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Attention: Kathy Aves  
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### **Submission on Canberra Airport's 2009 Preliminary Draft Master Plan**

I wish to make the following submission on Canberra Airport's 2009 Preliminary Draft Master Plan. As I have made a number of detailed submissions to various government inquiries and the Airport's 2008 Preliminary Draft Master Plan, I will keep my comments brief.

My more detailed submissions and associated references can be found on the web e.g. To the National Aviation Policy Statement at [http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/aviation/nap/files\\_issues\\_paper/May\\_M.pdf](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/aviation/nap/files_issues_paper/May_M.pdf)

To the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage Inquiry into a Sustainability Charter at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/environ/charter/subs/sub016.pdf>

The submission on the Airport's 2008 Preliminary Draft Master Plan can be found at <http://www.curfew4canberra.org.au/airportexpansion/assets/NCCC%20airport%20report%20final%20Dr.%20May.pdf>

In essence the same essential problems remain with the Airport's 2009 Preliminary Draft Master Plan as previously. No amount of editorial footwork on the Airport's part can change the fact that a growth model for aviation is incompatible with sustainability and community health objectives.

My main points are:

#### **1. Canberra Airport's growth and climate change**

In the UK, detailed and authoritative analysis by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution and more recently by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research (<http://www.tyndall.ac.uk/>) has quantified the aviation industry's emissions in relation to the UK's total carbon budget. It highlights a fundamental contradiction between the UK Government's Energy White Paper targets for carbon dioxide emissions and the same government's desire to facilitate airport expansion.

The same policy clash and contradiction between aviation and airport expansion on the one hand, and the need to markedly reduce greenhouse gas emissions on the other, has

similarly been quantified for Australian aviation, and also Canberra Airport in particular, by the Australia Institute.

The Australian Government should address aviation's role in relation to climate change in a much more serious and substantive way, and Canberra Airport's proposed growth scenario is certainly no exception. Climate change now constitutes a fast moving global sustainability emergency, and continuing to support a growth model for aviation is anachronistic. Policies underpinned by demand management are critical, as is planning to cope with increasing ecological dysfunction.

## **2. A 24/7 freight hub is incompatible with community health because of sleep disturbance, particularly for an inner city airport such as Canberra Airport**

Without doubt, the proposal to establish a 24/7 freight hub at the Airport is fundamentally flawed on health grounds alone. Canberra Airport is an inner city one in close proximity to suburbs, and is therefore not suitable as a 24/7 freight hub. Government support for such a freight hub would simply be irresponsible.

The World Health Organization has highlighted a range of adverse health effects associated with noise and expressed concern about the deteriorating noise environment in many countries. Aircraft noise at night is of particular concern, because of sleep disturbance and associated effects on people's health. Recent studies demonstrate increased blood pressure in people living near an airport, as they sleep, with important ramifications for health.

Overseas experience too shows that air freight hubs have significant ramifications for people's health, as nighttime noise and sleep disturbance are perceived to be much worse than daytime disturbances. This explains why locations willing to accept night flights are becoming progressively harder to find, and why there is growing pressure to implement nighttime bans more widely. Locating freight hubs further from population centres is one approach, as with more remote ex-RAF bases in Britain.

In the ACT, local health and amenity legislation provides protection for residents such that if a neighbour is using an air conditioner above 35 dBA at night, one is able to take action through the authorities to remedy the situation. Already in daylight hours, noise measurements at the Hackett Noise Monitor (available through Web Trak) indicate noise levels above 65 dBA for 737 aircraft. At night, such an intrusion against the quiet background noise levels prevailing in many areas of suburban Canberra and Queanbeyan close to the airport (less than 30 dBA) would be the equivalent of a "shot in the dark" and many times louder than local noise legislation will tolerate.

An 11 pm to 6 am curfew would provide certainty for the large number of community organisations that oppose the airport's expansion plans on health grounds, and to those sections of the population already exposed to aircraft noise. It would also provide certainty for business organisations and provide a better medium-term policy outcome, as having to implement a curfew later as a result of ever increasing community angst would be costly and counterproductive. Sydney residents are already protected by a nighttime curfew, and the quieter background noise levels in Canberra and Queanbeyan suggest that a wider community problem would arise here in the relatively near term if government supports the 24/7 freight hub.

### **3. The consultation process is widely considered as flawed**

I have attended many community forums on the issue in recent years, including one held at the ACT Legislative Assembly on 30 April 2009 on the Airport's 2009 Preliminary Draft Master Plan. It is readily apparent that Canberra Airport, and a wide range of community organisations coming under the umbrella organisation Curfew 4 Canberra, hold irreconcilable positions. The Airport maintains a commitment to growth scenarios and business driven objectives, whereas the community is deeply concerned about the threats to health, quality of life and amenity should the airport's plans eventuate.

In addition, the community has strong concerns about sustainability issues, whereas the Airport considers that it can have its cake and eat it too via some editorial fancy footwork adjustment to its Master Plan. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Further, there is a widespread perception in community organisations that the consultation process is a farce, including the fact that the airport receives submissions on its own expansion planning. The latter is perceived to be the equivalent of the "fox in charge of the chicken shed". To a large extent, trust does not exist between community organisations and Canberra Airport.

#### **Conclusion**

In summary, I believe Ministerial support for Canberra Airport's 2009 Preliminary Draft Master Plan is not warranted, as the same essential problems remain as in the previous Master Plan rejected by the Minister. Most glaring of all is a 24/7 freight hub, which would cause increasing community angst and bring inevitably louder calls for a curfew as the problem escalated. A curfew introduced now would provide certainty for the community and business organisations, and prevent costly reversals of potentially silly policy decisions taken now.

Regards

Murray May