

Planes Just An Illusion

The Federal Minister for Infrastructure Mr Mark Dreyfus is demanding answers about the high volume of Moorabbin Airport trainee aircraft over the City of Kingston. Mr Dreyfus says the excessive aircraft activity from the Moorabbin Airport has been an issue which residents have raised with him continuously since he became the Federal Member in 2007.

Recent correspondence from The Department of Infrastructure suggests that residents are imagining what they refer to as the endless and noisy assault on their community, quality of life and safety. Mr Jim Wolfe of the Office of Air Traffic Policy insists that the learner pilots do not fly over "built up areas". This comes just months after CASA issued a directive to AirServices Australia to increase the number of trainee aircraft over the city and allow the flying circuit to expand over even more homes and families. Meanwhile even professional pilots are complaining about the ever expanding circuits, citing it as a new source of confusion and reduced safety.¹

In August 2008 the City was rocked by a mid-air collision of two planes from the Moorabbin Airport. One of the planes crashed into a home near a Cheltenham school killing the pilot. Following this incident CASA commissioned an investigation into safety at Moorabbin and other general aviation airports. The independent Ambidji report² was issued in mid 2009 and suggested that the Moorabbin Airport posed "an intolerable societal risk". CASA released an immediate requirement for a reduction in the amount of trainee pilots over the City. Then just six months later CASA published its own clean bill of health citing its work with "mitigators" of safety. For most pilots a mailed reminder about air safety appears to have been the only safety "mitigator". While all of this has been happening the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has been sitting on the latest draft Master Plan for the Moorabbin Airport. In the draft plan the operators of the Airport (MAC, the Moorabbin Airport Corporation) argue for a doubling of the aircraft activity over the City of Kingston. MAC has been criticised by the community for being a socially irresponsible and opportunistic property developer with no real interest in the community or aircraft safety. MAC is currently demolishing a community golf course on the airport perimeter to make way for its next round of retail development. Mr McConnell the CEO at the airport has repeatedly made the comment that it is not his concern what the planes do once they leave the ground.

1. <http://www.pprune.org/dg-p-general-aviation-questions/88390-more-huge-circuits-moorabbin-point-cook.html>
2. http://www.casa.gov.au/wcmswr/assets/main/oar/papers/gaapfull_june09.pdf



Australian Government
Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Local Government

COPIES SENT TO
MSEA DUNYAP
MARA 20/2/2010

Reference: 50085 2010

Mr David Macill
Secretary
Dingley Village Community Association Inc
C/- 2 Mungari Street
DINGLEY VILLAGE VIC 3172

Dear Mr Macill

Thank you for your letter dated 16 December 2009 to the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, about training flights at Moorabbin Airport. The Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf.

In relation to the safety of training operations around Moorabbin Airport, there are a number of measures taken to mitigate safety risks at aerodromes where training takes place. The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), the aviation safety regulator, continually monitors the overall safety of flying school operations. Flying training activities (both helicopter and fixed wing) are also conducted and supervised by experienced flying instructors.

In an assessment of a flying school's training location, consideration is given to the overall safety of operations that will result. CASA has advised it has no reason to believe that flying training activities at Moorabbin Airport are unsatisfactorily located. Training exercises are not conducted over built up areas, but within the boundaries of the airport or over the recently closed golf course on the eastern edge of the airport complex. This provides a confined area away from residential and industrial areas around the airport.

You have referred to a recent incident involving a student pilot at Moorabbin. CASA has looked into the matters surrounding the incident on 15 December 2009 involving a Robinson R44 helicopter flown by a trainee helicopter pilot and found nothing untoward with either the helicopter maintenance or the flying school. The Australian Transport Safety Bureau was advised of the incident and, based on the information available, decided not to investigate.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Jim Wolfe
General Manager
Air Traffic Policy

20 January 2010



Mark Dreyfus MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR ISAACS



11 March 2010

Mr Jim Wolfe
General Manager
Air Traffic Policy
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GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Wolfe

Moorabbin Airport
Your ref: 00085-2010

Mr David Madill the Secretary of the Dingley Village Community Association has provided me with a copy of your letter dated 20 January 2010 concerning training flights at Moorabbin airport.

I note your statement that "training exercises are not conducted over built up areas, but within the boundaries of the airport or over the recently closed golf course on the eastern edge of the airport complex". Anecdotally I can tell you that many residents have advised me of training exercises being conducted over built up areas, and I may need to point out to you that the whole of the surrounding area of Moorabbin airport is a "built up area". What evidence do you have to support the statement made in your letter?

Further, are you able to advise me what means there are to enforce a requirement that flight training activities not be conducted over built up areas?

I would appreciate a detailed response because this matter has been raised with me continuously since I became the Federal Member for Isaacs in November 2007.

Yours sincerely

MARK DREYFUS QC MP
Federal Member for Isaacs