



Moorabbin Airport 2015 Draft Master Plan Submission

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on behalf of the people of Hotham

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Moorabbin Airport is located in on 294 hectares of Commonwealth land in my electorate of Hotham, in south-east Melbourne. By legislation, this land is earmarked public land, for public use.

The Moorabbin Airport Corporation (MAC) has released the Preliminary Draft 2015 Master Plan which details the long-term plan for how the land at Moorabbin Airport will be used from 2015 to 2035. I have canvassed the views of my constituents regarding the proposals contained in that document. This report summarises those views.

Moorabbin Airport is adjacent to large residential communities where tens of thousands of my constituents reside. Dingley Village and the surrounding suburbs are the areas most impacted by decisions concerning the airport. I make this submission to the Moorabbin Airport Preliminary Draft 2015 Master Plan on behalf of those constituents.

By and large, residents in these suburbs were attracted to live in this area because of its semi-rural feel. These are wonderful local communities with great schools and active community groups who have worked hard over many decades to protect the unique village character of this area.

When Moorabbin airport opened in the 1940s, the surrounding suburbs were full of market gardens, florists and dairy farms. It was a sensible location for an airport. But since then, the area has become residential. Meanwhile, Moorabbin airport has grown to become the third busiest airport in Australia by flight movements – currently 250,000 movements in and out of the airport each year.

Under the Draft 2015 Master Plan it is anticipated that flight movements will increase to half a million per annum. This represents an increase from 630 flight movements per day to 1,369 flight movements per day – primarily over the suburb of Dingley Village. It is also the busiest airport in Australia for pilot training.

This is completely inappropriate, especially when there is another airport, in a rural area, a little over an hour beyond Moorabbin Airport, at Tooradin.

The use of the airport land has also fundamentally changed since the airport opened. Much of the land is today a retail and industrial complex, from which MAC reaps significant rental income. The Master Plan proposes a substantial expansion of the industrial and retail developments on the site. Future development should be in accordance with community views – this is public land, for public use.

I am contacted frequently by my constituents living in close proximity to Moorabbin Airport regarding development proposals, flight movements, traffic and other concerns. This is one of the most important issues in my local area, and the views of residents must be central in determining the long-term direction for the Airport.

A summary of the views of the community follows:

We are opposed to increased flight movements in and out of Moorabbin Airport. The chief concerns of my residents are the increasing movement of planes and noise associated with this. We believe the level of forecast flight movements is absolutely inappropriate given the residential surrounds to the airport. We want the flight movements scaled back.

We are opposed to moves that will increase the already very congested roads surrounding the airport. The traffic associated with increased activity on the airport land is an additional widely-held concern. The areas surrounding the airport face very significant infrastructure and congestion issues. Local infrastructure will be placed under significant pressure already in the upcoming years, with a number of other large development proposals under consideration by Kingston Council.

We are concerned about increased development on the site. Other concerns, though not as universally held, relate to further development on the site. In short, it depends what kind of development is proposed and where, what the aesthetic nature of the development is, how much traffic it will generate, and whether it will pose any threat to local shopping strips such as in Dingley Village.

There has not been enough consultation regarding the Draft Master Plan. Finally, I would note that most residents do not feel that they have been properly consulted about the Master Plan. Based on our survey results, most people in the surrounding suburbs did not know about the Master Plan process, and this is unacceptable. Further consultation is necessary.

I will be pleased to participate in further aspects of the consultation as our task – ensuring Moorabbin Airport maintains the support of the community in which it operates – continues.

SURVEY AND CONSULTATION

To ensure I understood the views of my constituents, I conducted a survey by mail to 4,398 households who live in close proximity to Moorabbin Airport.

On 6 June, I held a Mobile Office at Dingley Village to ensure residents had an opportunity to discuss their concerns directly with me.

A summary of the survey results and additional comments received from the community are summarised in sections 1 – 6 below.



KEY FINDINGS

Whilst I received a diverse range of views and opinions from my constituents, a summary of the key findings is as follows:

- 75 per cent of residents reported that they did not feel they had been properly consulted in relation to the Preliminary Draft 2015 Master Plan for Moorabbin Airport.
- Most residents are against further industrial development on the airport site, primarily due to grave concerns about traffic congestion and safety – though there is a substantial number who are more ambivalent.
- Most are willing to contemplate retail development, but it would depend on the specific proposal.
- Most support increased employment opportunities, although expressed doubt about the forecasted figures.
- 82 per cent are deeply concerned about the negative impact on traffic congestion and road safety in the area.
- 85 per cent are currently negatively impacted by aircraft activity and noise.

1. Consultation on the Preliminary Draft 2015 Master Plan

Whilst the Moorabbin Airport Corporation maintain that they undertook a consultation process with the community, most surveyed residents reported that they were unaware of the Master Plan and 75 per cent reported that they did not feel they had been properly consulted.

Quotes from residents:

“We attended the Airport Survey Information Day – we are of the opinion that everything is cut and dried as there has never been concern for residents’ objections, this will remain the same.”

“According to MAC the ‘sky is the limit’. There is no stopping. Just expand and make money regardless what the community says. It is about time that the politicians responsible for aviation listen to the community and impose limits on pilot training and on non-aviation development.”

“No authorities whether it be Council, state or federal have had much influence on MAC’s developments.”

“I don’t believe the consultation process run by MAC is useful. I don’t trust MAC to reliably inform the Minister of the community’s concerns.”

“It is a much agreed premise that MAC is accountable to no-one.”

2. Impact of aircraft noise

The impact of aircraft noise is of the most concern to the community.

The residential community already endures the disturbance caused by the day-to-day operations of one of the busiest airports in Australia. Since the airport opened in the 1940s on 294 hectares of Commonwealth land, it has become the third busiest airport in Australia by flight movements and the busiest for pilot training flights.

The Preliminary Draft 2015 Master Plan is forecasting an increase in pilot training from 800 aviation students today to more than 1,600 – 2,000 annually by 2035. Flight movements are expected to increase from 230,000 per annum to half a million by 2035, with an increase in the number of aircraft from 300 to 580.

Residents are naturally very concerned about this substantial increase in aircraft activity in close proximity to residential communities and the associated noise and safety risks.

This is of the most concern to the community with 85 per cent of survey respondents reporting that they were impacted by aircraft noise every day. Low flying aircraft and helicopters are of the greatest concern. Survey respondents also reported that the impact was felt across the day – morning, afternoon, and evening.

We want the Master Plan changed, to reflect a significantly smaller number of annual flight movements.

Quotes from residents:

“Helicopter training flights are the main source of constant aircraft noise and increase in this traffic will be detrimental to residents in the western part of Dingley Village, apart from the increased possibility of an accident.”

“Main concern for me is the helicopter training flights which at times are very frequent and noisy.”

“By far the most noisy and intrusive craft are the helicopters.”

“Increased aircraft traffic is becoming stressful, particularly at weekends....traffic over our home can commence at 5:00am and sometimes as late as 11:00pm before it stops.”

“The noise is sufficient to make it impossible to conduct a conversation in our backyard.”

“I work night shifts (5 nights) so the planes affect me quite badly especially as my house is under the flight training path.”

“Safety is an ongoing concern and recent plane crashes in Cheltenham etc. cause a degree of distress and concern about future crashes in the local area.”

“Sometimes helicopters are so low things vibrate in the house.”

“In my opinion the noise created by training aircraft is an environmental disaster for local residents’ health, wellbeing and ability to enjoy their garden and social activities.”

“Surely training should be undertaken at a more rural airport e.g. Tooradin or Avalon.”



3. Additional retail and industrial development

The Airport is a heavily modified site with over 75 per cent of the 294 hectares already developed and 123 hectares set aside for non-aviation activities (or 42 per cent of the Airport site) with two-thirds set aside for industrial use.

There has been significant non-aviation development at the airport over recent years, including Direct Factory Outlets, Kingston Central Plaza, and the Costco warehouse to be completed in 2015.

When asked if they supported additional industrial development at the airport, a majority of survey respondents reported that they were against further industrial development. Key concerns are traffic congestion, noise, pollution and lack of consideration of the environs.

Quotes from residents:

"(There is) enough industry in the area – hard to drive in daytime due to so many trucks."

"We are not opposed to any progress being planned.....main concern is the amount of heavy industrial vehicles on Centre Dandenong Road from Boundary Road to Warrigal Road."

"The only beneficiaries of allowing industrial expansion at Moorabbin airport will be Moorabbin Airport Corporation in terms of increased revenue from rents / leases generated by the businesses starting up there."

When asked if they supported additional retail development at the airport, a small majority of survey respondents reported that they were in favour of additional retail development as long as a balance was maintained.

Some residents expressed concern that further significant retail development at the airport would have a negative impact on their local community shopping centre and would make it unviable.

Quotes from residents:

"As long as (the retail development) is different from the retail at Dingley Village."

"In addition to extra shops...I would like to see large areas of the land used as parkland with access by local / general community... I am concerned by development and losing the green wedge."

"We do think additional shops would make it harder for Dingley Village shops to survive."

4. Development of an employment hub

The Preliminary Draft 2015 Master Plan suggests the airport could be developed as an employment hub with on-airport jobs growing from 3,300 to 8,500 over the next 20 years.

Most residents are in favour of more local jobs at the Airport. But when asked if they support future development as an employment hub, residents expressed scepticism about the accuracy of the forecasted employment figures.

Quotes from residents:

"Depends on the nature of jobs (retail vs industrial)."

"In the current climate, any attempt to increase opportunities for employment, particularly locally, should be encouraged."

"Having worked at Moorabbin airport and running a business there for many years, I know how important it is for employment and the community."

"It would be nice if the airport corporation could look at providing some recreational facilities for the surrounding community to balance all its land being used for financial gain."

"A landscape architect must be involved in any development that is proposed to create green space for everyone's benefit."



5. Impact on road traffic conditions

With the increase of retail and industrial organisations at the airport over the past several years, road traffic has also increased causing great congestion and safety issues. A further increase is anticipated, particularly in the region of Boundary Road and Centre Dandenong Road where additional warehouse facilities are incorporated in the plan and additional traffic lights to be installed.

Existing congestion issues are already going to be exacerbated by a number of additional residential and commercial development proposals near the Airport site – e.g. move of Hawthorn Football Club to Dingley, proposed development of the Kingswood Golf Club (the latter of which we vigorously oppose).

When asked about the impact on road traffic, a massive 82 per cent of survey respondents indicated they were gravely concerned about the increase in road traffic and associated safety risks.

Quotes from residents:

“Road infrastructure is the key.....more retail and industrial development equals more traffic and congestion in the area.”

“Traffic in the area is already congested. Proposed developments of the Kingswood golf club and Costco areas will be a disaster for local traffic.”

“Massive trucks leaving the airport are a concern – they cannot turn into Warrigal Rd from Central Dandenong Rd or vice versa.”

6. Eastern and Southern Borders of the airport precinct

Under the Preliminary Draft 2015 Master Plan, it is intended that 15 hectares will be further developed along the Eastern and Southern borders of the airport with frontages to Centre Dandenong Road, Lower Dandenong Road, and Boundary Road.

When asked about any concerns about the development across a large section of the Eastern and Southern Borders, 64 per cent of survey respondents expressed great concern due to increased traffic congestion, and noise pollution.

Quotes from residents:

“Roads already clogged with trucks and extra traffic lights on Centre Dandenong Road.”

“The two new sets of traffic lights that are required to be installed if all this development goes ahead in Centre Dandenong and Lower Dandenong Roads will be extremely disruptive to flow of traffic on these busy roads.”



CONCLUSION

To retain their social license to operate, it is imperative that Moorabbin Airport develops in accordance with community views.

It may have been appropriate to have the third busiest airport in Australia in this area decades ago. But today, this is a residential area, a quiet community, a village. It is completely inappropriate to have this development where it is, especially when there is another airport, in a rural area, a little over an hour beyond Moorabbin Airport, at Tooradin.

A very large majority of affected residents are strongly opposed to increased flight movements in and out of Moorabbin Airport. We want the Master Plan to reduce the allowable annual flight movements.

A very large majority maintain significant concerns about the impact on infrastructure and in particular, traffic congestion, which is already a large problem in this area.

Some Hotham residents are implacably opposed to further development on the site, though others are not. Most will consider each proposal on their merits: whether additional jobs will be created, whether the developments take account of the aesthetic 'green' nature of the local area, how much extra traffic will be generated, whether the development will affect the viability of local shopping strips.

I would encourage the Moorabbin Airport Corporation to continue strong consultation with the community. Consultation is difficult, but imperative. While the Airport has made some efforts towards this, most residents did not know about the Draft Master Plan and even more do not feel properly consulted. Further consultation is therefore necessary.

I look forward to continued discussion with the Moorabbin Airport Corporation and the Federal Government on the Draft Master Plan.

