

16 December 2022



National Airports Safeguarding Advisory Group
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Dear Sir/Madam,

National Airport Safeguarding Framework – Guideline C: *Managing the Risk of Wildlife Strikes in the Vicinity of Airports*

Brimbank City Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback in response to the Issues Paper to improve the clarity, accessibility and the useability of Guideline C in the National Airport Safeguarding Framework (NASF). The Brimbank municipality is located to the south and south west of Melbourne Airport, where the majority is located within 13km of the Airport. Given the impact of Melbourne Airport on the municipality, Council holds a keen interest in changes to airport guidelines.

Due to the limited time provided for Council to respond, this submission has not been endorsed by Council and is an officer response. Further it has not undergone detailed consultation and review with internal stakeholders. It is acknowledged the Issues Paper is in response to previous concerns raised by stakeholders, including those in Council's submission provided to National Airports Safeguarding Advisory Group (NASAG) in 2019.

Land within the 13km threshold from Melbourne Airport is zoned for a variety of uses including green wedge, rural conservation, industrial and residential uses. Many of the areas in Brimbank are well established and include those settled prior to the opening of Melbourne Airport. Given the variety of land uses there is the possibility high risk uses already exist and are permissible within the planning framework. On this basis further clarity is sought on NASAG's expectations on how land can be managed within the three nominated threshold distances (5km, 8km and 13km). It is understood these thresholds have come from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

There are a number of significant open and natural spaces located near Melbourne Airport, including Brimbank Park, Horseshoe Bend Farm and the Maribyrnong River Corridor. It not clear how Guideline C would impact this land given the existence of the natural and native landscape. These and other locations across Brimbank host bird species that have the potential to create a bird strike, include the Ibis, Swift Parrot, Starling and Raptor species. It is however considered that the potential for bird strike would not necessarily occur evenly across the municipality, and in certain instances may not be deemed a risk by ICAO or NASAG. Consequently it is suggested that a finer case-based approach be considered, instead of three threshold distances to differentiate land management. It also suggested that blanket buffers be avoided, and that a more nuanced and balanced approach is examined that doesn't place an unreasonable burden on applicants, councils and other stakeholders.

While it is not clear if and how Guideline C might be incorporated into the planning system, Council officers also hold concerns about whether councils have the resources and expertise required to undertake assessments (if required), and propose that this should also be a key consideration.

It is also important to understand the broader policy context and potential for policy conflict. The western region (including Brimbank) currently has the lowest tree canopy cover in Melbourne. Urban development that results in the loss of trees and vegetation causes average temperatures in these areas to increase. This is known as the urban heat island effect, which impacts the health of both people and animals. Council is seeking to increase tree canopy coverage from 6.2% to 30% as outlined in Council's Urban Forest Strategy (2016-46) and encourages the planting of trees across the municipality. Should NASAG seek to apply landscaping guidelines, Council officers suggest that controls should be discretionary and include guidance on the planting of native flora. Council has previously worked with Melbourne Airport to develop Planting Guidelines for non-bird attracting species and if landscape controls are proposed, and Council officers urge NASAG to consider these, and to work with councils if this is to be pursued in the future.

The Guidelines and Issues Paper highlight the necessity for local government and planning authorities (among others) to regulate land uses. The Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay (MAEO) contains triggers for planning permits, and where required, Melbourne Airport is notified of applications. Provisions in the MAEO are informed by the Australian Noise Exposure Forecast and relate largely to noise attenuation measures and density. This could be expanded to include landscaping guidelines, but it is considered that any additional guidelines should be discretionary, performance based and practical.

The need for a planning permit has not changed despite recent amendments to State policy at Clause 18.02 within the Planning Policy Framework. Further, the MAEO does not apply to the entire 13km threshold. Given the lack of formal triggers and/or controls in the planning scheme not all high risk land uses may be captured.

While the Guidelines and Issues Paper imply that while high risk uses may be acceptable, this is subject to long term review and monitoring by State and local Government. It isn't clear who and how this would be undertaken and the resources required, especially given the limitations of the planning system. Given that many activities can occur without a planning permit, there are significant limitations in a reliance on the planning system. On this basis it is proposed any review and monitoring needs to be broader than the planning system, and potentially undertaken by agencies with the appropriate resources and expertise. Cooperation from other authorities or mechanisms that carry out land use reviews should also be considered i.e. the EPA for high risk land uses, such as landfills.

Council looks forward to further consultation as this review progresses. If you have any further questions about this letter please contact Leanne Deans, City Strategy Manager, on 9249 4353 or leanned@brimbank.vic.gov.au

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelvin Walsh". The signature is written in a cursive style. Below the signature is a long, thin, slightly curved line that extends to the right and then curves downwards.

Kelvin Walsh
Director City Development