

4 January 2024
Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board

AAB Action Item 1.9 – Airline Modernisation Update

Dear AAB members

One of my actions from the last AAB meeting was to follow up with David McCutcheon about what additional clarification can be provided on the fitting of vortex generators to Jetstar's A320s. Here is the outcome of that discussion.

There are currently no plans to retrofit vortex generators to Jetstar's existing fleet of A320s that don't already have them fitted (aircraft delivered prior to 2015).

The situation is that, although Jetstar will keep the issue under review, there are no plans to retrofit the existing fleet. The matter has been through a Business Case review and at this stage there does not appear to be a case for retrofitting based on the following factors:

- There is no clear evidence that the vortex generators provide a reduction in noise levels. The manufacturer does not claim a reduction in noise levels, and even the claims of one airline only purport to provide noise reductions that would be at the margin of what the average person would be able to detect.
- There may be a change in the tone of the noise produced but the benefits of this are unclear. This has been reinforced by community feedback about the noise from A320s that listed aircraft that were overflying a community, and to which the community wanted vortex generators fitted. About a third of the A320 aircraft listed already had the generators fitted while the remainder did not.
- It is clear that the newer A321 NEO aircraft are significantly quieter (perhaps as much as 50% quieter in noise footprint area and perceived loudness). Jetstar is giving priority to fleet renewal and replacement to quickly bring as many of these new NEO aircraft into operation as it can. Jetstar has slightly exceeded its own forecast of the number of NEOs that would be flying in and out of Brisbane by the end of 2023 (the percentage of new aircraft combined with aircraft originally fitted with vortex generators is now 22% against a forecast of 20% and this is planned to roughly double by the end of 2024).
- Even the unproven claims of gains in noise levels by one foreign airline (not the manufacturer) re fitting vortex generators, and the unclear suggestion of changes in tone of the noise are only relevant to arrivals and will not occur on departure. On the other hand, the substantial noise improvement with the new NEO aircraft applies to all operations (both departures and arrivals).
- In addition to the not insignificant cost of parts, there is a very substantial impact in pulling the aircraft out of operation to undertake fitment work. This impact of grounding aircraft becomes even more problematic when taking into account the expectation that the majority of the relevant aircraft will likely be pulled out of operation within 2 years, and a sizeable part of this time would pass before a majority of aircraft could be rotated through the workshop for modification.

Jetstar has explained its decision and highlighted that they are focussed on the introduction of quieter NEO aircraft, which will substantially benefit communities in both departure and approach areas.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron Brent', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ron Brent
Chair
Brisbane Airport Community Airspace Advisory Board