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CAMPBELL
ACT 2612

20 July 2009

Nicholas Dowie
Planning Policy and Environment Section, Airports Branch
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local
Government
GPO Box 594
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Dowie,

We wish to comment on proposals to develop a 24 hour freight hub at Canberra Airport to relieve noise at Sydney Airport and with particular reference to the discussion paper 'Safeguards for airports and the communities around them'.

There is a community expectation that people have a right to a sound night's sleep, undisturbed by aircraft (or other extraneous) noise and that such noise will not adversely impact on their health. There is clear evidence of a link between night-time exposure to aircraft noise and high blood pressure. This linkage occurs even if the noise does not cause one to wake up - see the European Commission's HYENA study at www.hyena.eu.com, which was published in the European Heart Journal, 2008.

The discussion paper fails to substantially and credibly address the public health of communities which adjoin airports. This is a major shortfall given the links established where the community is exposed to nightly aircraft noise. It also fails to address the issue of road transport noise which airports/freight hubs generate. We live in a residential area of Canberra, adjacent to the flight path where the current level of night-time aircraft movements impacts on our sleep. The potential impact of the proposals on residents in our suburb who are under medical supervision or on long term medication because of high blood pressure, is of particular concern.

Sleep amenity and public health are threatened by the proposal by Canberra Airport to expand its operations to a 24-hour freight and passenger hub. Local ACT laws protect our sleep from being disturbed by noise. However, there are no equivalent measures to protect our sleep specifically from aircraft noise. We place enormous value on the protection of our sleep between 11pm and 6am.

We recognise and accept the economic and other benefits that increased airport operations will generate for the ACT and the immediate region. However, there must be a reasonable balance between this, community well-being, and the cost

to the community through the impacts on public health. We have no objections to a facility operating between the hours of 6am and 11pm. We suggest this would be a fair, reasonable and defensible balance between community and commercial interests, with tangible benefits all round. It would be virtually impossible to reverse an initial decision to allow a 24 hour freight hub.

On the other hand, future aviation technology may advance to the point where the impact on the community of aircraft noise at night is negligible. In such a case, scope to widen operational hours without a negative public health impact may become practical, and can be examined and decided in a measured and considered manner, rather than what now appears to be an all or nothing context.

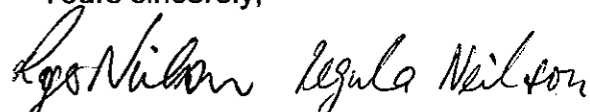
The proposal that we should share Sydney's aircraft noise is nonsensical and a 'red herring' to the basic issue that there is a public health question which overrides everything. Neither the proposal nor discussion paper addresses the collateral issue of the night noise of road transport to and from such a hub. We have experience of living in Europe where the noise impact of aircraft activity at the local airport caused it to be closed primarily in the interest of public health and community well-being.

Our strong views are that safeguards should recognise and reaffirm the following:

- that the community has a right to expect that sleeping hours will not be disrupted by aircraft noise or road transport noise associated with airports.
- that night-time exposure to aircraft noise is detrimental to public health.
- that a night-time noise standard should be established, respecting evidence of the noise level at which sleep disturbance occurs (for example taking into account views of the World Health Organisation).
- that peaceful and quiet residential amenity at night-time should be safeguarded in communities impacted by proposals such as Canberra Airport's.

A copy of this letter is being sent to Jon Stanhope, Chief Minister, ACT; Mr A Albanese, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport; Senators for the ACT Humphries and Lundy; and to Bob McMullan our local MHR.

Yours sincerely,


Roger and Regula Neilson

cc Jon Stanhope, Chief Minister, ACT
Senators for the ACT, K. Lundy and G. Humphries
Mr A. Albanese, Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport
Mr Bob McMullan, Member for Fraser