

RESPONSE TO AIRPORTS DISCUSSION PAPER JUN09

By Juliet Peters, 30 July 2009

INTRODUCTION

The number one factor effecting the public is noise and air pollution issues caused by airline traffic I am surprised that these issues are not open to debate in this latest discussion paper.

1.0 It appears that the only issue allowed for debate is whether unit developments should be built next to airports. We need expert reports on this to comment on. It limits the scope of debate if no facts and figures and produced. Here's my common sense argument: **I am not sure that adding stress to pilots is a good thing.** The opposing argument that building work always leads to a stronger economy is an argument lacking in "big picture" thinking. It supplies jobs in the short term. If the people living in those developments find the noise stressful, or planes flying so close to their units stressful, then it may be we are creating future problems for the Australian public: stress related illness. The government would do well to consider the wellbeing of Australians along side short term money making projects. A lowering of the standard of Australians over the long term can never be a good decision, even if there is some short term advantage to a few. Where there is no adverse and stressful effect of people generally then the government is free to make decisions that further benefit society. **On this whole issue of noise and air pollution it appears that the effect of the public has been ignored totally.** Mr Albanese has failed if every debating point in this discussion paper does not also explain noise and air pollution.

Pros for Units being built close to Airports

1.1 Land around airports is cheap (because no-one wants to live close to airports). If a developer builds units using the latest technology in double glazing it is possible that units may have less noise pollution. The units may sell in an environment where cheap housing is in short demand and this may be an option for people who simply have no choice. They can't afford living in a home that has peace and quiet so have to buy a unit that could create stress in their lives (rather than a place to get away from stress).

Cons for Units being built close to Airports

1.2 Without seeing a report by the Pilots Association I am hazarding a guess that pilots may find it stressful having to land planes between high rise towers, even if technology means it is perfectly safe. **Stress**

to pilots is probably the most serious safety issue. It isn't technology failing that has created disasters in aviation. It is pilot error. I am thinking of the pilot that caused deaths when he landed a plane too fast in a mental state of excitement. He was singing at the top of his voice. According to experts he was mentally ill. We know that some pilots take banned substances (a banned substance was found in a taxi after a pilot inadvertently left it there). It all points to one thing: pilots may be suffering stress related illnesses.

1.3 The Cons for creating "stress inducing homes" are it is not good for society. We want happy, motivated Australians. The economy will always be stronger where we Australians are feeling well and happy with our lives. Stress causes depression. "Helpless" stress (when one can't do anything about the stress that has been imposed on us by others or other people's lifestyles) leads to the worse types of depression. Since people like to live in quiet suburbs it is important that this is always in the minds of politicians. Creating an environment people find stressful and unpleasant is not an achievement. It is a lack of compassion and common sense. Even if developers might make profit and there are short term jobs to be had it may still not be the best decision when looking at the "big picture": How Australians want to live. Do you know anyone who would pick living next to an airport over living in a quiet leafy suburb. We need time to think and reflect. It is very important for our health and wellbeing.

Conclusion

1.4 Unless a psychologist's report is produced that states the contrary, stress is one of the most insidious problems facing our society. Creating a stressed out society causes problems in the long term: an unhealthy and unhappy society. **Creating an environment that people don't want to live in is not a great achievement for any government. It takes a person of integrity to make decisions for long term goals.** To achieve long term goals, developments around airports should be left to other industrial purposes that also make noise (and built appropriate with double glazing etc). Areas around airports should be "noise pollution zones". "Living zones" should be protected peaceful environments. Most Councils have laws (LEPs) that make it law that noisy businesses cannot operate in residential areas. What I am arguing is nothing new. However I am concerned that governments fail to observe these laws and why they were made in the first place. It is important to maintain a high standard of living for Australians. That isn't about money. Its about the environment people want to live in: attractive and peaceful.

1.5 I am writing a web site that will measure the success of each leader in terms of what a leader has achieved in terms of a) standard of living b) respect to the environment c) reduction in carbon pollution. Of course one aspect of "standard of living" is having a job. But it isn't the only thing. Jobs can be created that

also meet the three objectives above. It would be hard for any government to argue that lowering in the standard of living is an achievement. Quality of life includes living in a peaceful environment. Being able to listen to the birds sing. **This is why aviation is such an important topic.** It has created more and more corridors of noise and air pollution. **That means areas that once lived in peaceful environments now suffer noise pollution. It is an important measurement of an integrity of a government to measure how many thousands of people have a reduced quality of life as a direct consequence of a decision that showed disinterest in how noise effects quality of life.** Maybe when a government sees a list of its failures in terms of standard of living it might learn that it is important. That it doesn't look good.

1.6 If this government thinks having a quiet environment is of little or no importance to the public then I challenge the government to do a survey on this issue. Because you are wrong. You are not in touch with what the people want. It isn't even as simple as wanting. Its needing. People need to have stillness to unwind. It is necessary for health and wellbeing. This is a subject that is as important as good food and clean water. We are talking about essentials for health. And I would be interested in seeing arguments that noise doesn't effecting health. It would be an interesting debate. We have research that states that constant interruptions, even over a few hours, causes people to lose their ability to concentrate and remember things. We know that even one hour less sleep creates one hour that must be made up. Or ill health starts to develop. Because sleep is when healing is done.

Creating environments of stress must be taken seriously. Noise creates stress.

ISSUES NOT RAISED IN THE LATEST PAPER

Flight Paths

2.1 I need to ask this question: **why aren't we at the stage of making some decisions on where flight paths should go.** Even if Mr Albanese has made decisions (and therefore doesn't propose any further debate), shouldn't he give us his decisions, and his reasonings, explaining both sides of the argument. Why so secretive? Opening up a subject to debate is more than just taking submissions. Mr Albanese needs to explain both sides of all arguments and where he is leaning in relation to a decision. Does anyone deny the following facts that I outlined in my previous submission. In short that is:

2.2 Up until 2008 flight paths Melbourne to Brisbane and Sydney to Brisbane took a flight path well west of the western NSW cities such as Stroud and Armadale. Pilots followed a "signal" emitting from

somewhere just north of Brisbane (according to Air Services). This signal is was a straight line from Sydney to Brisbane following the shortest distance. Luckily it also creates the minimum amount of noise pollution avoiding the NSW tourists towns.

2.3 Around December 2008 I noticed that areas that tourist destinations that were previously quiet where no longer so. National parks away from noisy roads were once wonderful places to get away from busy city life. In choosing a weekend away destination the process was simply ensuring that the place you stayed was nowhere near the highway. Plane noise was not a consideration. Planes didn't fly over country NSW. But not any more.

2.4 I used to live in Fairlight in Sydney. In March 2007 I noticed the first planes fly over the suburb. The flight paths out of Sydney are numbered on a map A-F. Flight path E was a northern direction flight path and look planes out through the Heads and up the coast over sea. When this flight path was designed by a previous government it was clearly to avoid noise pollution. **The governments took the issue of noise seriously.** Flight paths were chosen to minimise noise pollution. Not just taking off from the airport but also at the cruising height. A plane makes substantial noise the full length of its journey.

2.5 There are now monitors that show where planes fly in the city so pilots that disregard the flight path system can be discovered. **I would like to know as part of this discussion process whether this is working? Do pilots get fined? How many pilots per day ignor flight paths?** This type of information helps with debate on how to tackle this newly formed issue. It was never an issue more than two years ago. It would be interesting debate as to why this has happened. **Do pilots no longer respect the regulations and no longer care about creating noise pollution. Where once they did care?**

2.6 These issues are of interest to the public. So can we open it up for discussion please. If not in an Aviation Discussion paper then when?

2.7 The new "pilot designed" flight paths are as follows:

There are three flight paths that run from Sydney to Brisbane.

- The first runs over the eastern beaches. Standing on the coast north of Hawkes Nest beach I counted five planes in half an hour (thus a flight path).

- The second runs about 1km west of the Pacific Highway. When driving up the Pacific Highway a plane flies past roughly once every 5-10 minutes.
- The third flight path runs 20 km inland of the Pacific Highway. Take a line north and south from the Promised Land national park which is about 5 km west of Bellingen.
- On the return from Brisbane I can only say that there are flight paths over the towns of Armadale and Tenterfield. I have not studied that area other than driving through those towns.

2.8 The current flight paths fly over our NSW tourist destinations. **Could the government estimate what the cost to the economy is likely to be by creating noise pollution over tourist areas?** It is interesting to note that the only issue raised in previous discussion papers is that the government must assist the aviation industry because it helps the economy. Yet no evidence was provided as to how this dogma was reached. In fact the evidence points to quite the opposite. Since 2000 the Australian tourism industry has been in sharp decline despite hefty amounts of advertising around the world. So it's not lack of advertising so why the decline? After all since that time there has been several new airlines to help our economy. The truth is that noise is not attractive to tourists: **TOURISTS LIKE PEACE AND QUIET WHEN THEY GO ON HOLIDAY.** People fly to get away from noisy city life. However they don't want to listen to the noise they are creating. Noisy destinations cannot compete with quiet destinations. Have you ever seen an advertisement that states a resort where you can "hear the planes". Popular destinations promise peace and tranquility and an encouragement to "come listen to the birds". Would the Minister choose a destination that stated "come listen to the flight path Sydney to Brisbane". Witness the lack of respect of wildlife's sensitive hearing. Witness the annoyance it causes everyone.

2.9 Another fact is that more planes in our skies have not encouraged Australians to fly to Australian destinations. Australians are more and more flying overseas for their holidays. Again not surprising. I had a holiday in Bellingen recently and it is one of my favourite places in the world. But I won't do that again until the flight paths are under control. **Once I listened to nature. The last visit I was forced to listen to planes.** Not at all relaxing just annoying. **It comes as no surprise to me to note that tourism numbers are down in Australia.** Any marketing expert knows that you have to meet what the public wants. The public doesn't want to hear planes. They want to hear birds. The facts speak for themselves. **An increase in plane numbers has not assisted our economy. It has harmed it.** It has impaired the ability of Australians to attract both the domestic and international tourism markets. There is absolutely no data that points to more planes meaning more tourism activity. It is the complete opposite. More planes means more noise means less tourists. When they fly over the tourist destinations. **It is bad**

planning to allow this to continue to happen.

2.10 We can maintain a peaceful environment in which to live and to holiday if we have a plan.

Let's get a plan. This is what needs to be done:

2.11 Using the flight path west well west of the western NSW towns used to work two years ago. So it can work now. It is the job of Air Services to control air traffic. They have failed. Has Air Services produced a report that identifies where the flight paths now are? And what they suggest to do about the current problem? Their lack of interest in the matter does indicate why we have the problem in the first place. Maybe they are plane enthusiasts themselves and see the issue entirely from the view of some pilots who are in denial about the noise and air pollution they cause.

2.12 Pilots need to provide a submission as to how many flight paths are necessary. We need CASA to explain how many planes per flight path is safe. We also need to know whether some flight paths should be over water (ie 10km out over water to avoid noise pollution over our beaches). Perhaps one flight path out over water and one flight path out west, at least 20 km away from national parks or tourist destinations. **Could the next paper draw up some alternatives for consideration?**

2.13 The next issue is how to monitor flight paths. In the past two years pilots have shown that without control they will not respect flight paths. The public would like to know how this came about? Have the Pilots Association been given the opportunity to make their case? Do they deny that they are no longer using the Brisbane signal system? As to monitoring, we can thank technology that we already have the answer. There are monitors that can pick up what plane is where. We therefore need to have an internet site (just like the city ones) which shows planes as they fly over the flight path out west. It would also list on a daily basis planes that took off and did not get recorded flying over the monitor. If they failed to keep to the flight path. Then pilots should explain the reason.

2.14 The next issue is whether the government is going to do anything to dissuade the individual ownership of planes. How does this fit with the objective of the government in relation to its global warming targets? What is the projected figure of plane ownership over the next 5-10 years. Is it an objective of the government that we all use our own plane as the ultimate life style accessory? Or would that mean hundreds of flight paths and the end of peace in this country. The absolute end of tourism in this country? Would anyone actually like to live under constant plane noise? Is there ever going to come

a time when planes make no noise and do not pollute the environment? The answer to that is we cannot sustainably aspire to owning our own plane. At some point the government will have to say enough is enough. **Isn't the time now?** Is it responsible for 10 individually owned planes to follow a half empty passenger jet from Sydney to Brisbane? Can we rely on people always making responsible decisions when it comes to the ultimate in convenience. How many thousands of Australians need to install solar panels to cover the emissions created by one person travelling to work by plane? The simple act of publishing such figures will put the focus on this issue so some members of the public make better choices in their means of transport.

2.15 I have seen dogma used by Air Services who inform me that “planes may not make any noise” whatever that means! Mr Albanese uses dogma such as more planes mean a stronger economy. When someone believes something that has never been proven, and is incorrect in fact, it is brainwashing. It means there are words (dogma) that one believes without question. Has this happened here? When a Minister cannot explain why he has taken one argument over another, doesn't that spell a problem? Does it mean he is convinced but can't explain how he came to be convinced. Get the facts. Take up my invitation and come see how noisy they the planes are.

2.16 **If the government can only think in terms of the economy then hear this: the economy will suffer in the future if we don't do everything we can in relation to carbon emissions. And top of the list of air polluters is planes.** By dissuading individual plane ownership it will lead to less congested airports and flight paths. It will assist the airlines by getting these people onto scheduled flights. It will mean we may not need a second Sydney airport. **We need to see how many planes per day land, and how many of those are scheduled flights compared to one passenger planes.** This is a critical area where many problems are solved and leads to costs savings. Can the government justify the public paying for another airport to allow 60 people to land their planes every day? Isn't the cost to the public and the environment too high a price to pay for such a luxury. A luxury that is unsustainable.

2.17 Flight paths must avoid national parks (by 20km). Pilots are currently breaking the laws that protect national parks. **National parks must be kept in their “natural” environment.** Wildlife has sensitive hearing to enable them to hear pray. The sound of a plane is not natural. It is not a noise that wildlife can identify. **Unless the government would like to change the laws so that national parks are not “natural” environments then pilots are currently breaking the law.**

2.18 The law requires real estate salespeople to disclose all negatives about a property to a prospective vendor. It may be obvious that a house next to a freeway is going to be noisy to live in but one may not know that the house is under an flight path or an RAAF training area. We have moved forward in relation to responsibility we all have to each other. Everything isn't always just about money (eg making a sale). **We are responsible for telling the truth.** A person is going to feel very stressed having made a purchase and finding out later it is an undesirable place to live. Maybe the land was required for eco-tourism. The salesperson of a property has no way of informing a prospective buyer. Because the information has not been made public. When buying property people need to know if they are under a flight path.

3.1 **Your options are either of:**

A) If it is the goal of the government to a) decrease carbon emissions b) increase standard of living (peace) c) create an attractive peaceful tourism environment and c) treat people with respect by not imposing unnecessary noise pollution on them (ie treat people how you would like them to treat each other) then control plane noise and dissuade the public from using a plane as a means of transport.

B) If the goal of the government is to a) increase carbon emissions b) destroy tourism by creating noisy environments c) decrease the standard of living (take away any peace in the day) and d) disrespect people so they in turn disrespect others then do nothing about controlling flight paths or plane ownership.

3.2 And let us know what you decide. The public would assume it would be A. There are too many reasons to control flight paths. I cannot see that having to travel first class on a scheduled flight can cause any massive problem to someone's lifestyle (over owning one's own plane). People complained when water restrictions were imposed onto them. But in the end it worked. Forcing respect of the environment works because even those who don't like it at first get to understand it is necessary for the greater good of the public. It is the role of government to help people make the right choices by not always allowing complete freedom of choice. Some lifestyles are unsustainable and have too greater cost to the public purse and the environment.

4.0 THE RAAF

- 4.1 It appears this paper is also taking submission of the RAAF. The same issues apply.
- 4.2 I can give you information on the RAAF at Williamstown. When I moved from Fairlight in Sydney I moved to Bulahdelah, 1 hour from Newcastle and the RAAF airport at Williamstown (close to Newcastle). I am involved with an Eco Tourism project and I was doing research on possible sites. I chose the Myall Lakes National Parks because of its close proximity to the city of Newcastle and Sydney. A perfect location for residents of those cities to have a short break. Obviously peace and quiet was essential. The national parks in this area are very beautiful. With massive lake systems, beautiful beaches and beautiful mountains and national parks. **Perfect.** I chose some land and signed the contract of sale. Nothing in it said anything about flight paths. Or RAAF training.
- 4.3 It did occur to me odd that this area did not have many hotels and restaurants. The same distance south of Sydney (Berry) has hundred of B&Bs, hotels etc. It was very odd. I had read articles in magazines by people posing the same question. Why is this area not a booming tourism destination.
- 4.4 The contract was signed in October 2008 and I spent the entire Sunday on the property. I spent many weeks in the area looking and learning about what the area had to offer. It was all perfect. At that time flight paths were not over this area, and the RAAF were not training. When I returned six months later all was revealed. I moved into Bulahdelah while I went through the process of Council applications. And I got a shock. **When visiting the land being purchased there was never more than 5 minutes of peace.** Six months previously I heard nothing but birds. It had gone from a perfect eco tourism site to totally unsuitable. I started asking questions. I had not been informed that this was a flight path OR an RAAF training area. Or that the RAAF training was this bad! It was deafening. And right over the Myall Lakes National Parks. It occurred to me that the RAAF was clearly not observing the laws that protect national parks to enjoy a natural environment. They should be avoiding national parks by at least 20km to keep them in a natural environment. Does the Minister for Defence know what is going on?
- 4.5 **RAAF should not be training in the same areas as passenger planes.** I made several phone calls to the Williamstown Information Officer and Air Services. I learned that:
- According to the RAAF Information Officer the RAAF train from Newcastle up to Foster and Taree. West to Stroud. Including west of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley area. **All critically**

important tourism areas.

- I asked why they didn't fly out to sea or fly out west and do the practice flying over areas where people didn't live or depend on tourism. A rather obvious question. The answer was that they were not to fly close to passenger jet routes which were out west. Interesting. **I asked if she knew that the flight paths were no longer out west but right over the areas the RAAF also use.** I have done my best to inform her and the government. But it is still happening, six months after my reports to various government departments. If previous governments thought it was not safe why does this government think it is? Why is it taking so long for the situation to be solved?
- **Airservices were unaware that planes were not travelling on the flight paths and were now flying over the RAAF training areas.** Clearly no one is watching what is going on. Air Services should know where the flight paths are. I should not have been the one to tell them. Nor were they interested when I told them. Nor were they interested they are flying in the RAAF training zone. In fact nothing interested them. I just received answers such as pilot can fly wherever they like. I asked if this was a government directive. Had the government decided to allow pilots freedom to noise pollute where the views are best. But I didn't get a reply. I challenged them that it was not up to Air Services to allow pilots freedom where to fly it could only be the government. But the government has not made any announcement to that effect. **So we need some explanation of this.** Previous governments organised flight paths out west (the shortest distance AND create the least disturbance to the population). Does the government want a more noisy Australia?

4.6 **If a previous government considered it was a safety issue that RAAF and flight paths be kept separate, is it the decision of this government that they co-exist.** Co-exist to maximum noise pollution over national parks, tourist towns and places where people live. Shouldn't both be out west?

4.7 Should they co-exist. I am sure technology is such that an RAAF plane may not collide with a passenger jet is of high risk. Perhaps RAAF pilots keep an eye open and they have radar screens. But I do not think they should be operating in the same area. What if an RAAF pilot had a heart attack? With planes flying in the area every five minutes it is not unlikely that there could be a collision. No I don't think they should be in the same area. Because a jet plane hitting a passenger jet is so horrendous that just being unlikely is not good enough. It cannot happen if they are not in the

same area. So what do the Ministers think. Right now it appears they are not worried.

- 4.8 The RAAF, like passenger jets, are currently breaking the law. Wildlife have sensitive hearing (to hear prey). Evolution takes hundreds of generations to change our anatomy. Birds do not have the hearing to tolerate massive noise pollution from RAAF jets. Nor do we for that matter. I am currently in Bulahdelah and I am wearing noise cancelling earphones (they are not strong enough – the noise is still irritating). Birds can't do that. **I feel sad that birds are suffering through this never ending noise.** These are birds that a previous government wanted to allow to be left in their natural environment. By making laws that they must be left in peace in that natural environment. **Problem is no-one is upholding those laws.** Can this government argue that jets flying low over national parks would not cause stress to the wildlife. Is it a “natural” environment.
- 4.9 National Parks only take up a very small percentage of a country. **So it is possible to find an RAAF training area that avoids national parks and upholds the law.** My opinion is that the RAAF should train over water only or fly out west and train only in that area and then return, so there is only one flyover in areas west of Newcastle a day. **The best option is that the RAAF move to Queanbean where the Defence Administration office is.** From there they can fly west and train in remote areas then neither effect towns, tourism or national parks. Williamstown effects National Parks, tourism areas and towns. The worst possible option of options available. The only information I have heard from Williamstown RAAF is that they fly over water “whenever possible”. No information is given as to how often or where they fly to enable people to make an informed choice of where to live or where to operate businesses.
- 4.10 It appears in the latest news that the government wants to sell off some RAAF sites but hasn't mentioned which ones. **It would be useful to know for those of us looking to invest in tourism.**
- 4.11 There are a great many issues that need determining. Such as how many flights over what areas are done on a daily basis. Does the RAAF concentrate on one area for six months then move to another. Without knowing any of this it is impossible for people buying in the area making the right decision. Right now I can tell you the following:
- I have been keeping a diary entry of number of RAAF flights over Bulahdelah from 1 February to today 30 July. **It is been just about every day!** There is not a single day without the words

“RAAF training” in the diary. I have only been away for a week in total during that time.

- **3 days ago I counted the number of flyovers to get an accurate measurement. It was 69.** It started at 9.30 am and ended around 5pm. **That is roughly 10 flyovers an hour.** That is roughly every six minutes. **No-one could work with this amount of noise.** I cannot. It is bad enough writing this report and being able to concentrate for any length of time. Every few minutes while writing this I am thinking “I can’t wait to move someone else”. We know from research (as mentioned above) that constant disturbance is bad for us. *Sun-Herald*, 1 March 2009. University of Michigan’s study explains that irrelevant stimuli such as flashing signs and noise of the modern world **takes up a lot of processing power which utilizes a great deal of energy.** In order to recover one needs “mental relaxation”. An over-stimulated brain in an urban (noisy) environment leads to **a bad mood and poor memory.** I didn’t need a study to tell me that. I’ve lived it. First in Fairlight (flight path), now in Bulahdelah (RAAF). When something feels unpleasant it follows it not good for you.

4.13 Australia was once a leader in the field of eco-tourism and we were held in high regard around the world. I have read two articles in Australian papers recently quoting English tourism reviews that have referred to Australia as a destination for “**faux-eco tourism**”. That is not a compliment. It means people who want to give their money to assist environmentally friendly enterprises are not coming here! Faux-eco means we are hypocrites. That we invite tourists and promise they will enjoy a beautiful and peaceful, environmentally considerate experience. Except when they get here they can’t hear the birds over the din of plane noise. Everywhere you go pilots encourage tourists to see and destroy our environment by taking a scenic flight. We do not want the reputation of being hypocritical. If people want to enjoy our beautiful environment they also want to respect it. **They want to enjoy the peace** and to hear natural noises of bird song. This is particularly disastrous for those of us committed to spending money on real eco tourism enterprises. We won’t be persuading people to take a joy flight over the national parks. The whole point of eco-tourism is to inspire a different type of fun: appreciation of nature. That can be done through walks, electric bikes, electric boats, horsedrawn carriages (doing well in Ireland and great fun). All in a peaceful, natural environment. A few people are damaging our reputation that affects us all.

CONCLUSION

Ensure that the decision of this government in relation to where the RAAF train and flight paths is based on the strongest argument. We need to see what the issues are and where the government stands. I am concerned that the issue of noise is not in the latest discussion paper and clearly it should be. It effects our lifestyle and our economy. By ignoring the issue the problem will not go away. Just because the RAAF and Air Services may assure the government all is well and under control it most certainly is not.