



COMMUNITY AVIATION CONSULTATION GROUP

2.00pm – Wednesday, 9 April 2025

Ringer Room, CAG Office, Level 4, Plaza Offices West, Canberra Airport

MEETING NOTES

The Independent Chair of the CACG is Bob Ross.

CACG Members	Representing & Title
Independent CACG Chair and representing: Pialligo Residents Association (PRA) North Canberra Community Council (NCCC)	
Canberra Airport Michael Thomson, Head of Aviation Andrew Connor, Planning and Environment Manager Susan Mulligan, Planning Co-ordinator Tori Murray, Senior Aviation and Space Manager Jordan Fallon, Government Relations and Policy Advisor	
Fernleigh Park Community Association (FPCA)	
Tuggeranong Community Council (TCC)	
Jerrabomberra Residents Association (JRA)	
Ridgeway Community Group (RCG)	
Swissport, Manager Airport Services Canberra	
Airservices Australia (ASA)	
RAAF 34 Squadron, Defence Establishment Fairbairn	
ACT Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	

Summary of Attendees

Community Groups Note: Chair represents 2	6	Canberra Airport	5
Swissport	1	ACT Government	1
Commonwealth Government Airservices Australia RAAF 34 Squadron	1 1 1	Total	15

1. MEETING FORMALITIES

1.1 Welcome and Notation of Apologies

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm.

The Independent Chair introduced himself and undertook a roll call of attendees.

The following apologies were noted:

- Canberra Airport
- Weston Creek Community Council
- Gungahlin Community Council
- QPRC
- Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
- Airservices Australia
- ACT EPSDD

Noel joined the meeting to say farewell to those present. Having been involved in the CACG for over twenty-five years he had taken on a new role and advised that Michael Thomson would now look after the CACG. He expressed his thanks and recalled many hearty discussions over the years.

On behalf of the CACG, JRA and TCC expressed their thanks to Noel for his dedication and work for the CACG over a long time and wished him all the best moving forward in his new role.

1.2 Declaration of Impartiality by the Chair

As the representative of the Pialligo Residents Association as well as representing the North Canberra Community Council, the Chair declared that should any issues of impartiality be raised during the meeting, he would address them in an appropriate manner.

1.3 2025 CACG Representation

Persons nominated to represent their community groups were noted.

1.4 2025 Meetings/Consultations

The list of Meetings/Consultations attended by Canberra Airport to date in 2025 was noted.

2. ACCEPTANCE OF MEETING NOTES OF CACG MEETING HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2024

The Meeting Notes of the CACG Meeting held on 26 September 2024 were accepted.

3. AIRSERVICES AUSTRALIA (ASA)

3.1 General Briefing

ASA spoke to the following:

- A person had written to Airservices asking what community engagement had been undertaken for the seaplanes. He initially approached the NCA, however they directed him to Airservices as we determine the flight paths.
- I have done some research, and those flightpaths have been in place for 30+ years; since 1995. They are long-standing routes and have existing use rights where they can request to land over the Lake which is facilitated by the Canberra Tower.
- I also talked to him about the Airservices standards in terms of community engagement. He also asked for a copy of the maps.
- We received a paper yesterday from another person who lives in Campbell aligned to the end of the runway. It appears he is concerned about circuit training in terms of aircraft under 5.7 tonnes. CASA prescribes how aircraft do circuits.
- I will say in my response that we want to keep the smaller aircraft to the west of the airport in order to keep them away from the larger aircraft. I will draw down on responses we provide on a regular basis to such enquiries.
- We have received another enquiry for the Ridgeway. We have in the past consulted with residents of Weetalabah which is in the same approximate area and provided a substantial amount of information and reasoning as to why the air traffic is in that location.
- I will take on some of those concerns and explain what is going on as well.

RCG advised that residents are increasingly disturbed by noise from the speedway and small aircraft and we are not quite sure why. It has increased since Covid and it may be that the larger jets have changed to turboprops. They seem to be directly overhead and are extremely noisy to the point where the flight path seems to have moved to the northern side.

RCG continued speaking to her paper in terms of residents do not believe these issues have been addressed and asked if there was any possibility of mitigating this noise. She also suggested installing a noise monitor.

ASA responded in the following terms:

- I do not want to sound dismissive, however you may not be aware of the conversation and investigation we did for the Weetalabah residents.
- In 2022 we did a full investigation on this matter which concerned the turboprop aircraft coming over the Ridgeway. The suggestion was can we move the flight path.
- We did a lot of work on this investigation where we determined that the flight path was in the right place and aircraft are operating how they should.
- There was a lot of analysis and conversation that went into that outcome. In the end people understood why the flight path was there but were not happy with the outcomes of the investigation.
- What we found last time was by moving the flight path, it would just move the noise to another community and more people would be impacted.
- It sounds like the message did not get through, having addressed the concerns of the Weetalabah community two years ago by undertaking a comprehensive investigation.

- I would be happy to take you (RCG) through the work we did and the outcomes of the investigation via a Teams meeting so you can see how much time and energy we put into the investigation.
- It was one of the more interesting engagements we had.

RCG said that would be a good start.

ASA continued:

- There is a visual approach where aircraft are flying in manually and follow waypoints, but there can be flight path variations which are completely normal and legal.
- A pilot does not have to be at 3,000 feet, they can be lower than that in approaching an airport.
- The investigation found that something in the order of 6,000 flights per year fly over the area and it has been steadily decreasing.
- We found that a lot of the aircraft were changing from turboprop to jets and some of the turboprops are now RNP equipped so they can use the same route as jets.
- We found the traffic has been decreasing over time. I would be very surprised if it was back to the levels of 5 or 10 years ago.
- Could you (RCG) send me some questions through the CACG Chair. I cannot commit to another investigation on the back of what we did in 2022.
- What I can do is consider your questions and then take you on the journey in terms of the investigation we did for Weetalabah as you would benefit on going on that journey.
- We did a number of presentations and I can share them with you.
- In terms of a noise monitor, there are ten noise monitors for the entire country and we use them sparingly.
- Typically, we do not put in a noise monitor because someone says the planes are noisy on an existing flight path.
- We have not changed the flight path since at least 2002 and we went through this during our investigation.
- Airports update the community through their Master Plans.
- I am happy to refresh the data we have over time so we can get a better picture.

RCG said she would be curious to see if the traffic has increased.

ACTION:

RCG to provide questions through the CACG Chair (via Susan Mulligan) for consideration of Airservices.

The Chair said once ASA has considered the questions, we can then organise a meeting.

ASA advised at least RCG would come away from that well informed.

It is noted that on 16 April, Susan provided two Airservices Weetalabah presentations to RCG via email:

Further to our CACG meeting last week, Airservices, has asked me to provide you with the attached presentations on the Weetalabah investigation Airservices undertook in 2022 into moving the visual approach to runway 30 at Canberra airport

which may be of interest to the Ridgeway Community Group. FYI refer slide 13 onwards of the second presentation attached.

Once you have had a chance to review the presentations, please provide any questions you may have through me and I will liaise with ASA on your behalf.

JRA asked ASA if it was possible to look at what airlines are using the runway compared to prior to Covid. Leading into Covid many of the Dash 8 aircraft were converted to use Runway 35. After Covid, Link Airways commenced services, and they are now using the Canberra to Sydney approach instead of using Runway 35.

ASA advised he would discuss this with the Airservices team.

Michael advised it may also be that during Covid there were no flights. In 2017/18 there were more flights on that runway than at present.

In response to RCG question in her paper about the Dash 8-300 aircraft, Michael advised that Qantas is replacing the 200s and 300s with 400s over the next six months or so. The 400s should use Runway 35 and not that approach. They have struggled like every airline in the world to procure aircraft.

RCG asked about the conservation zone?

ASA advised he will cover that from a flight path perspective. Airservices has an environmental team that looks at flight paths relative to the EPBC Act. We determine our own triggers for when environmental significance begins and ends. We can seek advice from the Minister under the Act and take appropriate action following that advice. In the UK they have different heights and points where they prioritise those things. We do consider those things, and we are tracking that emerging space in terms of how we manage noise and areas of natural beauty.

ASA spoke to the Powerpoint presentation.

In terms of RNP, ASA explained the only difference is the aircraft is monitoring its performance in terms of whether it is in the right place and if it deviates it will tell the pilot, therefore RNP delivers much better predictability. For the Ridgeway we will be able to see what aircraft are flying overhead.

RCG asked what happens to the complaints Airservices receives?

ASA advised when the complaints are received the Airservices team has a look and tries to provide an explanation of why the aircraft is in a particular location. If someone says they are still not happy, we will give them more clarification. When it comes to the point where we have provided all the information we can and have explained what we can, we will advise the complainant that we are no longer able to provide any further information and therefore consider the matter closed. We also receive requests from the noise team to look at something. Finally, there is a Noise Ombudsman that generally results in an investigation and a lot of scrutiny of Airservices as it goes to the Board, and we try to avoid that if possible. Those are the main ways complaints are handled by us. We are a bit limited as there are only six of us looking after the whole country.

4. CANBERRA AIRPORT

4.1 Aviation Update by Michael Thomson

Michael provided an update as follows:

a) General

- Canberra Airport is still operating between 85% and 95% pre-Covid.
- The number of flights is considerable down on what they were pre-Covid so it is interesting in terms of this increased awareness of aircraft noise because there are less aircraft flying out of Canberra than there were in 2019.

b) Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) Operations at Canberra Airport

- We have not had a drone problem at Canberra Airport, however, it is a growing concern at other airports such as Heathrow.
- The issue for us is photographers taking photographs from Mt Ainslie.
- We are in discussions with a drone detection organisation.

c) Learn2Fly Operations at Canberra Airport

- We have two flying schools at Canberra Airport; Goulburn Aviation and Learn2Fly. Learn2Fly is expanding its operation.

4.2 Airport Infrastructure and Development

a) Northern Road

Michael noted CACG members may have read about the Northern Road in recent media articles. The Road is necessary given the experience of only having one exit road out of Fairbairn during the 2019/20 bushfire crisis. The ACT ESA is based at Fairbairn, there are a large number of office workers and residents in the precinct who could not get out of Fairbairn. The Prime Minister of the day had to get out of Fairbairn by 4-wheel drive through the Military Training Area during that time.

In addition, the RAAF 34 Squadron VIP Establishment is based at Fairbairn and a single exit causes security concerns. We have had recent visits from the Chinese Premier, King Charles and Julian Assange. It is not ideal to have one exit out of Fairbairn as it could in an emergency force VIPs to exit the precinct by crossing the active commercial runway.

There has been a fair bit in the media about the Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon (CGED) and the potential impact of the road. Unfortunately, CGED have not been found on the Airport since 2019 when one was discovered during the pre-construction survey for CGED along the length of the alignment for Taxiway Bravo. Canberra Airport was the first private entity to financially support a research project on Airport in 2012. We and the experts believe that the only way the Dragon will escape extinction is to develop a robust captive breeding program which we are prepared to support.

Canberra Airport continues to work through environmental issues with the Department of Climate Change, the Environment, Energy and Water and we hope to resolve those in the next few months, however the forthcoming Federal Election has slowed the process. We are taking significant steps to support the recovery of the CGED even though it appears there are none on Airport.

In answer to a question from FPCA, Michael advised that it was only the issue with DCCEEW regarding the CGED that was holding up the project.

b) Airservices Australia Digital Aerodrome Service (DAS) Air Traffic Control Trial at Canberra Airport

Michael advised the 35m DAS tower has been erected, however it is not operational. Airservices is basing the operational facility in Hume with the expectation in the future controllers will be able to manage several airports from one off airport location. Western Sydney Airport will have the first operational DAS, and we will have the next one.

Tori advised that Canberra Airport had participated in an information session with National Air Traffic Services (NATS) from the UK.

c) 9 Molonglo Drive, Brindabella Business Park

Refer to the Canberra Airport Meeting Brief.

4.3 MDP Investment Projects

Refer to the Canberra Airport Meeting Brief.

4.4 3 Wellington Place, Majura Park, MDP – Variation Overview

Andrew provided a presentation on this MDP development – copy attached.

4.5 Canberra Airport Carbon Reduction Policy

Karlien provided a presentation.

Michael advised the CACG that the aviation fuel farm is capable of facilitating the use of Jet Zero aviation fuel. The problem is, it is three times as expensive as the current fuel and the airlines are therefore not keen. Singapore is pushing ahead, and it will take our food lot matter, produce the fuel and ship it back to Australia.

TCC asked how would you heat the large hangar without gas?

Karlien advised it will be based on the same principles as our buildings. We need to change to electric and that involves more plantroom. We are working with our contractors to make it as easy as we can for our tenants.

4.6 Other News / Events

4.7 Communications

Refer to the Canberra Airport Meeting Brief for items 4.6 and 4.7.

5. REPORTS

5.1 Community Groups

Jerrabomberra Residents Association

JRA informed the meeting that on Monday there will be changed traffic conditions on the Monaro Highway due to the current upgrade works which will no doubt prove challenging for south Canberra residents.

The DA for the proposed new Vikings Club in the Poplars precinct is currently being considered by the NSW Southern Region Planning Panel. JRA and other community members will address the Panel on Tuesday 27 May, after which the Panel will make its decision within seven days. The community is concerned about the Club being too close to homes, the social impacts of poker machines and late-night alcohol sales.

JRA advised there are also DAs for large warehouses in Environa Drive which are also too close to homes. The community is concerned about the increase in traffic after someone was recently hit by a car.

Tuggeranong Community Council

TCC informed the meeting that the TCC has had some interesting presentations, including by the Real Estate Institute and Hands Across Canberra.

One of the bulk billing clinics in Tuggeranong has recently gone into administration which proves they cannot operate on bulk billing alone.

Pialligo Residents Association

PRA advised that Beltana Road was now complete, and the community was pleased with the outcome.

North Canberra Community Council

Bob advised, as mentioned earlier, ASA would respond to issues raised by a Campbell resident.

Fernleigh Park Community Association

FPCA raised the Spotlight roundabout and that QPRC have a plan to put in traffic lights. QPRC does not seem to have the money or will to change that. There will be long queues, and it will take much longer to get to the Airport, particularly with the Monaro Highway upgrade works.

5.2 Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council

QPRC was unable to send a representative to this meeting, however QPRC did provide a Meeting Brief which is attached.

5.3 ACT Government

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)

No update provided.

Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS)

No update provided.

The ACT Government was represented by ACT Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, as an observer.

6. OTHER BUSINESS AS RAISED AT THE MEETING

TCC asked following the recent power failure at Heathrow Airport, did Canberra Airport have back-up power for the terminal and aerodrome? Andrew advised that all of Canberra Airport's buildings had back-up generators.

7. NEXT MEETING

Following subsequent consultation with the Chair, the next meeting of the CACG was scheduled for Wednesday, 23 July 2025.

There being no other business, the Chair closed the meeting at 3.35pm.