

Hobart Airport

Submission- Regional and Rural Affairs and Transport
Committee inquiry into the Impact and mitigation of
aircraft noise.

30 April 2024



Making
tomorrow's
Tasmania
possible.

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Background

Hobart Airport is the ninth busiest domestic airport in Australia and the busiest curfew-free airport in Tasmania. It is the principal aviation gateway to the city of Hobart and the Southern Tasmanian region and a critical piece of state infrastructure. As one of the world's five Antarctic Gateway cities, Hobart Airport provides a critical aviation link to the Southern Ocean and East Antarctic territories for both Australian and international polar research operations.

The airport (as shown in Figure 1) has operated on the same site for over 60 years and is strategically located to serve the greater Hobart area and the fastest growing residential and business areas in Tasmania. Hobart Airport delivers significant economic and social benefits to Tasmania by providing services to airlines, moving passengers, transporting cargo and is Australia's aviation Antarctic gateway..

Since privatisation in 1998, the number of passengers using the Airport has grown from 900,000 to 2.7 million passengers in FY2023. This growth supports the Tasmanian economy in key sectors including tourism, business, freight, and research. In terms of economic impact, in 2018 Hobart Airport provided a direct economic contribution of \$145 million to the Tasmanian economy.

Looking forward, Hobart Airport finds itself in a significant phase of growth. By 2042, it is forecast that more than 5.5 million passengers will pass through the precinct.

Hobart is Australia's Antarctic Gateway and a global Gateway to the East Antarctic. Hobart is the location of the world's largest single concentration of Antarctic and Southern Ocean research, as well as co-located logistics operations. Hobart Airport is the base for the Australian Antarctic Division's aviation operations. The development of Hobart Airport's infrastructure to support future Antarctic and Southern Ocean operations of Australian and other Antarctic programs is essential for the growth of these important sectors.



Figure 1 Hobart Airport Precinct

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Hobart Airport Master Plan

Like all Federally leased airports, Hobart Airport's masterplan outlines the infrastructure development and investment required to ensure aviation access needs are met for the next 20 years. The master plan looks forward; estimating passenger and freight demand to plan what needs investment between now and 2042 to build a strong future for Tasmania.

The Tasmanian population is growing, tourism growth is recovering to pre-COVID levels, high value Tasmanian exports are in demand, and Hobart's world-class Antarctic research sector is increasingly important.

As the gateway to Tasmania, Hobart Airport needs to plan and build infrastructure and facilities to make sure we can manage this growth to support the community and the economy.

The Hobart Airport masterplan outlines the key investments to meet demand through to 2042 as.

- Expansion of the terminal building to ensure forecast domestic and international passengers have a comfortable and uniquely Tasmanian experience.
- A runway upgrade and development of taxiways and aircraft parking, to accommodate more flights and different aircraft, and to facilitate Antarctic, international and cargo services.
- Development of the surrounding land to support aviation, transport and logistics, emergency services, Antarctic research, and tourism.
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Importantly, the masterplan demonstrates that airside infrastructure investment at Hobart Airport is limited to improving and maintaining our existing 12/30 runway. This means that there is no likelihood of additional noise impacts resulting from infrastructure investments such as a new runway.

Economic contribution of aviation to Tasmania

Hobart Airport's estimated contribution to the economy of Tasmania in 2018 was \$145 million and 639 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs, this is expected to grow to \$306 million and 1627 FTE jobs by 2030. Most of this contribution is from the tourism sector, freight, international students, and Antarctic endeavor.

Tasmania's air freight exports are mostly seafood and fresh fruit and vegetables, together accounting for 86% of air freight. Tasmania has a much higher volume of air freight per capita than the rest of Australia. This is because of the high volume, export focused seafood and fruit and vegetable producing industries and Tasmania's small population.

Antarctic and Southern Ocean organisations spend almost \$184 million annually in Tasmania. The sector employs over 990 (FTE) jobs, or 0.43% of the Tasmanian workforce. Tasmania's geographic location means it is a natural gateway to the East Antarctic. Of the five recognised Antarctic gateways around the world, Hobart is unique in its depth, breadth and combination of infrastructure, logistics support, and world class Antarctic scientific and diplomatic expertise. Importantly, Hobart is also home to the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD). The AAD lead the Australian Government's engagement in policy, science, logistics and operational activities.

Hobart Airport underpins this sector as the aviation gateway for Australian and international Antarctic programs, linking Tasmania to the Wilkins Runway. Aviation supports the movement of expeditioners and equipment to and from the ice, including critical heavy-lift support for freight provided by the Australian Defence Force's C17 aircraft. Occasional ad-hoc flights are undertaken to assist with medical emergencies requiring timely responses; Hobart Airport's curfew-free status enables this.

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Contribution of aviation to Tasmanian wellbeing

Aviation and the operation of Hobart Airport also contributes to Tasmanian's quality of life in several other ways that are not captured by standard economic indicators.

Supporting population growth.

Tasmanian population growth is largely driven by interstate and overseas migration. Of the 78,607 person increase in Tasmania's population since 2006, just 32.3% was due to a natural increase, while 67.7% was attributable to overseas and interstate migrants¹.

While Tasmania has benefitted from positive population growth in recent years, the state continues to be the oldest in the country. Long-term sustainable population growth including critical factors such as a stable or increasing working age population, is a key driver of wellbeing for Tasmania's people.

Tasmania's geographical isolation is diminished by the capacity of aviation routes that connect migrants, and indeed the Tasmanian diaspora, to family and community in their region of origin. An example of this is that between the 2016 and 2021 Census periods, the Nepali-born population in Tasmania saw the largest increase of all international birthplaces. In concert with this cohort's growth, travel between Hobart-Singapore-Kathmandu increased faster than other routes originating from Hobart via Singapore, beating London-Heathrow and Paris for the period between June 2022 and December 2022.²

Connecting individuals.

The primary role of all airports is to connect people, making it easier to visit friends and relatives, intrastate, interstate and internationally. This is particularly valuable in an island state such as Tasmania, which is geographically isolated from the mainland, and indeed the world. Hobart Airport helps to bridge the gap between Tasmania and the mainland, supporting economic and social vibrancy, enhancing Tasmania's liveability, social connectedness, and prosperity³.

Labour market mobility.

Many regions of Australia rely on Fly-In-Fly-Out (FIFO) workforces, requiring airports to provide connectivity of employment for individuals working intrastate or interstate. Of particular importance for Tasmania, the airport enables access to specialised personnel, driving local innovation and supporting critical services such as specialist healthcare.

Essential services.

Hobart Airport plays a critical role in supporting the operation of essential services. Medical services needed by people in regional areas, and medical evacuations for specialist treatment on the mainland are facilitated through the airport.

Environment and conservation.

Air travel accounts for more than 88%⁴ of tourism travel to Tasmania, a sector that generates \$2.5 billion in Gross Regional Product. Tasmanian visitor surveys indicate that 42% of a total of 967,000 tourists are in the state to "*visit national parks*"⁵, likely attracted by Tourism Tasmania's *Come Down for Air* campaign. This sector of the tourist market and its economic value highlight the intrinsic value of natural areas, and their contribution to social wellbeing. A sustainable nature-based tourism sector can contribute to the care and preservation of natural areas in the state, benefitting natural ecologies, and the wellbeing of current and future communities.

¹ *National, state and territory population and Births, Australia*, Australian Bureau of Statistics

² IATA Airport I.S. – accessed February 2023

³ *Connecting Australia*. Deloitte Access Economics 2018

⁴ [Tourism](#) Tasmania – Tasmanian Visitor Survey December 2022

⁵ [Tourism Tasmania - Visitor Survey Dashboard \(tvsanalyser.com.au\)](https://www.tvsanalyser.com.au)

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Roles and responsibilities in aviation

There are a range of organisations in the aviation industry which have varying degrees of influence on aircraft noise, and community engagement about aircraft noise is understandably confusing.

Airservices Australia

Airservices Australia (AsA) is responsible for airspace design, management of navigation, and air traffic control. AsA is a government owned service agency established under the *Air Services Act 1995*(Cth), with its function legislated as the provision of air traffic management and air navigation support to airlines and pilots, and the development of flight paths.

Airservices Australia also manages the Noise Complaints and Information Service; the aviation industry's main point of engagement with communities affected by aircraft noise.

Hobart Airport does not derive revenue from Airservices Australia and does not have a commercial relationship with the agency.

Civil Aviation Safety Authority

Flight path development is undertaken in line with strict rules and guidelines provided by the air safety regulator; the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA). CASA regulates all Australian airlines and airport operators.

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, and the Arts

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, and the Arts (DITRDCA) is the Commonwealth department charged with overall responsibility for aviation in Australia, including liaison with AsA and CASA. The Minister for Transport sets aviation policy and regulation on the advice of DITRDCA, aligned with International Civil Aviation Organisation best practice from around the world.

Aircraft Noise Ombudsman

The Aircraft Noise Ombudsman is responsible for investigating noise complaints and concerns from the public which cannot be or have not been resolved by AsA.

Airlines

Airlines around the world are investing in airframes and fleet that use improved technologies to mitigate aircraft noise. Over the past 50 years, aircraft have reduced their noise output by 75% and this progress continues. Today's aircraft entering service have on average, a noise footprint that is 30-50% that of the aircraft they are replacing thanks to new engine and airframe design and technology.

Airport operators

Airport operators have the primary responsibility for building, maintaining and operating airport infrastructure and facilities, and ensuring growth is enabled in line with lease obligations and the *Airports Act 1997* (Cth). Within the aviation sector, airport operators have no direct role in the formulation of policy, or the management of flight paths.

As part of the *Airports Act 1997* (Cth), airport operators facilitate a Planning Consultation Forum (PCF) and a Community Aviation Consultation Group (CACG). The PCF provides consultation between local, state, and federal government authorities responsible for town planning, transport, and infrastructure investment. The CACG provides for consultation with local community members, aiming to facilitate discussion of airport operations and impacts on nearby communities. Membership consists of representatives from airport, federal and state governments, Airservices Australia and local communities.

In the case of Hobart Airport, the CACG has an important role in engagement about a range of activities undertaken on the airport precinct, including Major Developments, land clearing, car traffic impacts, and aircraft noise. A perceived lack of engagement directly between AsA and the community can result in CACG engagement becoming dominated by discussions about aircraft noise.

Further, important context for Hobart Airport is that flight schedules are largely dictated by the national aviation network to which we are connected. Much larger, busier airports to which we connect dictate the cadence and frequency of flights at particular times of day and are challenging for Hobart Airport to influence.

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Community sentiment

Broad community sentiment about Hobart Airport is generally positive, averaging 56% favourability for the period June 2024 to March 2024; reporting either as 'very positive' or 'somewhat positive'.⁶ Survey data also indicates that majority of respondents agreed that Hobart Airport "places a high priority on safety" (73%), "makes a major contribution to the Tasmanian community" (60%) and "is a respected organisation" (56%).

Hobart Airport acknowledges that while the benefits of an efficient, growing aviation network are broadly shared across many sectors of the Tasmanian economy and the community, much of the noise impacts are borne by local people.

Hobart Airport supports community calls for improved engagement pathways.

In recent years, communities surrounding Hobart Airport have expressed significant frustration in the difficulty experienced when engaging with Airservices Australia (AsA). Technical airspace design reviews for Hobart Airport runway commenced in 2017, and new flight paths for departures and arrivals commenced operation on 7 November 2019⁷. These flight path changes altered many community members experience of aircraft noise.

A series of community engagements, surveys, assessments, post implementation reviews, and noise abatement trials led by Airservices Australia has fomented further frustration resulting in a breakdown of trust. The process is ongoing, with engagement scheduled for May 2024 with local communities on various aspects of the current noise abatement trial⁸.

Improvement to Airservices Australia engagement practises is essential, and Hobart Airport has worked closely with our community groups to try and support better engagement. The complexity of airspace design, and long-running processes involved mean that many community members seek support from Hobart Airport through representation on the CACG. While aircraft noise is one aspect of consideration for the CACG, it is not the primary focus, so limited time is available to discuss noise impacts.

Hobart Airport is pleased that Airservices Australia has sought to update its National Community Engagement Standard for flight path change proposals in June 2023. However, in the context of communities surrounding Hobart Airport, the improvements have provided no perceptible improvements in engagement between AsA and local community members.

Aircraft Noise Ombudsman

Hobart airport supports the Australian Governments consideration of increasing the independence of the Airport Noise Ombudsman (ANO) and separating it from the governance of Airservices Australia. The current arrangements see the ANO reporting to the Airservices board, and consultation associated with the Aviation White Paper indicate that stakeholders have suggested that the ANO should report directly to the responsible minister, which may contribute to improved perceptions of independence, and potentially afford greater scope and enforceability for ANO recommendations⁹.

⁶ Hobart Airport Community Sentiment survey, April 2024. EMRS.

⁷ [Hobart Airspace Design Review | Engage Airservices \(airservicesaustralia.com\)](#)

⁸ [Hobart Community and Industry Suggested Alternatives | Engage Airservices \(airservicesaustralia.com\)](#)

⁹ [Aviation Green Paper – Towards 2050 \(infrastructure.gov.au\)](#) p.103

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Caps and curfews

Hobart Airport's pivotal role in Tasmania's economic and social wellbeing is evident in that it is a crucial gateway to the state and the Antarctic. Facilitating substantial economic activity, job creation, and societal benefits, particularly in tourism, research, and freight sectors, Hobart Airport serves as a hub for Tasmania's connectivity.

Any proposal to place caps and curfews at Hobart Airport, which currently operates without restriction would be a regressive intervention, with direct and indirect impacts that would be felt across the Australian aviation network. As the major passenger transport access point between the island of Tasmania and the mainland, restrictions on the movement of aircraft would essentially 'pull up the drawbridge' to the state for the curfew's duration.

For example, if a late-night take-off is delayed in Melbourne, resulting in a Hobart arrival time being outside of restricted operating hours due to a curfew, this would require passengers/freight to wait overnight for the first morning's flight, creating significant delays for what is typically a very short journey.

The majority of aircraft movements at Hobart Airport are between the hours of 0600 and 2300, with movement peaks during the middle of the day. Aircraft movements outside of these hours are generally to deliver mail and parcels (three days per week) and to enable movements associated with Antarctic expeditioners or Australian Defence Force activities.

It is important to note that in the management of flight paths, among the variables for consideration are the emissions impacts of diversionary routes to avoid residential areas. Any flight path decisions must make note of the ongoing incremental impacts on CO2 emissions, and efforts by the aviation sector and the Australian Government to reduce emissions ahead of the net zero goals of 2050.

Hobart Airport supports options to improve management of aircraft noise.

Hobart Airport acknowledges local community concerns regarding aircraft noise and advocacy calling for improved engagement, however aviation access is a necessity to sustain Tasmania's growth and support our communities across the state.

In the context of Hobart Airport, and our engagement with stakeholders in the aviation system, the following are options for consideration that may assist in balancing essential aviation growth, while maintaining local community's amenity and wellbeing.

- Develop a framework for noise and emissions trade-offs that can be applied consistently and is well understood by communities.
- Continue to improve community engagement practises at Airservices Australia as a priority.
- Consider state-led noise management forums with landuse planners to discuss the balance between economic growth and community impact.

We hope that this submission is of assistance for this Inquiry.

For further information contact Erin McGoldrick, Head of Corporate Affairs –
emcgoldrick@hobartairport.com

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Letters of support:



26 April 2024

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Re: Support for Hobart Airport's Submission to the Regional and Rural Affairs and Transport Committee Inquiry into the Impact and Mitigation of Aircraft Noise

The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI) has existed in various forms since 1851 and has been powering business in Tasmania since that time. We are an independent membership organisation that aims to positively lead and support business in Tasmania.

The TCCI represents more than 1,500 businesses throughout Tasmanian. At the same time, it reaches up to 20,000 businesses through regional chambers with the TCCI Chamber Alliance.

As representatives of Tasmania's business community deeply invested in Tasmania's economic wellbeing, we write to express our support for Hobart Airport's submission to the Regional and Rural Affairs and Transport Committee's inquiry into the Impact and Mitigation of Aircraft Noise.

Hobart Airport is critical infrastructure in Tasmania, facilitating crucial connections both domestically and internationally. Its strategic location and freight and logistics connections make it a vital gateway for tourism, business, freight, and research sectors, contributing significantly to Tasmania's economic growth and prosperity.

We commend Hobart Airport's commitment to sustainable growth and its proactive approach to addressing community concerns, particularly regarding aircraft noise. We recognise the importance of balancing the airport's operational needs with the well-being of surrounding communities and acknowledge that many solutions suggested will take time to implement and require the collaboration of all participants in the aviation sector.

Furthermore, we echo Hobart Airport's caution against regressive interventions, such as caps and curfews, which could impede the airport's ability to serve as a vital link for Tasmania's economic development and connectivity.

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28 April 2024

Committee Secretary

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

Re: Support for Hobart Airport's Submission to the Regional and Rural Affairs and Transport Committee Inquiry into the Impact and Mitigation of Aircraft Noise

Fruit Growers Tasmania is the peak body representing apple, pear, cherry, berry and stonefruit growers in Tasmania. We are writing to express our support for Hobart Airport's submission to the Regional and Rural Affairs and Transport Committee's inquiry into the Impact and Mitigation of Aircraft Noise.

Hobart Airport is critical infrastructure for Tasmania's agricultural sector, providing essential air links that enable export of Tasmania's premium fruit to markets both domestically and internationally.

Tasmanian fruit growers produce \$325 million of fruit, employ 10,000 people, and contribute \$45 million in exports to Tasmania's economy each year. The industry has been a significant engine of growth over the last decade, consistently growing more quickly than any other major agricultural sector. Hobart Airport is a critical freight and logistics link for the timely airfreight of premium produce, especially to Asian markets.

We commend Hobart Airport's commitment to sustainable growth and their proactive engagement with stakeholders to address community concerns, including those related to aircraft noise. We understand the delicate balance between the airport's operational needs and the well-being of surrounding communities, and we appreciate their efforts to find constructive solutions.

Furthermore, we share Hobart Airport's apprehension towards regressive interventions such as caps and curfews, recognising the potential adverse impacts on the efficient movement of our perishable produce and the overall competitiveness of Tasmania's agricultural exports.

On behalf of our members, we support Hobart Airport's endeavours to navigate the challenges of aircraft noise while continuing to play a pivotal role in supporting Tasmania's agricultural sector, particularly the export of premium fruit.

Yours Sincerely

Peter Cornish
Chief Executive Officer
Fruit Growers Tasmania