

CoRBA - Melbourne
Coalition of Resident and Business Associations

Carlton Residents Association Inc.; Collins Street Precinct; Docklands Chamber of Commerce; Docklands Residents Association; East Enders Inc.; East Melbourne Group Inc.; Flemington Association; Hosier Inc.; Kensington Association; Melbourne South Yarra Group Inc.; North and West Melbourne Association Inc.; Parkville Association Inc.; Parkville Gardens Residents; Residents 3000 Inc.; Southbank Residents Association Inc.; Yarra Park Association; The Pasley Streets Precinct Group; Wilkinson Publishing; Yarra Park Association

24 September 2017

Lord Mayor Robert Doyle AC

By email : lordmayor@melbourne.vic.gov.au

Dear Lord Mayor,

AIRCRAFT PROBLEMS INNER MELBOURNE

I am writing on behalf of CoRBA (the Coalition of Resident & Business Associations) which represents community and business groups in the City of Melbourne. Our members across the municipality are seriously concerned about the impact of aircraft on the safety and amenity of Inner Melbourne.

Over recent years, Inner Melbourne has experienced a significant increase in low altitude flights, causing significant safety and security concerns as well as health and amenity impacts.

The problems arise from a number of sources, including helicopters flying and hovering over residential areas often for extended periods, as well as low flying fixed wing aircraft on training or joy flights and increasingly from heavy commercial aircraft approaching Melbourne Airport.

These problems have become worse since 2013 with light aircraft and helicopters no longer following Transit Routes, but being able to freely fly over sensitive residential and public areas. Records show an average of 65 orbits per day over East Melbourne, with the problem being worse on weekends and days with fine weather, when the average number of orbits has been shown to increase up to threefold. For example, the recorded peak shows flights over East Melbourne nearly every two minutes. A tenfold increase in the number of helicopter orbits occurred in the period 2012-2015.

For commercial passenger aircraft, implementation of GPS based Smart Tracking, the shifting of merge points and flight procedures has resulted in rapidly increasing density of flights overflying the area, with a frequency of five minutes and three minutes at peak periods, causing “noise ghettos” blighted by the concentrated noise.

The cumulative impacts of these frequent flights are significant safety and security risks as aircraft are able to operate with little control over a major city. The risks of so many flights, including training flights over some of Melbourne’s most densely populated areas is obvious. A crash on the MCG would be disastrous. In 2014 there was already a helicopter crash close to the MCG. Risks include engine failures

as well as collisions, with some near misses having been observed on the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) WebTrack. There is also the risk of a light plane or helicopter straying above the allocated airspace, resulting in a collision with a large passenger jet. The risk of using aircraft for terrorism impacting on prominent sites such as the MCG is also a matter of concern

The many flights also seriously diminish people's enjoyment of their houses and gardens and in many instances results in serious detrimental health issues.

The problems stem from a shift in regulation and enforcement which allows access to the controlled airspace over Inner Melbourne with a reduced formality, apparently enabled by the increased safety provided by Smart Tracking and resulting in a much reduced role of Air Traffic Control.

The need for legislative change has been recognized for some time and in 2011 Liberal Members, the Hon Judi Moylan MP and Steve Irons MP, introduced a private member's bill to deal with problems such as these. More recently Melbourne MP, Adam Bandt, introduced the **Air Services Amendment Bill 2016** as a private member's bill to provide some relief. It establishes clear requirements for consultation and reporting on the part of Airservices Australia. The Bill will require Airservices Australia to prepare a plan for management of flight paths and air space in central Melbourne, including prohibiting flights of helicopters and fixed wing aircraft below 2,000m above sea level within 5km of central Melbourne, with exemptions for emergency services aircraft, defence aircraft, aircraft flying to and from hospitals and other aircraft that it is in the public interest to exempt.

The Bill does not preclude flights over Inner Melbourne nor does it destroy commercial aviation. It is a balanced mechanism for managing the impacts, regulating altitudes and ensuring that a holistic view is taken, which includes consideration of the safety and health impacts on affected communities.

We urge you and Council to support the Bill to protect the interests of people in our municipality. We would be grateful if you could express this to both the Government and the Opposition. We would also request you to consider a formal Council resolution expressing this support.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Kennedy
Chair, CoRBA

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