

Chapter 1

Introduction and conduct of the inquiry

The inquiry

1.1 On 25 November 2009 the Senate referred the following matter to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 1 June 2010:

An assessment of the effectiveness of Airservices Australia's management of aircraft noise under its responsibilities to provide air traffic services and protect the environment from the effects associated with the operation of aircraft for which it has legislative jurisdiction.

In undertaking this inquiry, the committee shall consider whether Airservices Australia:

- (a) has conducted an effective, open and informed public consultation strategy with communities affected by aircraft noise;
- (b) engages with industry and business stakeholders in an open, informed and reasonable way;
- (c) has adequate triggers for public consultation under legislation and whether procedures used by Airservices Australia are compliant with these requirements;
- (d) is accountable, as a government-owned corporation, for the conduct of its noise management strategy;
- (e) has pursued and established equitable noise-sharing arrangements in meeting its responsibilities to provide air traffic services and to protect the environment from the effects associated with aircraft for which it is responsible;
- (f) requires a binding Community Consultation Charter to assist it in consulting fully and openly with communities affected by aircraft noise; and
- (g) any other related matter.

1.2 The committee subsequently resolved to extend the reporting date to allow for a more detailed examination of the issues.

1.3 Although the inquiry was prompted by concerns regarding aircraft noise and flight path changes at Perth Airport, the committee acknowledges the long standing issues associated with the management of aircraft noise at airports around Australia. Accordingly, the committee intends this report to be a broad assessment of the effectiveness of Airservices Australia's management of aircraft noise, rather than an exclusive analysis of the particular issues associated with a specific airport.

Conduct of the inquiry

1.4 The inquiry was advertised in *The Australian* newspaper and on the Internet. The committee also invited submissions from Commonwealth, state and territory governments and interested organisations and individuals.

1.5 The committee received 181 submissions on the reference. A list of submissions is provided in Appendix A.

1.6 Following referral of the inquiry, the committee held public hearings in Perth on 28 April 2010, Melbourne on 21 May 2010, Sydney on 28 May 2010 and Canberra on 10 June 2010.

1.7 The committee took evidence from approximately 40 witnesses, including representatives of aviation industry organisations, community representatives and individuals affected by aircraft noise. The committee also took evidence from representatives of government bodies at the Commonwealth, state and local level. A list of witnesses is provided in Appendix B.

1.8 The committee also undertook a site visit to Airservices Australia's facilities at Perth Airport on 27 April 2010. The committee visited the Air Traffic Control Tower and Terminal Control Unit.

The report

1.9 Chapter 2 of the report provides some background information regarding the role and responsibility of Airservices Australia. The chapter also investigates the inter-related responsibilities of key aviation stakeholders and the partnership approach to aircraft noise management.

1.10 Chapter 3 of the report focuses on the effectiveness of Airservices Australia's engagement with communities affected, or likely to be affected, by aircraft noise. The committee made use of the Western Australian Route Review Project as a case study to inform its inquiry into the effectiveness of community engagement, but also drew upon experiences of communities around Australia.

1.11 Chapter 4 of the report examines the effectiveness of Airservices Australia's management of aircraft noise at airports around Australia and the effectiveness of the Australian Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF) system as a tool to protect communities from the affects associated with airport operations.

1.12 Chapter 5 of the report discusses Airservices Australia's independence, governance arrangements and accountability mechanisms. The chapter discusses the establishment of the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman and explores the proposed administrative and governance arrangements relating to the position.

1.13 Chapter 6 of the report sets out the committee's conclusions and recommendations in relation to this inquiry.

Note on references

1.14 References to the Committee Hansard are to the proof transcript. Page numbers may vary between the proof and the official transcript.

Acknowledgements

1.15 The committee acknowledges the contribution of all those individuals and organisations who prepared written submissions and those who appeared as witnesses. Their work assisted the committee considerably in its inquiry.

1.16 The committee regrets that it was unable to hear evidence from all those who wished to appear in person during hearings and appreciates those individuals and organisations that provided extensive information to assist the committee's consideration of this matter. The committee would particularly like to thank airport operators and Airservices Australia for providing supplementary information at short notice to assist with the finalisation of the committee's report.

