

24 June 2008

**The Hon Anthony Albanese MP**  
Minister  
Department of Infrastructure, Transport,  
Regional Development and Local Government

GPO Box 594  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Minister

### **Towards a National Aviation Policy Statement**

I make this submission to Issue Paper April 2008 issued by your department.

My interest in Aviation emanates from the noise of a helicopter hovering near my residence for extended periods of time early in the morning under the guise of monitoring automobile traffic. The fact that there were no issues regarding road traffic at the times and the bullying tactics by the helicopter's owners and your department's poor response has developed my very strong view that Essendon Airport should be closed to all aviation. I previously forwarded a copy of a letter that I wrote to you on 12 March 2008 regarding this complaint.

I asked VicRoads whether they were monitoring automobile traffic using helicopters hovering in the Pascoe Vale area. On 15 April 2008 VicRoads responded:

“VicRoads has not been involved in any recent activities associated with monitoring traffic flows using helicopters.”

VicRoads failed to answer my question. Did VicRoads stop their activities when I complained?

Additionally, rogue operators of aircraft have no place in today's society and the issue can be likened to the anti-hoon legislation for drivers of automobiles in Victoria. There needs to be similar legislation put in place to deal with rogue operators of aircraft.

Essendon Airport was developed as Melbourne Airport. Melbourne Airport shifted to Tullamarine in the early 1970s and accordingly, there is no longer any need to have aviation services at Essendon Airport especially because of the adverse health and safety impacts on the local community and the terrorist threat to the City of Melbourne through the proximity as well as the poor security at Essendon Airport. At Essendon Airport there are only two security patrols per day. Additionally, the

cameras are only turned on after an incident has been notified. There is no active continuing monitoring of Essendon Airport. Accordingly, there is a clear and present security threat to the City of Melbourne.

There are no customs staff based at Essendon Airport despite the arrival of international jets, some of which are based at Essendon. Additionally, the checks conducted when the customs staff arrive from Tullamarine are superficial.

I also believe that the close proximity to Melbourne Airport compromises the operation of aircraft to and from Melbourne Airport and prevents Melbourne Airport operating at full capacity.

Aircraft that are based at Essendon Airport can all be fully serviced at other aviation facilities. Avalon Airport should be developed as the alternative as it can service the City of Geelong and the western suburbs of Melbourne. Geelong is the second biggest city in Victoria and Avalon Airport is ideally situated to perform this function.

Investment at Essendon Airport has been generally restricted to buildings and road infrastructure. Accordingly, other businesses and the community could use these buildings and road infrastructure when Essendon Airport is closed.

Helicopters cause noise complaints by flying low over housing as they land or take off from Essendon Airport. There should be defined flight paths for all rotary aircraft landing or taking off from Essendon Airport. I request that the Minister give immediate directions for defined flight paths for all rotary aircraft so rotary aircraft are required to fly above specific heights over residential areas. Police and Ambulance helicopters, when attending emergencies could be exempt from this requirement.

I request that the Minister ban aircraft, which are excessively noisy from Essendon Airport. Some of the aircraft based at Essendon are far too noisy and need proper exhaust systems if they are to be allowed to continue to fly. Aircraft flying low over Pascoe Vale exacerbates the problem.

Essendon Airport management have assured me that there is no pilot training performing circuits around their airport. They said all aircraft did destination work. Why then do aeroplanes fly around Essendon Airport? At times, I hear the distinctive drone of their planes' engines as they circle the airport every few minutes. This is circuit training. Why do they lie?

I strongly support the government's policy of not considering any relaxation of curfew restrictions at Sydney, Adelaide, Coollangatta and Essendon airports (paragraph 4 Section 4.2 of TNAPS). However, the issue of curfew infringements needs enforcement action by your Department. Essendon Airport says that they cannot prevent any aircraft from landing at the airport. Are they saying that the curfew is breached on a routine basis? What are the penalties for such breaches? Are these breaches monitored? Is the curfew enforced?

Please advise the procedure for monitoring the curfew at Essendon Airport. Are Airservices Australia staff present at the Control Tower during curfew times?

I also ask that the Minister give immediate directions for a proper complaint handling system to be implemented for Essendon Airport. The system is to encompass an acknowledgement of the complaint and a proper investigation of the circumstances and appropriate punitive action taken to prevent a recurrence together with written feedback to the complainant through the course of the investigation. If it is not Airservices Australia, well who is it that I can complain to?

For Essendon Airport to remain open there is a compelling case for a dedicated team of firefighters to be stationed at the airport in case of an aviation emergency and an aircraft crashes without warning on takeoff or landing, because of the increased number of jet aircraft carrying passengers. I can think of two of the emergencies that occurred in the past and they both cost multiple lives. Firefighters are an integral part of the operation of such an airport.

Essendon Airport has gained notoriety by having the worst safety record of all airports in Australia.

Essendon Airport management have told me of the need for a new Control Tower because they are struggling to see some aircraft moving as they are obscured by buildings. We don't need Essendon Airport. There is no need for a new Control Tower at Essendon Airport when they don't need to see the aircraft – the same as the usual operation of Avalon Airport. You should build and staff a new Control Tower at Avalon Airport which has far greater passenger movements. Avalon should also have a dedicated fire emergency station.

The operation of Essendon Airport does not make a profit with aircraft only paying a nominal fee for landing at the airport. The fees for landing an aircraft at Melbourne Airport are costed for the extensive services they provide. Accordingly, aircraft operators prefer to operate from Essendon Airport. The aircraft are insured if there is a mishap. The lives of people lost do not come into their accounting for the operation of aviation business. Indeed, the aviation workers at Essendon Airport should be demanding the highest standards of health and safety.

It has been claimed that Essendon Airport has never operated at a profit for more than 40 years. It is time to bring that to an end. Essendon Airport has been flogging off land on 99 years leases – are the lease holders going to pay municipal rates or will they, like the airport, shirk on its responsibility to the local community? Essendon Airport has never paid its fair share of rates and taxes by virtue of it being located on Commonwealth land. It is time to bring this farcical situation to a halt. The operation of Essendon Airport is not viable without the continuing massive payouts by government! The government paid for the security upgrade around the airport.

Essendon Airport needs an independent body to oversee the operations of the airport. This body should be able to take punitive action against the airport, operators and rogue pilots. This body should have substantial community involvement because of the adverse consequences of the airport's operation on the local community. Residents

live in fear that one (or more) of these aircraft will crash into their properties and kill people. My experience of Essendon Airport is that the operators there are rogues.

Climate Change dictates that we must change the way we live. Essendon Airport has no place in society when it is an obsolete airport. Society must reconsider the benefit of having people fly around in aircraft for their pleasure using ever increasing expensive fuel with its carcinogens.

It is my strong belief that Essendon Airport should be closed and I request that a date be set that Essendon Airport will close, in the life of this Parliament. However, if Essendon Airport is allowed to continue operating then there clearly needs to be a total rethink on the cavalier approach taken at present by the airport, operators and rogue pilots. In my view, proper constraints placed on the operation of Essendon Airport would cause its closure.

Please confirm receipt of my submission.

Yours sincerely

**Paul Gavin CPA**

## Towards a National Aviation Policy Statement

### 4.2 Aircraft Noise

What airport strategies and government policies could be implemented to reduce the impact of aircraft noise on communities?

**Extend the curfew at Essendon Airport to allow nine hours sleep for residents, especially for children. Essendon Airport is a special case compared to Sydney, Coollangatta and Adelaide, as it does not service large passenger numbers, so the impact would be minimal on the operation of Essendon Airport but would have a substantial beneficial impact on the lives of local residents.**

**In addition, monitor the curfew and impose substantial sanctions for breaches of the curfew.**

Could the ANEF system be improved or be supplemented by other planning tools to better explain the impact of aircraft noise? Should State and local governments play a greater role in aircraft noise management? What should be the responsibilities of airports?

**State and local governments should play a greater role in aircraft noise management because the aircraft operate with impunity in their State and municipalities and should be able to take remedial action against the perpetrators in their aircraft.**

**The airports have never properly exercised their responsibilities with regard to the impact of aircraft noise, and should be taken out of the equation. The airports, whether it be the airport operator at Essendon or Airservices Australia have shirked their responsibilities with regard to the impact of aircraft noise.**

**At Essendon Airport, there needs to be a critical role for local community representatives to get the operation of the airport and its impact on local communities at an acceptable level. There is a substantial feeling in the local community that it would be better to close Essendon Airport.**

Should emphasis be given to airport/community partnership approaches, for example, based on locally negotiated agreements rather than generic legislative approaches?

**Indeed there should be locally negotiated agreements rather than generic legislative approaches but there must be the provision of substantial legislative enforcement and penalties for rogue operators as well as processes in place to prevent these rats from simply moving their nests.**

Can techniques for sharing information on aircraft noise impact be further developed to improve the supply of information to potential property purchasers and other affected parties?

**Yes. The health of local residents is adversely affected by the current method of operation of aircraft at Essendon Airport by excessive noise and aircraft fumes permeating households. This is a “no brainer” – cut the aircraft noise and the fumes – and therefore cut the complaints. However, local residents fear that one of these aircraft will crash and kill people.**

Can operations at airports be better managed to ensure the community is protected while at the same time providing nighttime access?

**No because of the poor attitudes and practices of operators at Essendon Airport. The curfew at Essendon Airport should be extended to nine hours as a minimum each night. The greatest fear of residents is that one of these aircraft will crash.**

How effective are the current noise enquiry and noise complaint services? Are there more effective ways to deal with people’s complaints and requests for information? Can the services be better provided?

**The current noise enquiry and noise complaint services are totally ineffective. You make a complaint and it is simply recorded – no action is taken. AirServices Australia hide away from the problem and place the blame elsewhere. There needs to be a proper complaint system with acknowledgement of complaints, a proper investigation and complainants advised in writing of their complaints. Additionally, there needs to be proper reporting of the volume and types of complaints to the public. The services can be provided in a far better way than the current way.**

## 5.1 Aviation Security

### Efficiency and costs

Could government spending on security be spent more efficiently? Could more focused security measures provide a higher level of security?

**Close Essendon Airport because of its lax security and eliminate the threat to the City of Melbourne. The minimal resources spent on Essendon Airport could then be re-allocated to Melbourne Airport.**

### Growth and industry development

Whether current passenger security screening requirements based around jet aircraft should be extended to non-jet aircraft of similar capacity, speed and weight?

**Yes. The sole focus on jet aircraft is flawed and enhances the clear and present threat to the City of Melbourne by the operation of Essendon Airport. We do not want another 911 disaster.**

Is the security infrastructure at airports adequate?

**The security infrastructure at Essendon Airport is grossly inadequate.**

The current focus of the aviation security system is regular passenger transport services. Should it be extended to include aircraft providing, for example charter services?

**Yes extend the focus to include aircraft providing, for example charter services. Cost is not a factor for terrorist organisations. This omission is a clear lapse in focus in the aviation security system.**

### Identity and background checking

Should background checking be extended to include managers/directors of companies with employees who hold an Aviation Security Identity Card?

**Yes. It is imperative that background checking be extended to include managers/directors of companies with employees who hold an Aviation Security Identity Card, as they have the ultimate ability to direct, control and influence their employees who hold an Aviation Security Identity Card.**