

**RESPONSE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE REPORT OF THE  
SENATE RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT  
REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

**'INQUIRY INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRISBANE AIRPORT  
CORPORATION MASTER PLAN'**

THE HON JOHN ANDERSON MP, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER,  
MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES

May 2002

**The following provides the Commonwealth's response to recommendations made by the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee report to the Government concerning the development of the Brisbane Airport Corporation's Master Plan.**

**Each of the Committee's recommendations is addressed in turn.**

**Recommendation 1—That the Airports Act 1996 be amended to include an object and purpose statement for airport master plans.**

Section 71 of the Airports Act 1996 currently sets out clearly what is to be contained in a draft or final airport master plan. While there has been no evidence of any misunderstanding by airport operators as to the matters required to be covered in an airport master plan, the Government acknowledges that there has been confusion in the public's mind as to the purpose of such a document. Accordingly, the Government considers that a purpose statement in the legislation could prove helpful and an appropriate amendment to the legislation will be prepared.

**Recommendation 2—That the Airports Act 1996 be amended to specify the relationship a major development plan has to a master plan.**

The Government considers that some of the public concern associated with the development of the **Brisbane Airport master plan** reflected a lack of understanding of the status of the master plan and its relationship to major developments on airport, such as the proposed new runway. Accordingly, the Government will prepare an amendment to the legislation to clarify the relationship between airport master plans and major development plans.

**Recommendation 3—That the Airports Act 1996 be amended to include more prescriptive requirements for community consultation by airport owners and airport-lessees.**

**Recommendation 4—That DoTRS develop a set of protocols which outline the requirements for community consultation in relation to airport master plans and major development plans.**

The Government recognises the legitimate expectations of communities to be consulted on the planning and development of airports and the benefits which can result from such consultation by way of better informed decision making.

The requirements under sections 79 and 92 of the Airports Act 1996 ensure that airport operators undertake a structured public consultation process as part of the master planning and major development planning process. The current framework also provides for certainty and clarity in the manner in which community comment is to be incorporated into those planning processes and reflected in the submissions to the Minister. In addition, the public is entitled to (and does) make its views known

directly to the Government on particular airport planning matters. In making a decision on an airport master or major development plan the Minister takes into account comments from all the stakeholders including the community.

The Government is conscious of the costs that would arise from a highly prescriptive regulatory process covering the level, means and detail of public consultation to be undertaken and the depth and level of associated information disclosure. Moreover, stakeholders are likely to have different levels of knowledge on, and expectations about, these matters and this in itself can give rise to different impressions of how well consultation has been undertaken.

In that regard, to facilitate and improve consultation on issues that involve aircraft noise impacts, the Department has developed and released a discussion paper entitled 'Expanding Ways to Describe and Assess Aircraft Noise'. The Discussion Paper outlines a range of new graphical presentations designed to advance the way in which aircraft noise exposure is conveyed to the lay person.

The Department has also developed and made available to all major airports computer programs that enable the graphical material presented in the Discussion Paper to be readily produced for dissemination by an individual airport.

This work is designed to provide for a more inclusive and meaningful consultation process that enables affected individuals to make more informed judgements and comment. Continuing in that vein, the Government will also develop, in consultation with airport lessees, major stakeholders and public interest groups, a standard set of guidelines to promote a shared understanding for how consultation processes should be managed.

**Recommendation 5—That BAC conduct more open consultation with affected groups, including community groups.**

Brisbane Airport has met the statutory requirements of the Airports Act 1996 in relation to the preparation of its master plan.

The public perception that consultation had been inadequate was largely based on concerns that approving the master plan meant that the proposed parallel runway would be built regardless of the merits of alternative options or the noise and environmental impacts on the community.

As noted by the Committee, it is the major development plan process that provides the focus for detailed scrutiny and associated community consultation in relation to individual major development proposals.

In approving the master plan, the Minister for Transport and Regional Services has emphasised his expectation that any subsequent development by Brisbane Airport of a draft major development plan for a new parallel runway would need to fully explore alternative runway options. This requirement is to provide the community with a complete and transparent process for understanding the issues arising, including the impact on local communities affected by prospective flight paths.

The Department has drawn this Recommendation to the attention of Brisbane Airport and will reflect its intention in the drafting of airport consultation guidelines.

**Recommendation 6—That the Airports Act 1996 be amended to place a responsibility on airports to disclose draft flight path information prepared by AirServices Australia to the public as part of draft master plans.**

The Government is conscious of community concern about the lack of flight path information related to possible future runways in airport master plans. To provide a clear picture of aircraft noise exposure patterns, flight path information extending well beyond the Australian Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF) contours would have to be provided.

The Airports Act 1996 requires that a draft master plan assess the extent of likely significant noise impacts by reference to ANEF contours. Preparing ANEF contours requires broad assumptions to be made about the location of flight paths within the immediate environs of an airport. It is proposed that in future the 'close in' flight paths that have been used to develop the ANEF contours will have to be shown in master planning documents and that the relationship between flight paths and ANEF contours will need to be discussed to provide a better community understanding of issues. The Government will give effect to this through amendments to the Airports Act 1996 Regulations.

The flight path assumptions which provide an acceptable basis for forecasting noise impacts on, or close to, an airport (ie for constructing ANEF contours), however, will generally not be an accurate basis for describing the likely environmental impacts on areas further away from the airport. A set of 'outer' flight paths is required for this purpose.

While it may be possible to discuss the 'outer' flight paths in broad conceptual terms in a master plan, it becomes unrealistic to attempt to depict where these may be in the future due to the significant uncertainties in the key factors that determine the location, and level of use, of flight paths. Those uncertainties, which increase as the time horizon is extended, include climatic changes, advances in future technology (both for aircraft and navigation equipment), changes in fleet mixes and traffic demand and aircraft operating standards, and airspace design and structure.

These practical limitations mean that meaningful 'outer' flight path information should only be produced at the time when actual changes are being proposed to such flight paths such as when a draft major development plan is being prepared for a new runway. To ensure that this information is available to the public for the consultation phase in preparing such plans, the Government will amend the Airports Act 1996 Regulations to require detailed 'outer' flight path information to be produced for any future major development plan that could substantially affect aircraft flight paths.

**Recommendation 7—That BAC investigate different community consultation models in order to identify the various ways in which more effective community consultation can be conducted.**

This matter will be taken up in developing airport consultation guidelines to assist airport operators in better managing their consultation processes.

**Recommendation 8—That the dual roles of Airservices Australia of government adviser and external consultant be critically examined to determine whether there is potential for conflict of interest.**

The Government announced in November 1999 its intention to corporatise Airservices Australia and to introduce some measured competition to the provision of airport based air traffic control services and aviation rescue and fire fighting services.

As part of that process the Government is reviewing Airservices Australia's two regulatory functions (airspace and environmental management) to determine how they might be best undertaken post-corporatisation. This examination will take into

account potential conflicts of interest and the need for any protocol arrangements to separate commercial from regulatory functions. In the meantime Airservices has initiated its own internal procedures to formalise its approach to the avoidance of conflict of interest situations.

**Recommendation 9—That a noise amelioration program, similar to that announced by the Minister for Transport and Regional Services for Sydney Airport, should be considered.**

Eligibility for both the Sydney Airport Noise Amelioration Program and the Adelaide Airport Noise Insulation Program is based on aircraft noise exposure calculated under the Australian Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF) system. These programs involve the insulation of existing residences within the 30 Australian Noise Exposure Index (ANEI) contour and insulation of certain existing public buildings (schools, preschools, hospitals, nursing homes and churches) within the 25 ANEI contour. In the case of Sydney the program also involved voluntary acquisition of existing residential properties and a church within the 40 ANEI contour. Since there are no properties subject to similar levels of aircraft noise exposure in areas surrounding Brisbane Airport, the Government does not intend to extend the program at this stage.

---

16 May 2002