

**WATSON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION SUBMISSION ON THE
CANBERRA AIRPORT
2008 PRELIMINARY DRAFT MASTER PLAN (PDMP)**

Who is the Watson Community Association?

The Watson Community Association (WCA) was incorporated in 1995. The association proposes to act on behalf of all residents of Watson and is open to all who wish to join (there is no joining fee). It publishes a quarterly newsletter which is distributed throughout Watson (the *Watson*) to keep residents informed of current events and issues in Watson and North Canberra. It is an affiliate of Curfew 4 Canberra Inc., where it is represented on the committee.

As the airport is no doubt aware, Curfew 4 Canberra Inc has been formed in response to the dramatic changes proposed in Canberra Airport's draft 2008 Master Plan. The Watson Community Association is particularly concerned about proposed night time aircraft movements and the impact this will have on the quality of life for our residents.

Points raised in the PDMP

1.6 History

- 1998 Canberra International Airport Pty Limited purchased the airport lease
- 1999 Master Plan approved by the Government
- 2005 Master Plan approved by the Government

The Master Plans included the rights to a 24-hour curfew. This right of curfew appears to have been 'inherited' from the time that the airport was owned and regulated by the Federal Government, and its past life as an RAAF operational base. The development rights acquired through purchase of the lease have been used by the new owner to expand aviation and non-aviation activities.

1.2 Purpose of the Master Plan

The Watson Community Association believes that the *unstated* purpose of the 2008 Preliminary Draft Master Plan for the Canberra International Airport is based on risk management strategies which have to be implemented *now*. The risks are economic in nature. The lessee is no-doubt aware of the considerable risks associated with a decrease in general economic activity, which is now possible with the recent financial equity crisis. This is compounded by the risks posed by global warming, carbon trading, rising oil prices and general inflation. There is also regulatory risk which will most likely also increase over time, and could have adverse effects on the airport's operations. The transport industry is more exposed to these risks than almost any other sector in the economy. Because of this economic uncertainty the lessee:

- Demands more and more planning flexibility;
- Through a deliberation policy of aggrandizement, constantly seeks political and commercial support for its policies;
- Demands that all-day and night activity be allowed (no curfew);
- Demands that most other economic activity close to flight paths be discouraged;
- Is slow or incapable of publicly issuing evidence or criteria to justify all of its economic, social and environmental decisions, if such evidence exists, i.e., the contentious triple bottom line approach to decision making;
- Is seeking to obtain maximum short-term to medium-term profits, before the risk factors take full effect

4. Integration with local planning strategies

There has been a dramatic increase in morning peak hour traffic using Antill Street in Watson and Hackett since the initial airport expansion plans have come into fruition. The Watson Community Association suspects that much of this traffic is using the Antill Street – Majura Avenue – Limestone Avenue connections to get to the eastern parts or Civic or to continue on to Fairbairn Avenue to continue on to Fyshwick, Queanbeyan and Tuggeranong. This traffic emanates from two sources: Gunghalin and NSW. This route is being chosen rather than Northbourne Avenue and Majura Road, both of which are bottlenecks in peak AM traffic. This might be classified as ‘*road sharing*’. The Airport is fond of the term ‘*noise sharing*’. Canberra International Airport is partially responsible for the peak hour log jams on the roads surrounding the airport, and the reverberations are now being felt as far away as Watson and Hackett. Ongoing road works surrounding the airport will go on for years, and we too will share in this trauma, as collateral damage from further unconstrained re-development of the airport precincts occurs throughout Canberra and the region. The Watson Community Association suspects that Canberra Airport will be hearing more about this in other submissions.

11 Aircraft noise

This is the major issue confronting current and future Watson residents. At present, the majority of Watson residents, apart from North Watson, are included in a so-called Noise Abatement Zone. The outline for these zones is shown on Figure’s 11.1, 11.4, 11.8, 11.9 and 11.12 of the PDMP.

The Canberra International Airport Pty Ltd (CIAPL) maintains that ‘*currently, these measures mean that 99.5% of the region’s residents are protected from aircraft noise. We wish to maintain this level of noise protection*’ (PDMP, p.76). What the CIAPL might as well have said is that 95.5% of residents are protected from noise which exceeds 65dBA in modelling, or alternatively, is outside the ANEF 20 contour as modelled by Airservices Australia.

In the eastern parts of Watson and North Watson, the modeled single event 65-70dBA contour for certain aircraft arrival types is located only two kilometers away from residential housing (Figure 11.8). Watson is exposed to aircraft noise substantially above background levels. It is also possible that noise levels approaching or exceeding 65dBA may reach Watson residents in certain conditions. Recent ground truthing in Hackett for single event 737s and light aircraft has proved that this is the case. The data for this independent study in Hackett is included in Appendix 1: *Report (11 February 2008) on Canberra International Airport Preliminary Draft 2008 Master Plan*, prepared for the North Canberra Community Council by Dr Murray May.

As regards a night curfew, the Watson Community Association recognizes that there is a fundamental human right to adequate sleep. Watson residents are disturbed, to the point of being woken, by flights starting just after 6 am. The possibility of heavier, wide bodied aircraft operating during the 11pm to 6am timeslot is a frightening proposition.

Interestingly, in standard lease covenants in the ACT between the lessee and the Commonwealth, there is a clause restricting noise along the following lines:

the noise levels referred to herein shall be those levels emitted at the lease boundary expressed as L_{Madj} as measured and calculated by the method specified in the Australian Standard AS1055 – 1978 (“Code of Practice for Noise Assessment in Residential Areas”) within the stated times:

	L _{Madj}
7 am to 10 pm	55 dB (A)
10 pm to 7 am	45 dB (A)

This clause refers to transfer of noise from one site to another within an urban setting. If a similar clause to this exists in every residential lease in Canberra, the sorts of noise levels emanating from aircraft would exceed those designated in the Australian Capital Territory’s *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991*. Also note, that these noise levels are substantially less than the 65 dBA levels noted as being otherwise intolerable (10 to 100 times less). These in fact should be the maximum single event noise levels which Canberra residents should be subjected to during these hours, not the 55 dBA – 65dBA contours which Canberra International Airports seems to think is reasonable. Single event noise, apparently one of the variables used in the modelling to generate the ANEF, is not the only factor affecting residents perception of noise: there are also the factors of how many movements, how much noise in total, and perhaps even more importantly, respite from noise, i.e., whether one ever gets a break from the noise.

There is also a covenant between the Commonwealth and the lessee in relation to quiet enjoyment as follows:

That the Lessee paying the rent and observing and performing the covenants and stipulations on the part of the Lessee to be observed and performed shall quietly enjoy the premises without interruption by the Territory or any person lawfully claiming from or under or in trust for the Territory.

It is clear that noise levels emanating from aircraft flying nearby residential areas can exceed those permitted in the standard lease covenants which apply to the ACT. This apparently is possible without penalty or any apparent legal avenue of redress even if unrelenting aircraft noise increases to the levels considered ‘reasonable’ in the PDMP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. The Watson Community Association recommends that the Minister for Infrastructure Transport, Regional Development and Local Government immediately impose an 11 pm to 6 am curfew on Canberra Airport.**
- 2. The Watson Community Association recommends that Canberra International Airport Pty Ltd extend the Noise Abatement region to include all of Watson. The newer residential area known locally as ‘North Watson’ is not included in the Noise Abatement region.**
- 3. The Watson Community Association wishes to see modelling which shows the 55dBA and 45dBA contours for larger aircraft.**

4. **The Watson Community Association recommends that the Federal Government undertake an independent review of the assumptions and data that underpin the draft ANEF to ensure that it is valid.**
5. **The Watson Community Association recommends that Canberra International Airport's Master Plan should be subject to mandatory preliminary assessment procedures that require independent evaluation of the greenhouse implications of increases in aviation traffic, the effects of unrestrained off-site development on flora and fauna, and the effects on off-site infrastructure such as roads, other non-aviation transport systems, and stormwater.**
6. **The Watson Community Association recommends that Airservices Australia collect aircraft noise data using a grid of ground stations to test and confirm theoretical modelling, and provide this data to the community in the form of a GIS.**
7. **The Watson Community Association recommends that Airservices Australia produce a document outlining how the ANEF is derived, which is accessible and easily understandable by the community at large. This is necessary if the community is to understand how the ANEF might be used in future planning and decision making.**

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