M.A.R.A. Inc.

(Moorabbin Airport Residents Association Inc.)

Submission by MARA for the Air Services Amendment Bill 2018

Key:-

M.A.R.A. - Moorabbin Airport Residents Association Inc.

D.V.C.A. - Dingley Village Community Assoc.

M.A.C. - Moorabbin Airport Management

C.A.C.G. - Community Aviation Consultation Group

M.P. - 2015 Master Plan for Moorabbin Airport

F.F.P. - Fly Friendly Programme

INTRODUCTION:-

MARA was formed to have an ongoing interest in all aspects of the Moorabbin Airport and to be a vehicle for the residents to liaise with, and express their concerns to the relevant operational and governing bodies affecting airport operations. A prime objective of MARA is to improve the safety for nearby residents and **to achieve a significant decrease in the noise levels** over residential areas.

MARA membership covers the communities negatively affected by airport operations such as, the extremely high amount of circuit training allowed (and set to increase), and therefore the accompanying unacceptable noise level residents are subjected to in certain areas. MARA welcomes the opportunity to once again highlight community concerns regarding noise, safety and other harmful effects caused by the noxious and unrestrained light aircraft noise operating out of Moorabbin Airport in the City of Kingston, Victoria. We hope that by putting forward this submission, the Committee will hear the voices of the many residents who feel rejected and unheard when it comes to both aircraft/circuit training noise issues and the lack of commitment offered by both large political parties to help resolve the matter.

AIRCRAFT NOISE:-

While MAC proudly announces that Moorabbin Airport is the "third busiest" (and numbers show it is often at no. 2) airport in Australia, it fails to highlight the negative impact it has on so many of the airport's residential neighbours. In the most recent Master Plan it is noted that "The potential for noise to impact upon neighbouring areas is considered low due to the distance to surrounding residential areas and the nature of commercial and aviation activities carried out at the airport.". This statement is absolutely incorrect, bearing in mind the amount of students/aircraft flying circuits over a residential area on a daily basis - which are the majority of the airport's movements. Add to that the number of helicopters that fly over it!! It appears that despite MAC leasing premises to various flying schools, neither it, Air Services Australia or any other government body have any control over the type and amount of noise generated from aircraft flying at low altitude over residential areas.

For many years now, the residential suburb of Dingley Village, a neighbour of Moorabbin Airport, (the airport sits to the west of the Village, with Boundary Road bisecting it from the Village), has been consistently hammered by an unacceptable level of aircraft-related noise. Most of this is due to the amount of circuit training allowed to occur over the Village – anything from 90 to 100% of this training is done over Dingley. This noise and the negative impact it has on the lifestyle and health of residents has been recorded in numerous previous Master Plan submissions. However as MAC is only answerable to the Federal government, the problem remains unresolved and if anything, continues to grow.

It is quite astounding that in this day and age, MAC, Air Services Australia and the Federal Government deem it appropriate and acceptable to subject people so such unrestrained noise, in their own homes! MARA continues to maintain that the noise quantity and density must be significantly reduced.

Submissions by community groups and individuals continue to be made. Unfortunately, up to date there has been very minimal positive outcome!

MAC is keen to grow the aviation side of its business, with the intention of increasing the 230,000 aircraft movements in 2014 to 500,000. This means that the negative impact aircraft-related noise has on the airport's residential neighbours will more than double!! This should be unacceptable to all parties concerned, including the Federal Minister for Regional Affairs & Transport.

RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT OF AIRCRAFT NOISE:-

While much is made of 'responsible management of aircraft noise' by airport management, this is strenuously questioned by the MARA group. MAC has attempted to deal with the noise issue (unsuccessfully) in the following ways:-

In 2013 MAC implemented a circuit design project, the aim being to reduce noise impact on the local community. While the idea was good, five years on and nothing has actually been achieved. Each and every compromise suggested by either MARA, DVCA or local council has been rejected by CASA and/or Air Services Aust.

In 2014/15, a number of noise monitors were placed in the Dingley/Mordialloc/Parkdale areas by Air Services Aust. This was a repeat exercise of that done in 2013. Again, despite the high count of unacceptable noise level readings (especially in the Dingley area), no action has been taken to alleviate some of the noise stress residents are continuously burdened with.

A most recent option suggested to MAC by the DVCA and supported by MARA, is the occasional sharing of the circuit training between its east and west runway circuits, thereby allowing the burden of constant noise to be shared on weekends. Again, this has required much 'pushing' by the DVCA and MARA – and has not yet come to pass. However, while this may give Dingley residents an occasional reprieve, the noise issue is only being moved 'up the road' for that period of time.

FLY FRIENDLY PROGRAMME:-

While a 'Fly Friendly' brochure has been introduced, this is not enforceable and is actually of little help to residents in Dingley Village. The FFP is a voluntary agreement and, does not address the frequency of operations over the same residential areas - the root cause issue for residents.

NOISE OMBUNDSMAN:-

In the past few years, a Noise Ombudsman has also been established by the then Federal Government. The premise was that this office would realise the residents' concerns and would report to the Minister with its findings. On meeting with the Ombudsman, MARA was again disappointed to find that this office was in reality powerless when it came to residents and aircraft noise issues. We were left wondering what the actual point of the office was!

COMMUNITY AVIATION CONSULTATION GROUP (CACG):-

Community groups such as MARA and the DVCA have and continue to be active members of the CACG, attending all meetings on behalf of residents, trying to work to seek a solution or a compromise for the ongoing issues. However, consultation with community representatives is

often minimal. Many of the stakeholders at the meetings do not live near the airport or are business owners on airport land. Hence, they are generally not interested in supporting our associations in the plea to reduce noise and improve safety.

State and Federal politicians and local council have all been approached by the community seeking assistance with this matter. However as a private organization, MAC is protected by the Federal Government. All our concerns appear to be of no value and are disregarded (nicely and professionally) by whichever political party is in power at the time.

NOISE COMPLAINTS:-

MAC and Air Services Aust regularly report at the CACG on the reduction of noise complaints made by the public. However, MARA is continually informed that people are basically tired of 'banging their heads against a brick wall'. Phone calls or emails of complaint to the Air Services Noise Complaints line over specific aircraft noise incidents are ineffectual because, while the call is logged, the main function of the complaints line has been to compile noise complaint statistics which are then passed on to MAC – and that's the end of it. As such, the core issues of the complaints are not addressed. Residents are now aware of this impotent system and are of the opinion that there's no point in lodging a complaint as absolutely nothing will be done – until (unfortunately) a tragic accident occurs!

Community groups continue to seek help from CASA, Air Services Australia, the Ombudsman and local and federal politicians. However, it would appear as this 'problem' has not been resolved after so many years, that it just continuously gets dumped in the 'Too Hard' basket – probably with the hope that a future Minister will deal with it!

SAFETY CONCERNS:-

Dingley Village has 3 primary schools as well as aged care facilities. A number of these are 'hammered' by student pilots doing circuit training above them. The airport itself continues to add more and more commercial buildings to its site, chipping away at the 'buffer' between itself and businesses. MARA questions the safety aspect of this, bearing in mind the amount of students allowed in the air at any given time and the number of incidents and near-misses reported over the years (not to mention those that the public are unaware of). An increase in the number of flight schools in the Moorabbin Airport means an increase in student numbers, an increase in circuit training and flights over residential areas and therefore, a much greater risk of accidents occurring over neighbouring homes, in particular, Dingley Village.

CONCLUSION:-

In conclusion, it is MARA's fervent hope that something positive will come from this submission, for the residents in both Dingley Village and the surrounding areas. While MARA supports a strong and safe aviation industry, in this era it is unacceptable to subject people to such an amount of constant noise irritation as that caused by circuit training, in their own homes. Of course, an obvious and logical solution would be for the Federal Government to encourage and assist flying schools to move and grow their businesses at a regional airport eg. Mangalore or Avalon. Not only would there be more open and safer space for flight training, but the area itself would get a financial boost by being able to offer student accommodation and so forth. However, as this is most likely a case of 'wishful thinking' on the part of local residents, any solution and/or compromise suggested and enforced by this Committee, would be most welcome and very much appreciated as it is our belief that this ongoing problem is thought to be either of nuisance value only or too hard to deal with and therefore consigned to that dreaded 'Too Hard' basket.

MARA thanks the Committee and/or its advisors for taking the time to read this submission.

KAREN HASTINGS (President)

For and on behalf of M.A.R.A.