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22 October 2025

Director, Aviation White Paper Project Office
Aviation White Paper
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sport and the Arts
GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601

By email: AVPOL@infrastructure.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Submission on the Draft Community Aviation Consultation Group (CACG) Guidelines

1. I write to you in my capacity as President of the Gold Coast Lifestyle Association (**GCLA**) in response to the invitation by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sport and the Arts for submissions on the Draft Community Aviation Consultation Group (**CACG**) Guidelines.
2. The GCLA is a Gold Coast-based community advocacy group with the principal objective of ensuring that the operations of the Gold Coast Airport are conducted in a manner that takes appropriate consideration of the minimisation of any adverse impact on the Gold Coast community, particularly in relation to aircraft noise, and the GCLA is a permanent member of the CACG for the Gold Coast Airport.
3. The GCLA welcomes the review of the Draft CACG Guidelines as an opportunity to strengthen existing CACG Guidelines to enable greater community input into work programs, increase community involvement in meetings and increase the flow of information to the community from CACG meetings generally and, in particular and relevantly, to improve community engagement in relation to the impact of aircraft noise on the Gold Coast community as a result of operations at the Gold Coast Airport.
4. The GCLA urges the Department to ensure that the CACG Guidelines create a framework that achieves meaningful community involvement in CACG meetings and increases the two-way flow of transparent information to and from the community in relation to the impacts arising from Airport operations.

5. To achieve this, we recommend that the following points be addressed in the Draft CACG Guidelines:

(a) Purpose: to be an effective platform for the representation of community concerns, the following should be added to the bullet-point list at the bottom of page 2:

- *“To be a collective, informed channel to provide community feedback directly to the Department (ie not just to the airport alone) on significant airport initiatives (including for eg Master Plans and Major Development Plans);”*

(b) Chairing: to address both the perception and reality of the CACG Chair being in fact independent of the airport, the CACG Chair should be appointed by the Department instead of the airport and, as such, each of the first paragraph in this section on page 3 and the first sentence in the first paragraph on page 4 should be revised as follows (as marked-up):

“~~The Department is~~ ~~Airport operators are~~ responsible for appointing the CACG Chair but should do so in consultation with the airport operator, the membership of the CACG, and should ensure that the CACG Chair is independent of the airport’s management. The CACG Chair will need to demonstrate a capability to manage the deliberations of the CACG in an impartial manner. A CACG chair may be appointed for a specified term to be determined by the agreement of the Department ~~airport operator~~ and the appointee.”

“CACG Chairs, in consultation with the Department ~~airport operator~~, should ensure appropriate succession arrangements are in place to ensure continuity of the group in the Chair’s absence or at the end of their term.”

(c) Selection and recruitment of new members: to ensure that the CACG is properly representative of community interests and to avoid the risk or perception of ‘stacking’ by the airport, membership (new members, renewals etc) should be administered through the existing CACG membership as a group and not decided by airports alone and, as such, the first sentence in this subsection on page 4 should be revised as follows (as marked-up):

“Membership selection will be determined by the existing CACG members and may occur in consultation with elected representatives and residents’ groups or similar local community groups.”

(d) Role of officials and parliamentary representatives: to ensure that the CACG functions as an effective forum to properly communicate and inform the Government of community concerns with airport operations, officers of the Department should be required to attend CACG meetings (preferably in person). This is a very important requirement in our view as it allows the Department to hear first-hand the issues and solutions raised by the community and to provide accurate details to inform CACG discussions from the perspective of the regulator. The CACG also provides a very good forum for Departmental officers to undertake meaningful engagement with key community stakeholders, something that is essential to delivering best practice public sector management. Further, we note that the 2024 Senate Inquiry into the impact and mitigation of aircraft noise (Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee) made the following recommendation: “14. The committee recommends that the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government directs departmental representatives to participate fully in Community Aviation Consultation Group meetings, preferably attending in person.”

We therefore recommend the paragraph on page 5 be amended to read: *"Officers of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts are required to attend CACG meetings, preferably in person."*

The invitation of any officials and parliamentary representatives should be a matter for the CACG membership rather than being controlled by the airport and, as such, the first two paragraphs in this subsection on page 5 should be revised as follows (as marked-up):

"It is a matter for the CACG members ~~airport management~~ and the Chair of the CACG to determine whether officials and parliamentary representatives will be invited to attend as members or observers of the CACG."

The GCLA trusts that this submission is well received and will assist the Department in the development and release of the updated CACG Guidelines.

Please do contact the undersigned if there is any aspect of this submission that we can expand upon or clarify.

Sincerely,

John Hicks
President
Gold Coast Lifestyle Association Inc
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