

Extract from Hansard, ACT Legislative Assembly, 12 February 2008, Question Time

PROOF P3

Canberra International Airport

DR FOSKEY: My question is to the Chief Minister. It is in regard to the expansion plans of Canberra International Airport. It has been said by airport proponents and quoted by MLA Mick Gentleman at a forum last week that 99.5 per cent of the Canberra population will not be affected by airport noise, yet I have not been able to find any objective research or information to back up that figure. Could the Chief Minister please advise the Assembly how the ACT government is compiling objective information on the future noise development and greenhouse gas emission impacts of the airport?

MR STANHOPE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank Dr Foskey for the question. The question of the expansion of the airport and issues in relation to noise and indeed other implications of the airport's master plan and vision for the future are certainly issues worthy of exploration within this place, and certainly within the community.

It was in the context, of course, of public consultation on the Canberra International Airport 2008 draft master plan that a meeting of interested and affected residents, primarily, as I understand it, residents of Jerrabomberra, Queanbeyan and Wamboin—I think that is a fair summation of the makeup—was held. I understand—and I say this by way of information and it does, perhaps, reflect the level of interest or concern that is at the heart of the question that Dr Foskey asks—that there were four Canberrans at the meeting. The rest, less four—and the four do not include Dr Foskey and Mr Gentleman—the entire other membership at the meeting in relation to the master plan on aircraft noise were residents of Queanbeyan, Jerrabomberra and Wamboin. Nevertheless, this is an important issue—

Dr Foskey: May I interrupt?
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MR SPEAKER: Do you have a point of order?

Dr Foskey: I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. That is a misrepresentation.

MR SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Dr Foskey: Well, it is a misrepresentation.

MR STANHOPE: I was not at the meeting. I relied on advice or information that was provided to me in relation to the constitution of the meeting. I think it is relevant in the context of a discussion. Dr Foskey referred to the public meeting. The public meeting was in relation to the airport's master plan. The issue being agitated was, of course, the implications of aircraft noise.

I find it of passing interest that the majority of people at the meeting were residents of Jerrabomberra because of the position which the Jerrabomberra Residents Association has to the development of Tralee. That was the irony that I was essentially pointing

out in relation to this meeting. The ACT government has been assured repeatedly by the mayor of Queanbeyan and by the Jerrabomberra Residents Association and others that there are no issues or implications in the development of Tralee. Yet at the first meeting to discuss the international airport's 2008 master plan, the people most affected, most interested and most concerned about aircraft noise or a possible increase in aircraft noise are the residents of Jerrabomberra—the very community which, through its residents association, continues to agitate for a private school under the flight path and the development of Tralee, which, on all accounts, is further from the airport than Jerrabomberra. It is ironic in the context of other representations that are made on this issue that it is the residents of Jerrabomberra and Queanbeyan, through attendance at that public meeting, that express greater concern about these issues.

In relation to aircraft noise and the airport and its operations, the ACT government, as with all state governments, are essentially neutered in relation to our capacity to influence airports and airport operations as a result of decisions taken by the Howard Liberal government to actually remove from state and territory planning adjudication or influence any issues in relation to the management and operation of airports. Just in the last couple of years here in the ACT, whilst there was some comfort in national capital planning authority over the airport, even that was removed two years ago in the face of objections from the ACT government.

Similarly, it was of major concern to the ACT government, as it is to every state government in Australia, that the Howard Liberal government, in its decisions in relation to management and planning for airports around Australia, also removed any requirement or capacity by state and territory governments to require airports, in relation to their growth or their master planning, to ensure that their operations, to the extent that they impacted on things like roads and traffic, actually contributed to the amelioration of those traffic issues. This is the regime which the Liberal Party put in place around Australia. It does cause significant concern to this government, as it does to other governments. In relation to the numbers which you quote, which Mr Gentleman referred to, those 99 per cent or whatever it was are from the master *Legislative Assembly for the ACT 12 February 2008*

plan. Mr Gentleman and those that refer to those numbers were referring directly to the master plan.

MR SPEAKER: Is there a supplementary question?

DR FOSKEY: Is the government prepared to consider a curfew in light of growing community concern and in light of the increased value of information which no doubt will be unearthed as it prepares its response to the master plan?

MR STANHOPE: As I indicated, the ACT government has no capacity to impose a curfew on Canberra international airport. As a result of the planning regime put in place by the Howard Liberal government, with the support of its branch here in the ACT and the ACT opposition, the ACT government has no capacity to control or influence operations at Canberra international airport. The ACT government will, of course, engage in community debate around the expansion of the airport. In the context of all of our commitments to triple bottom line policy making and accountability, we need to look at all aspects of the operations of Canberra international airport. It is one of the most significant drivers of this economy imaginable, and over time it will become more important and more significant as an

economic driver for Canberra and the Canberra region.

With respect to a review of economic opportunities in the ACT, we need to work with Canberra international airport and the community in order to maximise and optimise opportunities for expansion of our economic base and of industry. The airport will be pivotal in this regard—and, over time, more and more so. In any consideration of issues around noise, curfews, economic growth and development, we need to weigh up the economic, social and environmental implications of the expansion of the airport—and, indeed, of any industry. So, yes, the government will always look at the social and environmental aspects of master planning for airport growth, an increase in flight movements and an expansion in noise. But we will, in that consideration, also have regard for the importance and significance of Canberra international airport to the ACT and the region now, and, I believe, increasingly in the future. It is a major driver; it is pivotal to our continued economic success.

Dr Foskey, I refer to your protestations about the need for triple bottom line accounting and policy making and your consideration of the social and environmental impacts of Canberra international airport. I hope that, in your contribution to the public meeting that you attended, you urged all those present to ensure that they balanced the economic considerations with the social and environmental impacts and implications of the expansion of Canberra international airport.

'Deb Foskey later corrected the record, giving the facts about the meeting's attendance - about 80 people attended the public meeting of which 59 signed Curfew 4 Canberra's petition addressed to the Federal House of Representatives. The addresses given show that 45 people came from the ACT and 14 came from NSW. A transcript of this will be posted on this website as soon as it becomes available'.
