



**REPORT FROM THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SELECT COMMITTEE
ON
AIRCRAFT NOISE**

**(Being a report that the Committee have
been unable to complete their inquiry)**

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REPORT FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SELECT COMMITTEE ON AIRCRAFT NOISE

1. On 27 November 1968, your Committee was appointed by resolution of the House of Representatives to inquire into and report to the House as soon as possible on:

- (a) the definition of the major forms of noise associated with aircraft which cause complaint;
- (b) problems which emerge from the incidence of the various forms of aircraft noise;
- (c) the effects of aircraft noise on persons, property, institutions and communities;
- (d) the sources of and extent of complaint arising from aircraft noise;
- (e) the units used for the measurement of aircraft noise and any special factors peculiar to Australia which should be considered in the application of acceptable levels of noise for various sections of the community, having regard to the international consideration of these matters;
- (f) administrative procedures and regulations in the course of operation, designed to lessen aircraft noise, and their effectiveness for that purpose;
- (g) administrative procedures and regulations required to be formulated and initiated to lessen aircraft noise nuisance now and in the future;
- (h) technological developments and programmes in course of operation to lessen aircraft noise and their effectiveness for this purpose;
- (i) technological developments and programmes required to be formulated and initiated to motivate and expedite further progress in lessening aircraft noise, having regard to overseas activities including those of the International Civil Aviation Organisation and similar bodies, and
- (j) the constitutional powers of Commonwealth, State and Local Governments to legislate for the adequate control of aircraft noise and the necessity for legislation for this purpose, having regard to the fact that aerodromes may be owned or operated by the Commonwealth, State and Local Governments as well as private persons and organisations.

2. Your Committee has resolved, in consequence of the considerable volume of evidence which has been presented to it on the incidence and effects

of aircraft noise in Australia and the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, that progress of the Committee should be reported. Your Committee's investigations, whilst being far from complete have progressed to a stage which indicates that the final Report of the Committee, when presented, will be of substantive significance to Australia.

3. Your Committee has had 48 meetings, and of these 27 were held in public; 164 witnesses have appeared before the Committee. The balance of meetings were either in camera or were deliberative meetings of the members.

4. Your Committee has carried out 20 inspections of Regular Public Transport airports, hereafter designated R.P.T. airports, and 20 inspections of military and/or light aircraft aerodromes. Control towers of R.P.T. airports have been inspected and Committee members have been informed generally on the normal operations of aircraft.

5. The assistance of technical staff of the Department of Civil Aviation, hereafter designated D.C.A., and equipment of the Department have been sought and generously supplied in taking sound recordings at a series of points in urban residential and other land use areas in order to gain a proper appreciation of the magnitude of aircraft noise. To this end arrangements were made for normal civilian and/or military aircraft operations in the environs of aerodromes in the presence of Committee members together with the D.C.A. noise recording technicians. In this way the impact of aircraft noise in the affected areas was experienced by Committee members.

Your Committee wishes to record its appreciation of the co-operation of the Department of Air and D.C.A. in making these arrangements for the Committee.

6. There is a wide disparity of attitudes in Australia towards aircraft noise, its abatement and arrangements to mitigate its effects. In the largest cities there is acute awareness of noise with somewhat less concern elsewhere. However, your Committee in noting this disparity of attitudes has also been impressed by the universal uncertainty on the part of government authorities, planners, private enterprise and the general public about the desirability and methods for effective aircraft noise control.

7. The evidence presented, together with its own observations, has enabled your Committee to identify a number of problem 'areas' viz.:

- (a) co-ordination between town planning authorities and those responsible for airport development;
- (b) definition and implementation of an imaginative and effective public relations policy;
- (c) identification of tolerance standards of aircraft noise for persons within and outside the industry;
- (d) the definition and measurement of psychological and physiological effects of aircraft noise;

- (e) the problems for industry arising from attempts to mitigate the duration and degree of aircraft noise;
- (f) the legal implications of—
 - (i) regulatory measures to reduce the incidence of aircraft noise;
 - (ii) of compensating those for whom proven damage exists in consequence of aircraft noise and its regulation; and
 - (iii) Commonwealth ownership and administration of aerodromes and air space in areas under State and local government control;
- (g) the safety features of aircraft operation in relation to noise abatement procedures;
- (h) administrative procedures sufficient and necessary to implement noise abatement procedures;
- (j) technological aspects of engine noise production and its reduction;
- (k) the economics of operation of the air transport industry and economic consequences for this operation of noise abatement procedures.

8. Each of these problem 'areas' is present to a greater or lesser degree in every R.P.T. and other air terminal environment inspected. Most Australians live in urban areas served by airports. It seems fair to state that those who live and/or work in proximity to airports, or to the flight paths of aircraft using these terminals, suffer reduced urban amenity. Moreover, your Committee is convinced of both the prospect of increasing incidence of aircraft noise and of continued urbanisation of the Australian community. In these circumstances the consequences of this increasingly widespread incidence of aircraft noise are likely to manifest themselves in a deepening and widening of the problem areas defined above. In all but two of these problem areas the evidence so far placed before your Committee is so incomplete as to preclude elaboration and recommendation at this interim report stage. In the case of the first two problem areas defined ((a) and (b) in paragraph 7) however, your Committee is constrained to elaborate (in paragraphs 11 and 12) as a consequence of its own observations and other evidence and make a recommendation (paragraph 13).

9. The technical nature of much of the evidence placed, and expected to be placed, before your Committee has made it essential to devise some form of technical support for the Committee members. To this end several experienced and highly trained persons eminent in the various fields involved in the inquiry have assisted the Committee. These persons have been asked to advise the Committee on the technical aspects of the problem 'areas' identified earlier (paragraph 7). The continued research by these persons on your Committee's behalf is of considerable importance to the evaluation of evidence and to the ultimate merit of your Committee's inquiry and its final report.

10. The air transport industry is characterised by continuous technical change. Believing as it does that the industry is of the utmost importance to

Australia, your Committee wishes to ensure that a correct assessment of the nature and direction of this technical change is made. For this purpose the use of the expert technical assistance previously referred to (paragraph 9) is fundamental to the future course of the inquiry.

11. There is evidence of the need for an effective and imaginative public relations policy aimed at dispelling doubt about the effort being directed towards alleviation of aircraft noise nuisance. Recently some publicity has been given to administrative and operational procedures adopted by D.C.A. to mitigate the effects of aircraft noise. This is a creditable beginning in public relations and your Committee is optimistic about the possibilities for further developments of the same type, to ensure a better understanding of the situations and problems with which D.C.A. and the air transport industry is confronted.

12. The D.C.A. and the Department of Air and those responsible for town planning in the various urban areas should jointly plan for developments in the industry. Your Committee is deeply disturbed by the apparent absence in Australia and in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea of any set of guiding principles for such joint planning. There is evidence of the absence of joint planning in places such as Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Lae and Amberley, and to a lesser extent in Perth, Brisbane, Canberra, the Tasmanian airports of Launceston, Devonport and Wynyard, the New Guinea airports of Porth Moresby, Madang and Goroka, and some other places inspected. It appears that decisions have been made or are about to be made in respect of urban development which ignore the prospect that urban amenity is likely to be jeopardised by developments in the aircraft industry.

13. There is the prospect that at least one of the consequences of your Committee's inquiry will be the realisation of the need to establish criteria for the co-ordination of town planning procedures and developments in the aircraft industry. For this reason your Committee is most anxious to underline the need for restraint in implementing any plans for urban development and/or changes in the aircraft industry in Australia until a suitable set of guiding principles for such co-ordination is formulated.

It is a challenging task to establish these criteria but failure to do so will, in the considered opinion of your Committee, result in the exaggeration of the very considerable losses to the community which are already evident in the larger metropolitan areas of Australia.

Against this background, your Committee recommends immediate action by the Commonwealth to initiate arrangements for the establishment of airport planning and co-ordination media incorporating State and Local Government bodies involved in urban development planning and plan implementation.

14. Your Committee, in the course of inspections of R.A.A.F. bases in various places in Australia, has noted the proximity of existing and planned houses for R.A.A.F. personnel and families to sources of aircraft noise

generated by R.A.A.F aircraft. Your Committee is concerned at this apparent indifference towards the ordinary comfort of persons committed to living on these service bases and would commend measures to mitigate the effects of aircraft noise to existing homes and recreational buildings. Your Committee urges re-consideration of plans already approved for residential development on R.A.A.F. bases so as to avoid unnecessary exposure of service personnel to aircraft noise. It also commends these considerations for personnel in future planning of R.A.A.F. bases.

15. In view of the impending dissolution of the House of Representatives and the inability of your Committee to complete its inquiry and present its final report, it is recommended that the Committee be reconstituted in the new Parliament. It is further recommended that the new Parliament give its new Committee power to consider and make use of the records of your present Committee in order to carry forward and ultimately to report on the work carried out during the present Session.

L. L. BOSMAN
Chairman

Canberra
28 August 1969