



29th November 2023

Submission to the Aviation Policy Review Green Paper - Towards 2050

Introduction

After reviewing the Green Paper and attending multiple information sessions run by the Department of Infrastructure (DoI) on this policy review, I have a good understanding of the Paper's content, purpose and tone. I have also reviewed multiple submissions authored by other individuals and community groups.

I take this opportunity to make my personal submission to the review process, encouraging the Dept. to recognise the need to balance the demands of the aviation industry with the responsibilities to the Australian people, on whose behalf this review is being undertaken.

While it is the Minister and Government that ultimately decide upon policy content, there is an undeniable responsibility placed on DoI to serve the public interest, by providing comprehensive advice in the upcoming White Paper, to ensure that Government is made fully aware of all the issues raised in this policy review process.

Observations

History of policy development

Over the past century, the aviation industry has developed faster than the associated legislation required to regulate it. As such, the powerful and influential aviation industry has been the driver of regulatory inputs and outcomes, aimed at organising operating norms, ensuring safety, but mainly at generating profits.

This has seen adopted policy rely heavily on the advice and demands of the industry itself, in the piecemeal formation of reactive decision making by governments. This has resulted in a situation where the expectations of the industry have been reinforced by what this Green Paper terms; *the light touch approach by government* to aviation legislation and regulation.

Current policy situation

While previous administrations have allowed the industry to dictate policy frameworks, it seems there is a genuine attempt by the current administration to be more proactive in setting future policy directions. This has resulted recent improvements to engaging with communities that are so heavily affected by the impacts of aviation, which without doubt, is an intrusive industry having both noise and pollution emissions, that are so abhorrent to affected residents.

While this initiative is commendable, there is an obvious disconnect between various arms of government administering transport, environment, health and regional development to the point that the siloed objectives of one department, undermine the stated aims of another.

This is no more evidenced than in the development of aviation policy.

The current review process has reached the stage of issuing a Green Paper, the content of which:

- Continues to apply a 1950s aviation solution to what is essentially, a 21st Century transportation problem,
- Further reflects the wants of the aviation industry,
- Further reinforces the industry's policy influence and expectations,
- Continues to ignore the valid concerns of residents affected by aviation emissions,
- Offers lip service to issues of noise, pollution, climate change and health impacts, and
- Totally avoids inclusion of defined, quantified and enforceable legislative measures to protect Australian communities.

Future policy directions

In the formulation of the upcoming White Paper and subsequently in adopting policy to 2050, DoI and the Government have an opportunity to meet their responsibilities to the people they are there to serve.

These responsibilities cannot be met by simply promoting uncontrolled aviation growth.

Until such time as the industry itself solves or significantly mitigates its own noise and pollution impacts, aviation sustainability (in all its forms) will not be achievable without policies that set clear boundaries for the industry to;

- Be more cognisant of its adverse social, environmental and cost impacts on people,
- Actively and rapidly institute measures to mitigate impacts on climate extremes,
- Progressively develop, invest in and adopt truly safe alternative fuels,
- Be put on notice that the Government will no longer pander to industry demands at the expense of its responsibility to protect Australian communities.

Specific Recommendations

The Green Paper, White Paper and subsequent adoption of Aviation Policy towards 2050 must include:

1. Defined, quantified and enforceable regulation within legislative instruments to protect affected communities from the inherent impacts of aviation noise and pollution.
2. Restructure of the NASF to provide a balance between aviation wants and community needs - particularly by applying the same restriction criteria to aviation expansion as the criteria used currently to quarantine areas from noise sensitive developments. If it is prudent to stop noise sensitive development within specified areas near airports, why is it not also prudent to prevent aviation expansion at an airport which would create the same noise impacts on existing residential areas?
3. Redesign of the 2020 Flight Path design principles to place;
 - a. Safety of both aircraft and residents as the first priority,
 - b. Social and environmental impact mitigation as the second priority, and
 - c. Place airport and airline efficiency (read profits) as a third priority and conditional upon not undermining priorities a) and b).
4. Abandoning the ANEF concept as being relevant to accurate information on estimated noise impacts. The ANEF and ANEC should not be used for anything other than for land use planning purposes and definitely should not be used in Environmental Impact Statements or major plans to estimate noise impacts of airborne aircraft.

5. Impact assessment criteria founded on modern evidenced based research - not, as is the current practice, of relying on inappropriate, out of date and inaccurate legacy criteria.
6. Acknowledgement that aviation is just one part of an overall policy framework that should be fully integrated with Government:
 - a. Commitments to lower climate impacts by 2030 and 2050,
 - b. Community Health and well-being objectives
 - c. Environmental stewardship and maintenance,
 - d. Australia wide transport initiatives, and
 - e. Regional development and support programs.

Questions to the Department

The Green Paper posed a number of questions in order to gain input from stakeholders and communities. These questions were structured in a way that largely disregarded community concerns which have been highlighted time after time by residents affected by aviation impacts.

These Green Paper questions won't be addressed in this submission - rather I pose a number of questions in this submission aimed at focusing the minds of departmental officers on their responsibilities to the Australian community.

Question 1. - Is there a genuine commitment to include the repeatedly raised community concerns about aircraft noise and pollution in future policy development - or is this just another *tick the box* exercise?

Question 2. - Does Dol realise that under-pinning assessment criteria (such as NASF, ANEF and Flight Path Design Principle) are structured in a way that automatically locks out community concerns from meaningful consideration, in policy development?

Question 3. - Does Dol consider it adequate to reduce aviation climate change impacts by:

- i) Promoting uncontrolled aviation growth?
- ii) Aviation policy being in direct conflict with Government social, environmental and health objectives?
- iii) Portraying the practice of allowing aircraft to fly more directly to their destination, as an environmental issue, when it is so clearly a measure to improve aviation profitability?
- iv) Relying upon the benevolence of the industry to actively pursue the adoption of sustainable aviation fuels and practices?

While I don't expect to be provided with answers to these questions, it would be most prudent if Dol management, and indeed Government decision-makers, were to critically analyse their own answers to these questions.

Conclusions

Throughout this Policy Review process, there has been an obvious and meritorious shift by many of the Dol officials to interact well with residents over their issues of importance. The Green Paper content however, does not adequately reflect the repeated community concerns raised during the consultation process.

Should these matters be excluded from the up-coming White Paper and subsequent adopted policy, we will inevitably witness a repeat of community reaction that was experienced with the 1990s Sydney Airport 3rd Runway debacle and the more recent community outrage to aviation changes in Brisbane, Gold Coast, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart and Sunshine Coast.

It seems that little has been learned from these situations, as the same issues are now surfacing with communities affected by the Western Sydney Airport and Melbourne Airport expansion projects.

The measures needed to solve the aviation noise and pollution impacts, cannot be put in place without recognition that inherently, aviation is an intrusive industry and that, while ever the industry does not resolve its own adverse impacts, communities will continue to call on regulators and governments to place mitigating controls on the aviation industry.

With this opportune time in reviewing Aviation Policy toward 2050, I therefore urge our Federal Government to create policy changes that truly address the concerns raised, in submission after submission, by residents affected by aviation noise and pollution.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Neal".

Trevor Neal