aviation White Paper process. (November 2023).
- Our submission outlines a range of initiatives and strategies to mitigate noise impacts and improve community engagement.
- These improvements would require better collaboration between Airservices Australia, airports and airlines and means greater investments in advanced technology and improved operational procedures, delivering noise improvements during take-off, landing, and inflight.
- For example, should Airservices allow airlines and airports to adopting sustainable practices, such as using continuous descent profiles or approaches, we can make a meaningful improvement for the community.
- These approaches minimise the use of engine power and thereby reducing the overall noise footprint during descent.
- As I say this would require meaningful collaboration between airlines, airports, and air traffic control authorities to implement such practices effectively.
- Furthermore, we emphasized the significance of better engagement with communities, including more open communication channels, and introducing greater transparency and independent investigation processes to address their concerns effectively.
- As I conclude my opening remarks, I touch on the three key changes VA believes will bring positive change for flight path communities and how their concerns and complaints are dealt.

In our Green Paper Submission

- (a) The Noise Complaints Information Service (NCIS) should sit within CASA or the Department of Infrastructure and Transport rather than Airservices. This would strengthen its independence and enhance its capacity to provide objective advice and information, ensuring that decisions regarding noise complaints benefit both the community and the travelling public.
- (b) Like the NCIS, the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) sits within Airservices and is unable to be truly independent when conducting investigations and making recommendations. It should be run by the Department of Infrastructure and Transport to ensure impartiality.
- (c) Greater public awareness of aviation is crucial to improve community receptiveness to changes in flight paths and mitigate concerns about aircraft noise from the onset.



Ends.

