

Essendon Airport Noise Management Working Group

**Report to
the Hon Anthony Albanese MP,
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Local
Government.**

April 2009

Table of Contents	Page
Executive Summary	4
Summary of Recommendations	6
Chapter 1: Background	8
Chapter 2: Aircraft Mix	10
Chapter 3: Runway Usage	14
Chapter 4: Fly Neighbourly Agreement	16
Chapter 5: Noise Buffers	18
Chapter 6: Community Consultation Committee	20
Chapter 7: Other Impacts	22
Attachment A:	
Recommendation Implementation Plan	24
Attachment B:	
Impact Analysis of Recommendations	26
Attachment C:	
Aerial View of Essendon Airport	34

This page left blank intentionally

Executive Summary

Essendon Airport is a smaller airport used by general aviation (GA), corporate jet operations and emergency services. Total aircraft movements, currently at 52,710¹, are decreasing over time and this is due to less use by GA, although they remain the majority of Airport users.

Following the examination of Airservices Australia Noise Enquiry Unit statistics regarding complaints about Essendon Airport operations, and feedback from the community through the local Federal Members of Parliament, the main causes of complaint were established. The primary cause of community concern was helicopter movements, particularly when operating during curfew hours.

Helicopter operations during curfew were 80 per cent emergency related and were undertaken by the police wing, air ambulance and the Royal Flying Doctor Service. The emergency services operators were aware of community concerns and had already instituted, when practical, noise abatement procedures to avoid residential areas such as following runways and highways when departing from and arriving at the Airport.

Outside of curfew, from 6:00 am to 11:00 pm, the main cause of helicopter complaints was about the traffic monitoring helicopter. An examination of these services showed there are two regular flights a day undertaken to monitor the peak hour traffic. The operator was also aware of community concerns and was practicing similar noise abatement procedures as the emergency services operators.

Apart from helicopters there were a number of other aircraft identified as noisy and impacting on the community. Of note were the twin-engine propeller Aerocommanders, which are mostly used for freight. The operators of these aircraft were contacted and equally expressed an awareness of the community concerns and a willingness to reduce their noise impact on the community.

There was no evidence of any aircraft operating in breach of the noise requirements or of the curfew.

In addition to the operation of noisy aircraft, several other key noise concerns for the community were revealed during investigations. These were the operation of engines while still on the ground (for safety checks or maintenance) and the noise of road traffic using Essendon Airport and Essendon Fields facilities.

On consideration of these issues the Working Group developed 16 recommendations. The key themes of the recommendations are: establishing a Community Consultative Committee (CCC) and increasing public access to noise information; using the CCC to negotiate, implement and monitor formalised Fly Neighbourly Agreements; shortening a runway, subject to investigating the impacts on the community; analysing and assessing the impacts of closing a runway; amending the Master Plan to restrict potentially noisy activities in the existing building setback; and improve the monitoring and reporting by Airservices Australia of curfew movements at Essendon Airport.

¹ As recorded by Airservices Australia

This page left blank intentionally

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Airservices Australia to examine changes to procedures for helicopters to provide for further noise mitigation in the vicinity of Essendon Airport.

Recommendation 2: The Department to monitor night time traffic at Essendon Airport for a period of three months to identify any information gaps in existing data collection and ensure compliance with curfew requirements by all operators.

Recommendation 3: Airservices Australia to develop monthly reports on curfew movements to assist the Department with monitoring curfew compliance.

Recommendation 4: Shortening the North-South runway to be implemented following further investigation of airspace safety issues and detailed modelling to support a reduction of the noise impact on surrounding residents.

Recommendation 5: A feasibility study on the potential for the future closure of the North-South runway to be undertaken by EAPL. This will include a full safety case and assessment of the likely impact on Essendon Airport, operators, community and Melbourne Airport and an annual cap on movements.

Recommendation 6: Airservices Australia, in conjunction with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, to develop a Fly Neighbourly Agreement template for Essendon Airport, to be approved by the Office of Airspace Regulation.

Recommendation 7: Once established, the Community Consultation Committee (see Rec. 10) to negotiate the content of the Fly Neighbourly Agreement for implementation.

Recommendation 8: EAPL to maintain the 20 metre building setback identified in the Master Plan.

Recommendation 9: At the earliest opportunity EAPL to review its Master Plan to formally restrict a range of potentially noisy activities (using the terms defined in the Mooney Valley Planning Scheme) in the building setback.

Recommendation 10: A Community Consultative Committee to be established immediately based on the framework agreed.

Recommendation 11: The Federal Minister responsible for Aviation to appoint the Community Consultative Committee Chair.

Recommendation 12: Further road traffic calming measures that EAPL will consider include additional speed humps and chicanes and the appearance of narrowing of the road to reduce the speed of traffic.

Recommendation 13: The Community Consultation Committee will specifically target the owners/operators of older, noisier aircraft in the Fly Neighbourly Agreement to limit their adverse noise effects.

Recommendation 14: The Airport will brief aircraft operators and other on-airport industry to encourage adherence to the ground running strategy in the Airport Environment Strategy.

Recommendation 15: In the event of ongoing offensive noise the Airport will work with the Airport Environment Officer, who has powers of enforcement under the Airports (Environment Protection) Regulations 1997.

Recommendation 16: EAPL to establish a community information page on its website.

This page left blank intentionally

1. Background

Following your approval of the Master Plan for Essendon Airport Pty Ltd (EAPL) on 31 October 2008, you requested the Airport establish a Working Group to advise you on the impact and management of issues, in particular noise, relating to aircraft operations at Essendon Airport.

The Working Group's Terms of Reference were to advise you on the following.

1. Ways to better manage and monitor the aviation noise impacts at Essendon Airport.
2. The most effective options to reduce the noise impact on nearby residents, while maintaining the viability of Essendon Airport, including:
 - a. analysing the current aircraft mix, which aircraft generate noise of most concern to nearby residents and exploring whether the mix might be altered to reduce the community impact;
 - b. analysing whether runway usage might be altered to reduce noise impacts;
 - c. better management of Fly Neighbourly flight paths and noise abatement zones;
 - d. identifying specific noise buffer zones and techniques to better shield local residences from airport operations; and
 - e. the establishment of an airport operated community consultation committee for ongoing dialogue on airport issues, including on-airport developments and noise management.

The Working Group will provide analysis on the impact of each option on the community, the operations of the airport, airport users and the wider transport, freight network.²

As instructed, the Working Group was chaired by EAPL representative Mr Mark Maskiell (CEO of Essendon Airport Pty Ltd), with membership as follows:

- Mr Kelvin Thomson MP, the Member for Wills;
- the Hon Bill Shorten MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, Parliamentary Secretary for Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction, and the Member for Maribyrnong;
- Airservices Australia, Mr Richard Dudley, General Manager Corporate Affairs; and
- The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (the Department), Ms Maureen Ellis, General Manager Aviation Environment.
- Secretariat support was provided by the Department and members were supported by officials.

The Working Group held monthly meetings between December 2008 and April 2009. Prior to the first meeting of the Working Group, members met to establish a framework for proceeding. At this meeting the expectations of members were discussed, the Terms of Reference were agreed, a timetable was established and roles were fixed. Members also agreed on the general framework for the final report.

Background papers on key areas including noise buffer zones, aircraft noise complaints, community consultation committees and fly neighbourly agreements were produced by officials for the information of members.

² The Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Media Release, 31 October 2008

While membership of the Working Group was not open to the public, input from interested parties was provided through Mr Thomson and Mr Shorten and consultation with stakeholders carried out, as required.

2. Aircraft Mix

2.1 Current Situation

Essendon Airport is predominantly a general aviation and corporate jet airport, with a significant emergency and police aircraft contingent. Airservices Australia recorded 52,710 aircraft movements for Essendon Airport in 2008: of these 37,642 were aircraft under 7 tonnes; aircraft between 7 and 136 tonnes performed 3,198 movements; and helicopters recorded 11,764 movements. The small remainder were either military aircraft or aircraft of unknown weight. There are currently two regular public transport (RPT) operators providing services at Essendon Airport: Sharp Airlines and Airlines of Tasmania. All aircraft are under 7 tonnes and fly a combined 18 to 19 times return per week, depending on demand and seasonal scheduling. Legislation³ restricts aircraft operations between 11:00 pm to 6:00 am, through a curfew, and aircraft over 45 tonnes from using Essendon Airport.

EAPL advised general aviation (GA) use of the Airport is decreasing each year at a rate of approximately 5 per cent, with movements dropping by approximately 16 per cent between 2002 and 2008. Airservices has recorded an increase in the movements of aircraft over 7 tonnes (mainly corporate jets): in 2002 these accounted for only 1.2 per cent of all airport traffic and by 2008 these accounted for 6.5 per cent.

These numbers indicate a change of aviation trend for Essendon Airport – i.e. a decline in light aircraft use of the Airport, but a notable shift towards increasing use of the Airport for corporate jet users. The Airport anticipates these trends will offset each other and aircraft movements will plateau at approximately 54,000 movements over the next 20 years (projected 53,871 total movements by 2027).

According to statistics provided by the Airservices Australia Noise Enquiry Unit, from January 2005 to January 2009 there were 107 complaints concerning propeller driven aircraft from a total of 146,062 movements⁴. For the same period the 10,362 recorded jet movements at Essendon Airport received 108 complaints. This equates to nearly 14 times⁵ the number of complaints per jet movement compared to propeller driven aircraft movements. Helicopters received 163 complaints from 30,556 movements.

Helicopter use of the Airport is also increasing. As recorded by Airservices Australia helicopter movements in 2002 at Essendon Airport were at 9,554, 14 per cent of total movements. In 2008 this had grown to 11,764 or 18 per cent of total movements. EAPL reports outside of curfew the breakdown of the helicopter movements is approximately 42 per cent police/emergency, 14 per cent media and 10 per cent oil rig transport. The remainder are private or other movements. Helicopters account for 39 per cent of noise complaints for Essendon Airport. These complaints were mainly about the noise due to flight paths and hovering. The flight paths and holding areas for helicopters and fixed wing aircraft are restrained by the proximity of Melbourne Airport airspace.

³ Air Navigation (Essendon Airport) Regulations 2001

⁴ 82,653 known propeller engine, 63,409 likely propeller engine movements

⁵ Eight times at 82,653 movements

Movements during Curfew - October 2008 to December 2008⁶:

	Type	Movements	Percentage
Fixed Wing	Air Ambulance/ RFDS ^a	229	70
	Freight Transport	53	16
	Freight Transport (jet) ^b	1	0.5
	Private	31	9.5
	Private (jet) ^c	2	0.5
	Aero Rescue	7	2
	No flight plan records	3	1
Total Fixed Wing		326	75
Helicopter	Police	35	32
	Air Ambulance/ RFDS	20	18
	Private	1	1
	Non-specified emergency	54	49
Total Helicopter		110	25
Total		436	

^a Royal Flying Doctor Service

^b Pre-curfew taxi; wheels down at 11:00 pm

^c No flight plan recorded

The sample indicates that nearly 80 per cent of movements during the curfew period were emergency services related. Freight movement of post, medical supplies and bank documents account for 12 per cent of movements. At only 8 per cent of total curfew movements, private operations appear to be less significant as a noise source.

Helicopters accounted for 25 per cent of movements during the curfew period. Almost all of these movements were emergency or police related. For the air ambulance and Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) the purpose of movements, on the whole, relate to patient transfers and medical emergencies. Police operations by helicopter during curfew include regular patrols and also emergencies.

Seven helicopter operators involved in charter operations, GA, traffic monitoring and the Police and Ambulance services were approached by the Department on behalf of the Working Group regarding their operations and awareness of community concerns about noise and their willingness to address these issues. Operators asserted that they were following established practices and control tower direction for flight paths unless there was a good safety based reason not to do so.

⁶ As provided by Airservices Australia

A common theme raised by non-emergency operators was the frequency of emergency flight (both police operations and air ambulance) being seen anecdotally as a significant source of helicopter noise complaint by the community because of the times of operation. Airservices Australia's records of complaints note several complaints made, in particular, about Police movements. On being contacted by the Department, the Police confirmed they were very aware of community complaints about their movements and eager to assist in any way they can. They also noted that complaints had increased since moving to their new hangar, which is closer to residences.

Reflected in the complaints received by Airservices Australia, residents are also greatly bothered by the traffic monitoring helicopter. The Department contacted the Australian Traffic Network in relation to its traffic monitoring for media purposes. This organisation operates a (noise compliant) Robinson R44 helicopter based at Essendon Airport and provides a traffic update service to all radio and television stations. The operator confirmed it operated a regular weekday morning departure from Essendon at 6:00am, returning at 9:00am and an afternoon departure at 3:00pm, returning at 6:00pm. The normal flight path is to follow runway 17 (to the south) and once given clearance by Air Traffic Control, continue on towards to the Westgate Bridge before then diverting to identified traffic hot-spots.

Essendon Control Tower advises on occasion the traffic patrol holds in the eastern corner of the Airport site when awaiting instructions from its operator or obtaining weather information before being cleared to depart by Air Traffic Control. Clearance can only be given when airspace operational management requirements have been considered. This includes priority aircraft to and from both Essendon and Melbourne Airports, and air traffic requirements at Melbourne Airport.

It should be noted that under the Air Navigation (Essendon Airport) Regulations 2001 a helicopter may land at, or take off from, Essendon Airport during a curfew period if the helicopter complies with the relevant maximum noise levels specified in Chapter 8 or 11 of Volume 1 of Annex 16 to the Chicago Convention (the Convention on International Civil Aviation), that are applicable to the maximum take-off weight of the helicopter.

The Airport is also a port for several older and noisier aircraft. All aircraft of this type identified by the Airport and the Department comply with the ICAO noise requirements imposed upon these aircraft. The older aircraft fly on an irregular basis. For example, one of the DC3s based at Essendon Airport runs a regular scenic dinner flight on Saturday night, but otherwise would not normally conduct any other activities. Noisier aircraft, in particular a large number of Aerocommanders that operate out of the Airport, fly more regularly. Aerocommanders are exempt from curfew restrictions as the aircraft has a maximum take-off weight (of 4 tonnes) below the curfew limit and meets ICAO Chapter 3 noise requirements.

The Department contacted a sample of the Aerocommander aircraft operators based at Essendon Airport. These aircraft are used by a number of businesses for freight and airborne surveying. Discussions with the operators found their operations were predominantly freight, and the large majority of movements were made outside of curfew hours. Restricting these operations would have a major impact on the air operators involved and provision of the services.

2.2 Key Issues

- Helicopter movements including associated noise, flight paths and hovering were key issues of concern to the community.
- Jet aircraft account for a disproportionately high number of complaints to movements.
- During curfew, 8 out of 10 movements are for medical or emergency situations.
- While older aircraft using Essendon Airport are the subject of noise complaints, all are compliant with ICAO noise requirements.
- Airservices Australia reports the major causes of complaint are helicopters (39 per cent), aircraft height (28 per cent) and flight paths (27 per cent).

2.3 Options

The Working Group agreed some additional monitoring of Airport use may assist in identifying further options for mitigating against the impact of aircraft noise, particularly night time noise on the surrounding community. Current movement data compiled by Airservices Australia for Essendon Airport during curfew hours detects all aircraft movements with an active transponder but is not able to identify every aircraft movement through the Airport. The Essendon Tower is closed from 10:00 pm until 6:15 am during weekdays (later on the weekend) and Essendon air traffic monitoring services are provided from the Melbourne Air Traffic Services Centre. There is also limited data available to explain those unspecified emergency movements (other than Victoria Police and RFDS) identified in the data sample provided for October to December 2008.

Airservices Australia and the Department will work together on current curfew monitoring to ensure monthly curfew movement reports for Essendon are available and include all available movement data. The Department continues to provide detail of curfew dispensations granted for Essendon, consistent with the other airports subject to curfew (Sydney, Adelaide and Coolangatta). However, curfew dispensations for Essendon Airport are rarely requested or granted.

2.4 Recommendation

Airservices Australia to examine changes to procedures for helicopters to provide for further noise mitigation in the vicinity of Essendon Airport (**Recommendation 1**).

The Department to monitor night time traffic at Essendon Airport for a period of three months to identify any information gaps in existing data collection and ensure compliance with curfew requirements by all operators (**Recommendation 2**).

Airservices Australia to develop monthly reports on curfew movements to assist the Department with monitoring curfew compliance (**Recommendation 3**).

3. Runway Usage

3.1 Current Situation

Essendon Airport has two runways that cross over in a North-South (17/35) and East-West (08/26) configuration. The North-South runway is 1,503 metres long and the East-West runway is 1,921 metres long. The majority of aircraft movements, 60 per cent of arrivals and 68 per cent of departures, are on the North-South runway. The majority of the remaining arrivals and departures are landing on the easterly end and taking off from the westerly end of the East-West runway. Only two per cent of take offs and landings are landing on the westerly end and taking off from the easterly end of the East-West runway.

The distribution of aircraft movements is determined by weather conditions and air traffic from Melbourne Airport, which lies 10 kilometres to the North-West of Essendon Airport. EAPL advised the East-West runway is used by the larger aircraft, such as Bombardier Global Express XRS (a very long range Corporate jet seating 8-18 passengers and 4 crew), while light aircraft like the Cessna 172 (a four seat single propeller model) are more susceptible to cross winds and require runway options for alternative approaches during strong winds.

The majority of complaints made to the Noise Enquiry Unit by residents living in the vicinity of the Airport, come from the suburbs of Strathmore, Essendon North and Essendon. The Department's examination of the flight tracks identified these suburbs as most often beneath the approach and departure phases of flight by aircraft using Essendon Airport. The main complaints made by residents to Airservices Australia from January 2005 to January 2009 related to aircraft height (28.5 per cent), flight paths (27 per cent) and the increased frequency of aircraft movements (23 per cent).

3.2 Key Issues

- Most complaints are received from residents living to the East of the Airport.
- The majority of takeoffs and landings are performed on the North-South runway.

3.3 Options

At the instigation of EAPL representatives, members examined options in relation to future runway use that would help to mitigate noise impacts by increasing the setback of the runway to residences (see Chapter 4). Two key options were identified. Any changes to the Airport would need to be consistent with the Master Plan and consider future noise exposure patterns around the Airport.

Option 1 would involve shortening the length of the North-South runway by moving the southern threshold northwards, by approximately 469 metres. This would involve the actual removal of the 400 metres of tarmac from the southern end of the runway. The length of the runway would be reduced to about 1,040 metres. This would increase the set-back of the runway from residences and increase the minimum height of aircraft over homes South of the Airport by about 50 feet/15 metres for departing and arriving aircraft. Detailed analysis and modelling of this option would need to be undertaken to support a reduction of the noise impacts on surrounding residents. With current operations EAPL suggests this change could be implemented immediately without impact on users. This would be done only after obtaining the appropriate necessary approvals from the Civil Aviation Safety Authority.

Option 2 relates to the future of the North-South runway. With the projected decline in light aircraft (GA) using the Airport there would be a reduced need for a cross runway. The North-South taxiway may continue to be used for access to the East-West runway. Closure of the cross runway will eliminate take offs and landings over residents to the North and South of the Airport. All movements would then be along the East or West flight paths.

It will be necessary to ensure that residents to the East and West of the Airport are not adversely affected. One way to do this may be to set the 2008 level of East-West movements as an annual cap which could not be exceeded. Another approach might be to wait until total movements drop to a level such that after closure of the North-South runway the East-West movements will remain below the 2008 number of movements.

Members agreed this option warranted further investigation, particularly on traffic use of the East-West runway. Extensive consultation with all stakeholders, especially in relation to its impact on GA users of the Airport and residents under the East-West runway flight paths, would also need to be undertaken.

3.4 Recommendation

Option 1: Shortening the North-South runway to be implemented following further investigation of airspace safety issues and detailed modelling to support a reduction of the noise impact on surrounding residents (**Recommendation 4**).

Option 2: A feasibility study on the potential for the future closure of the North-South runway to be undertaken by EAPL. This will include a full safety case and assessment of the likely impact on Essendon Airport, operators, community and Melbourne Airport and an annual cap on movements (**Recommendation 5**).

4. Fly Neighbourly Agreement

4.1 Current Situation

There is currently no formal Fly Neighbourly Agreement (FNA) in place at Essendon Airport. An FNA is a voluntary code of practice negotiated between aircraft operators and communities or authorities that have an interest in reducing the disturbance caused by aircraft within a particular area. The major benefit of an FNA for the community is to reduce the noise and visual impact of aircraft.

FNAs may: provide limitations on aircraft operations including the number, height, time, or flight tracks used; detail required piloting techniques; and identify operating principles. The Civil Aviation Safety Authority's Office of Airspace Regulation has developed Guidelines for FNAs for both fixed wing aircraft and helicopters.

Any agreement reached must be consistent with the Civil Aviation Regulations 1988 and air traffic management procedures applicable to the area. Mandatory aviation operating and safety procedures and local aviation requirements have precedence over FNAs in all circumstances. FNAs should ensure police, fire, search and rescue, other emergency services and infrastructure-monitoring organisations have access to low level airspace when the need arises.

While there are no sanctions for failure to comply with FNAs (i.e. they are not legally enforceable) 'naming and shaming' for repeat offenders may be determined by the participants to be an incentive for compliance. Where FNAs have been formally established (e.g. Gold Coast Airport), experience shows the arrangements have been well accepted and have worked reasonably well.

4.2 Key Issues

- FNAs are not mandatory and are not enforceable. The parties of the FNA agree to the scope of the agreement and to monitoring, reporting and compliance arrangements.
- Advice of an FNA may be published in aeronautical charts and documents.
- An FNA for Essendon Airport must take into account the requirements and implications for Melbourne Airport.
- FNAs have the potential to limit or manage noise impacts.
- EAPL considers the Community Consultation Committee (CCC) the appropriate group to negotiate an FNA with the community and operators.

4.3 Options

Members agreed Airservices Australia, in consultation with CASA, develop a template Fly Neighbourly Agreement for Essendon Airport at the earliest opportunity. As Essendon Airport operates in the shadows of Melbourne Airport, there may be limitations on options for the FNA, such as moving flight paths away from residential areas.

Negotiations between the proposed CCC and all operators would then be required to agree the content of the FNA, monitoring and reporting requirements. A strategy for ensuring operator awareness of the agreement and ongoing compliance will also be required.

4.4 Recommendation

Airservices Australia, in conjunction with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, to develop a Fly Neighbourly Agreement template for Essendon Airport, to be approved by the Office of Airspace Regulation (**Recommendation 6**).

Once established, the Community Consultation Committee (see Rec. 10) to negotiate the content of the Fly Neighbourly Agreement for implementation (**Recommendation 7**).

5. Noise Buffers

5.1 Current Situation

A setback zone between commercial developments and residential neighbours can reduce noise and other impacts. In their 2008 Master Plan EAPL has committed to requiring all new buildings to be setback 20 metres from the Airport boundary with any adjoining residence. EAPL established a 20 metre setback to address community concerns about development on the Airport's shared boundaries with residences. The Airport continues to require this setback.

A building setback does not automatically mean that noise generating activity cannot occur in a setback zone. While the Essendon Airport Master Plan identifies the 20 metre setback it does not specify any land use restrictions for this area. To prevent industry on the Airport presenting an unacceptable risk to the neighbourhood, the Airport's Master Plan provides a threshold distance of between 100 and 5,000 metres⁷ between residences and industry, depending on the activity.

As building development continues at Essendon, it is to be expected that buildings between Airport operations areas and local residences will provide some noise shielding benefits, provided these premises themselves are quiet. In other words, commercial and light industrial development between Airport operations and local residences may act as a buffer zone for aircraft noise.

5.2 Key Issues

- While Essendon Airport has a favourable setback zone there is currently nothing to prohibit activities with adverse impacts in this zone.
- Aviation safety takes precedence in the setback zone.

5.3 Options

EAPL could immediately amend the Master Plan.

Essendon Airport could amend the Master Plan to formally restrict potentially noisy activities (using the usage terms defined in the Mooney Valley Planning Scheme) on land in the building setback

Landscaping is not recommended as a means of mitigating noise⁸. Vegetation buffers may not be appropriate in some areas of the Airport as this could result in increased bird or animal activity, which would pose a significant aviation hazard. Even if it were, the noise attenuation benefits of landscaping are modest at best.

5.4 Recommendation

EAPL to maintain the 20 metre building setback identified in the Master Plan. (**Recommendation 8**).

At the earliest opportunity EAPL to review its Master Plan to formally restrict a range of potentially noisy activities (using the terms defined in the Mooney Valley Planning Scheme) in the building setback (**Recommendation 9**).

⁷ Essendon Airport Pty Ltd Master Plan 2008, Land Use Plan Clause 52.10

⁸ Essendon Airport based on Beranek *Noise And Vibration Control*, McGraw Hill, 1992

This page left blank intentionally

6. Community Consultation Committee

6.1 Current Situation

Essendon Airport previously had a Community Consultation Committee (CCC). The committee was originally established in 2002 to deal with the singular issue of noise. Later, the Airport replaced the CCC with an arrangement of individual meetings that dealt with issues as they arose with those concerned.

Members of the Working Group considered the background paper provided by the Department and examined a variety of CCC models that have been effectively implemented at other airports, both in Australia and internationally. Members agreed, given the different circumstances of each airport and the surrounding community, that a tailored solution for Essendon Airport would be appropriate. Members identified the underlying basic principles that should apply to such a Committee with EAPL agreeing to draft a proposed model for consideration.

Input from community members also identified some issues for inclusion in CCC deliberations including: meetings to be outside of working hours; preference for the title to be a Community Advisory Committee; agendas need to be agreed and complied with; information on the Master Plan process, meetings should include genuine exchange and not a series of presentations from the Airport owners.

6.2 Key Issues

- A CCC should be implemented immediately to ensure the community is informed and involved in Airport issues.
- While the issue of an independent chair was extensively discussed, members agreed the framework should identify the purpose and power of the committee and its composition including a Chair, Airport representatives, Federal, State and Local Government representatives and community representation.
- Members also agreed the size of the committee should be limited to facilitate genuine dialogue.
- The Working Group agreed it should be left to the committee to agree the Terms of Reference within the proposed framework, when it meets, where, how often, and an appropriate work program.

6.3 Options

EAPL proposed a CCC with the following membership.

- Federal Member of Parliament (Mr Kelvin Thomson MP);
- A State Member of Parliament (the Hon Robert Hulls MP; Mrs Judy Maddigan MP; or the Hon Justin Madden MLC);
- A local Councillor from the Mooney Valley City Council (Mayor Cr Paul Guiliano; or Cr Jan Chantry);
- Two community representatives (the Hon Bill Shorten MP and Mr Kelvin Thomson MP to nominate);
- Two Airport representatives (EAPL CEO; and Operations Manager); and
- An independent Chair appointed by the Federal Minister responsible for Aviation.

6.4 Recommendation

A Community Consultative Committee to be established immediately, based on the framework agreed (**Recommendation 10**).

The Federal Minister responsible for Aviation to appoint the Community Consultative Committee Chair (**Recommendation 11**).

7. Other Impacts

In their deliberations, members discussed a number of issues outside the Terms of Reference that had adverse impacts on the community and provided scope for further action to limit the noise impacts on surrounding residents.

7.1 *Traffic Noise*

Mr Thomson, in representing his constituents, noted that inappropriate use of the new Wirraway Road entrance by 'late night hoons' and speeding drivers was creating noise and disturbances for neighbouring properties. EAPL has installed some traffic calming measures, such as roundabouts and street scaping, to reduce noise impacts.

Further road traffic calming measures that EAPL will consider include additional speed humps and chicanes and the appearance of narrowing of the road to reduce the speed of traffic (**Recommendation 12**). Reduced speed equals reduced noise in most circumstances.

Any installation of traffic calming measures should consider the mix of traffic accessing the particular road e.g. ambulance and emergency services vehicles and larger vehicles as the measures may restrict accessibility for these vehicles.

7.2 *Noisy Aircraft*

There are several older and noisier aircraft operating out of Essendon Airport, which EAPL advises has been the cause of several complaints to the Airport. Members noted it is also probable some residents may notice noise not specific to Essendon from very large jet aircraft, as the flight paths to Melbourne Airport overfly Essendon Airport.

The Department investigated the compliance of the older aircraft identified by EAPL with the ICAO noise emission standards; whether all had the required Australian Government issued noise permits; and whether they were operating within the terms of these permits.

The investigation revealed that all older or noisier aircraft were appropriately certified to operate. Some are exempt from noise certification requirements under the Air Navigation (Aircraft Noise) Regulations 1984 due to 'grandfathering' clauses. Others were conducting only limited operations, as required by their noise permits issued by the Department under the same regulations.

Members agreed the Community Consultation will specifically target the owners/operators of older, noisier aircraft in the Fly Neighbourly Agreement to limit their adverse noise effects (**Recommendation 13**).

Members acknowledge the Australian Government's proposal to phase out the ICAO marginally compliant Chapter Three and older, noisier aircraft identified in the National Aviation Policy Green Paper may also go some way to assist with reducing the noise impact of these aircraft.

7.3 *Engine Operation on Ground*

EAPL has received complaints from the community about some aircraft operators (both fixed and rotary wing) taking an excessive time to warm-up their aircraft in areas close to residences.

Engine operation associated with aircraft on the ground falls under two categories: one is ground running, and the second run-up engine noise.

Ground running of engines is an engine operation associated with the repair and maintenance of aircraft. The engine may be run at full throttle for a period of time or cycled back and forth. Helicopter ground running may occur while the aircraft is hovering. Ground running can occur for an extended period of time but is a necessary safety activity to ensure the engine has been repaired or maintained correctly.

The Essendon Airport Environment Strategy 2005-2009 restricts ground running of aircraft to the hours between 7:00am and 6:00pm Monday to Friday and 10:00am to 6:00pm on Saturday and Sunday. EAPL advises there have been no recorded instances of the ground running hours being breached.

Run-up is the pre-flight test of the engine by piston aircraft. This is a requirement of the pre-flight safety procedure for piston engine aircraft. Engine run-up usually takes between 1 and 5 minutes to complete.

Complaints made about early morning noise are, on the whole, in relation to run-ups. The Community Consultative Committee should consider the Airport's proposal to allocate an area for run-ups between the curfew hours near the centre of the Airport, when not interfering with the movement of other traffic.

Under the provisions of the Airport (Environment Protection) Regulations 1997 (the Regulations), noise is offensive when it, in the opinion of an Airport Environment Officer (AEO), offensively intrudes on individual, community or commercial amenity. The Regulations outline those matters the AEO should consider in determining whether offensive noise is being created.

The Airport will brief aircraft operators and other on-airport industry to encourage adherence to the ground running strategy in the Airport Environment Strategy (**Recommendation 14**). In the event of ongoing offensive noise the Airport will work with the Airport Environment Officer, who has powers of enforcement under the Airports (Environment Protection) Regulations 1997 (**Recommendation 15**).

7.4 Community Information

Input to the Working Group from community members (through their Federal representatives) highlighted a need for adequate and easily accessible information on Airport operational issues. Members agreed information on issues likely to impact on the community would be of great benefit.

To achieve this, EAPL to establish a community information page on its website (**Recommendation 16**). EAPL will have final clearance on content and with the Department and Airservices Australia making information contributions. This page will include appropriate information on the curfew, advice on the Airservices Noise Enquiry Unit and other noise information.

7.5 Curfew Arrangements

EAPL supports a noise based curfew for the Airport. However, the Airport believes a more appropriate platform to address amending current curfew arrangements is through the *National Aviation Policy* process.

Attachment A

Recommendation Implementation Plan

	Recommendation	Timeframe for delivery	Agreed by Minister	
1	Airservices Australia to examine changes to procedures for helicopters to provide for further noise mitigation in the vicinity of Essendon Airport.	By end June 2009	Yes	No
2	The Department to monitor night time traffic at Essendon Airport for a period of three months to identify any information gaps in existing data collection and ensure compliance with curfew requirements by all operators.	Implemented by 1 July 2009. Results to be reported to Minister and Working Group members by end October 2009.	Yes	No
3	Airservices Australia to develop monthly reports on curfew movements to assist the Department with monitoring curfew compliance.	To be implemented by 1 October 2009.	Yes	No
4	Shortening the North-South runway to be implemented following further investigation of airspace safety issues and detailed modelling to support a reduction of the noise impact on surrounding residents.	Investigation to be completed by end August 2009. Implementation to be determined pending the outcome of the investigation.	Yes	No
5	A feasibility study on the potential for the future closure of the North-South runway to be undertaken by EAPL. This will include a full safety case and assessment of the likely impact on Essendon Airport, operators, community and Melbourne Airport and an annual cap on movements.	Feasibility study to be completed by end December 2009. Implementation to be determined pending outcome of investigation and consultation.	Yes	No
6	Airservices Australia, in conjunction with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, to develop a Fly Neighbourly Agreement template for Essendon Airport, to be approved by the Office of Airspace Regulation.	Framework completed by end December 2009.	Yes	No
7	Once established, the Community Consultation Committee (see Rec. 10) to negotiate the content of the Fly Neighbourly Agreement for implementation.	Implementation in first quarter of 2010 calendar year.	Yes	No
8	EAPL to maintain the 20 metre building setback identified in the Master Plan.	n/a	Yes	No

	Recommendation	Timeframe for delivery	Agreed by Minister	
9	At the earliest opportunity EAPL to review its Master Plan to formally restrict a range of potentially noisy activities (using the terms defined in the Mooney Valley Planning Scheme) in the building setback.	Identification to be completed by end June 2009.	Yes	No
10	A Community Consultative Committee to be established immediately based on the framework agreed.	To be established by 1 July 2009.	Yes	No
11	The Federal Minister responsible for Aviation to appoint the Community Consultative Committee Chair.	Minister to appoint Chair by end June 2009.	Yes	No
12	Further road traffic calming measures that EAPL will consider include additional speed humps and chicanes and the appearance of narrowing of the road to reduce the speed of traffic.	Currently being implemented	Yes	No
13	The Community Consultation Committee will specifically target the owners/operators of older, noisier aircraft in the Fly Neighbourly Agreement to limit their adverse noise effects.	Implementation in first quarter of 2010 calendar year.	Yes	No
14	The airport will brief aircraft operators and other on-airport industry to encourage adherence to the ground running strategy in the Airport Environment Strategy.	Briefing to be undertaken by end June 2009 and reiterated on a 6-monthly basis.	Yes	No
15	In the event of ongoing offensive noise the Airport will work with the Airport Environment Officer, who has powers of enforcement under the Airports (Environment Protection) Regulations 1997.	As required on an ongoing basis.	Yes	No
16	EAPL to establish a community information page on its website.	To be implemented by end June 2009.	Yes	No

Impact Analysis of Recommendations

	Recommendation	Community	Airport	Air Operators	Other Stakeholders
1	Airservices Australia to examine changes to procedures for helicopters to provide for further noise mitigation in the vicinity of Essendon Airport.	Potential positive: reduction of helicopter noise near residences surrounding Essendon Airport. New procedures may increase aircraft emissions.	Potential conflicts with Melbourne Airport airspace would need to be considered by Airservices Australia and CASA.	Any recommendations would need to be implemented without placing significant limitations on emergency services operations. Operators will need to understand possible new procedures and ensure they are followed. New procedures may increase fuel use.	Negligible impact.
2	The Department to monitor night time traffic at Essendon Airport for a period of three months to identify any information gaps in existing data collection and ensure compliance with curfew requirements by all operators.	Potentially positive: better understanding of movements during curfew. May increase assurance that the curfew is being monitored and enforced. Potentially fewer movements during curfew as scrutiny may encourage air operators to reconsider flight schedules.	Potentially positive: improved community perception of the airport.	Potentially negative: more scrutiny of operations may lead operators to limit movements during curfew thereby restricting or limiting operations.	Additional monitoring, follow up with industry, and possible prosecution action will need to be undertaken by the Department. Department to undertake proactive industry curfew education program, level of which would be dependent on the findings of the monitoring.

	Recommendation	Community	Airport	Air Operators	Other Stakeholders
3	Airservices Australia to develop monthly reports on curfew movements to assist the Department with monitoring curfew compliance.	<p>Potentially positive: better understanding of movements during curfew.</p> <p>Potentially fewer movements during curfew as scrutiny may encourage air operators to reconsider flight schedules.</p>	<p>Potentially positive: improved community perception of the airport.</p> <p>Existing air operators may feel over regulated and move their operations to other airports.</p>	<p>Potentially negative: more scrutiny of operations may lead to limiting movements.</p> <p>Compliance with curfew limitations could lead to enforcement and potential prosecution action by the Department.</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring, follow up with industry, and possible prosecution action will need to be undertaken by the Department and Airservices Australia.</p> <p>Department to undertake proactive industry curfew education program, level of which would be dependent on the findings of the monitoring.</p> <p>Ministerial Direction to Airservices Australia currently addressing monitoring of all other curfew airports would need to be amended to include Essendon Airport.</p>

	Recommendation	Community	Airport	Air Operators	Other Stakeholders
4	Shortening the North-South runway to be implemented following further investigation of airspace safety issues and detailed modelling to support a reduction of the noise impact on surrounding residents.	<p>Potential for reduced noise and emissions on the community to the South of Essendon Airport if air operators change their operational procedures for landings.</p> <p>It has been suggested noise and emissions could increase to the South of the Essendon Airport as aircraft may need to increase thrust to take-off on a shorter runway.</p> <p>Expected 50 feet (15 metres) increase in the minimum height over residences is unlikely to noticeably decrease perceived noise however the increase in minimum height is a positive initiative for the community.</p> <p>The 400 metre increase in the setback area from the end of the runway to residential areas will be seen as a positive by residents.</p>	<p>Any changes to operational procedures would need Airservices Australia and CASA agreement.</p> <p>Shortening the runway in itself does not necessarily lead to altering the Master Plan but a change in the use of the land under the existing sections of the runway to a use that is currently prohibited by the Master Plan would, at minimum, require a variation to the current Master Plan.</p> <p>Changes to demand for runway use by air operators may impact on Airport's viability.</p>	<p>Although the runway has previously been shortened with reportedly no negative repercussions some resistance from operators is expected.</p> <p>May increase fuel use and emissions.</p> <p>May impact on runway use in inclement weather.</p>	<p>Non-aeronautic logistics and freight transport companies may also resist runway changes if it impacts on the supply of goods underpinning their financial viability.</p> <p>Additional costs (set-up and operational) if freight companies required to move to alternative airports.</p> <p>There could be access concerns for users of time sensitive freight services (e.g. medical supplies).</p>

	Recommendation	Community	Airport	Air Operators	Other Stakeholders
5	A feasibility study on the potential for the future closure of the North-South runway to be undertaken by EAPL. This will include a full safety case and assessment of the likely impact on Essendon Airport, operators, community and Melbourne Airport and an annual cap on movements.	<p>Potential positive impact on residents immediately to the North and South of Essendon Airport.</p> <p>Potential negative impact: noise concentration for residents to the East and West of Essendon Airport</p> <p>Increased taxi distances to runways further away could increase ground noise.</p>	<p>Any changes to operational procedures would need Airservices Australia and CASA agreement.</p> <p>Airport would need to consult with industry and community.</p> <p>Master Plan would need to be amended.</p> <p>Potential development opportunities for the land currently impacted by the North-South runway.</p> <p>Closure of the runway, if considered feasible, is likely to have an impact on the airport's operational capacity.</p>	<p>Operational limitations of one runway could lead to flight cancellations in times of strong winds.</p> <p>Increased taxi distances May have implications for fuel use and emissions.</p>	<p>Non-aeronautic logistics and freight transport companies may also resist runway changes if it impacts on the supply of goods underpinning their financial viability.</p> <p>Additional costs (set-up and operational) if freight companies required to move to alternative airports.</p> <p>There could be access concerns for users of time sensitive freight services (e.g. medical supplies).</p>

	Recommendation	Community	Airport	Air Operators	Other Stakeholders
6 & 7	<p>Airservices Australia, in conjunction with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, to develop a Fly Neighbourly Agreement template for Essendon Airport, to be approved by the Office of Airspace Regulation.</p> <p>Once established, the Community Consultation Committee (see Rec. 10) to negotiate the content of the Fly Neighbourly Agreement for implementation.</p>	<p>Potential positive impacts on community if flight paths are diverted away from residential areas.</p> <p>Depending on the current noise impact of operations on residents, proposals of noise sharing could be either positive or negative.</p> <p>New procedures may increase aircraft emissions.</p>	<p>As part of the CCC ensure ongoing compliance with the Fly Neighbourly Agreement.</p> <p>May force operators to shift operations to other airports. Could have negative impact on airport's financial viability.</p>	<p>Operators will need to understand possible new procedures.</p> <p>New procedures may increase fuel use.</p>	<p>Additional costs (set-up and operational) if freight companies required to move to alternative airports.</p> <p>There could be access concerns for users of time sensitive freight services (e.g. medical supplies).</p>
8 & 9	<p>EAPL to maintain the 20 metre building setback identified in the Master Plan.</p> <p>At the earliest opportunity EAPL to review its Master Plan to formally restrict a range of potentially noisy activities (using the terms defined in the Mooney Valley Planning Scheme) in the building setback.</p>	<p>Formal recognition of the current set back may reassure the community.</p> <p>Possible decreases in noise as long as any industry abutting the building set back is appropriately sited (including facing away from built-up areas)</p>	<p>Minimal or no impact as building setback areas have been in place for some time.</p>	<p>Negligible impact.</p>	<p>Negligible impact.</p>

	Recommendation	Community	Airport	Air Operators	Other Stakeholders
10	A Community Consultative Committee to be established immediately based on the framework agreed.	<p>Potential positive impact. Community may feel empowered and participate in outcomes to the benefit of the community.</p> <p>Potential negative impact if community does not feel level of representation (number of community representatives) is adequate.</p>	Potentially positive: improved community perception of the Airport.	Lack of representative role on the CCC could make operators feel sidelined or disengaged.	<p>National Aviation Policy Statement (White Paper) is expected to suggest implementing CCCs at ‘major’ federally leased airports.</p> <p>Recognising that each airport has different operating environments, the Essendon CCC framework could be used as a model.</p> <p>Airservices Australia to provide noise complaint statistics to CCC meetings, similar to all other existing CCCs.</p>
11	The Federal Minister responsible for Aviation to appoint the Community Consultative Committee Chair.	Potentially positive: community may see Chair as truly independent.	Negligible impact.	Negligible impact.	National aviation and general community could create expectations that the Essendon CCC model might be a blueprint for National Aviation Policy Statement (White Paper), when in fact each federally leased airport is different.

	Recommendation	Community	Airport	Air Operators	Other Stakeholders
12	Further road traffic calming measures that EAPL will consider include additional speed humps and chicanes and the appearance of narrowing of the road to reduce the speed of traffic.	Potentially positive: reduced vehicle speed should reduce road traffic noise impact on residents near Essendon Airport.	Implementation and ongoing maintenance costs.	Negligible impact.	Negligible impact.
13	The Community Consultation Committee will specifically target the owners/operators of older, noisier aircraft in the Fly Neighbourly Agreement to limit their adverse noise effects.	Depending on the current noise impact of operations on residents, proposals of noise sharing could be either positive or negative.	As part of the CCC ensure ongoing compliance with the Fly Neighbourly Agreement.	<p>Could place limitations on operators of older and noisier aircraft and impact on their financial viability.</p> <p>Operators of noisy but compliant aircraft may be vilified.</p> <p>Operators will need to understand possible new procedures.</p> <p>Possible increased fuel costs and emissions due to implementation of new procedures.</p> <p>Potential cost if required to upgrade fleet.</p>	Tourism based operators, such as the DC-3 scenic/dinner flights, could experience detrimental financial effects if their aircraft were limited or banned from operating at Essendon Airport.

	Recommendation	Community	Airport	Air Operators	Other Stakeholders
14 & 15	<p>The Airport will brief aircraft operators and other on-airport industry to encourage adherence to the ground running strategy in the Airport Environment Strategy.</p> <p>In the event of ongoing offensive noise the Airport will work with the Airport Environment Officer, who has powers of enforcement under the Airports (Environment Protection) Regulations 1997.</p>	<p>Potential positive: reduced noise impact from ground noise on neighbouring residents.</p>	<p>Airport would need to invest time and expertise in initial briefing of operators and ongoing management/monitoring.</p> <p>Potentially positive: improved community perception of the Airport.</p>	<p>Enforced compliance with requirements of the Airport Environment Strategy and the Regulations and to an environment protection order if or when issued</p>	<p>Additional monitoring, follow up with industry, and possible enforcement action will need to be undertaken by the Airport Environment Officer.</p>
16	<p>EAPL to establish a community information page on its website.</p>	<p>Potentially positive: better understanding of aircraft movements, tolerance and access to relevant aviation specific information.</p>	<p>Small financial cost to establish the information page and coordination with industry.</p> <p>Potentially positive: improved community perception of the Airport.</p>	<p>Potentially positive: improved community perception of the Air Operators.</p>	<p>The Department and Airservices Australia to ensure any material provided for this website is up to date.</p> <p>Additional community knowledge may increase level of complaints to Airservices Australia's Noise Enquiry Unit.</p>

Essendon Airport

