

# Melbourne Airport Environs Strategy Plan 2003

Department of Sustainability and Environment





# **MELBOURNE AIRPORT ENVIRONS STRATEGY PLAN**



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## Abbreviations

AEO - Airport Environs Overlay

AEO1 - Schedule No1 to the Airport Environs Overlay

AEO2 - Schedule No2 to the Airport Environs Overlay

ANEF - Australian Noise Exposure Forecast

APAM - Australian Pacific Airports (Melbourne) Pty Ltd

AS 2021 - Australian Standard, *Acoustics - Aircraft Noise Intrusion - Building Siting and Construction*, published 10 August 2000

DoTRS - Federal Department of Transport and Regional Services

HORSCAN - House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aircraft Noise

LPPF - Local Planning Policy Framework

Melbourne Airport Environs Area - Area declared by Governor in Council in accordance with Sec 46S(1) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

MSS - Municipal Strategic Statement

SPPF - State Planning Policy Framework

VCAT - Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

VPP - Victoria Planning Provisions

## Introduction

In 1999, the then Minister for Planning agreed to prepare a strategy plan for the Melbourne Airport Environs Area Strategy Plan.

The purpose of the Strategy Plan is to provide an updated and progressive framework of planning controls and initiatives to manage the interests of both the Melbourne Airport and the significant airport environs. The current planning controls require updating in several respects: they do not properly reflect the most current information on aircraft noise exposure; the controls require clarification in how they should be applied to different noise exposed areas; and there is a need for more transparent assessment criteria.

Changes have also occurred in the regulation and operation of airports, which has seen the long-term lease for the Melbourne Airport sold to a private operator. The role of the lessee as a referral authority under the airport environs controls is reviewed. The reform of the Victoria Planning System has also changed the planning tools available for the management of airport environs. The Strategy Plan recommends a new separate planning provision for Melbourne Airport and it proposes initiatives outside the planning system. Proposals include promoting broader public awareness of aircraft noise exposure and the development of construction guidelines to more easily meet noise attenuation standards.

The Melbourne Airport Environs Strategy Plan will help ensure that Melbourne Airport retains its key competitive advantages of 24-hour curfew-free operation; an integrated passenger terminal complex; extensive rural environs; and appropriately manage the impact of aircraft noise on adjacent residential areas. The Melbourne Airport Environs Strategy Plan will build on the previous work associated with the introduction of the Melbourne Airport Environs Area controls and develop the current Victoria Planning Provisions in relation to the airport and the municipal local planning policy frameworks for the airport environs.

The preparation of the Melbourne Airport Environs Strategy Plan has been a transparent process, guided by a Steering Committee established by the Minister, with Ms Liz Beattie MP, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Tullamarine appointed as its Chair. The committee membership included representatives from the following:

- community members and Councillors from the municipalities of Melton, Brimbank, Hume and Moonee Valley;
- the Melbourne Airport operator, Australia Pacific Airports (Melbourne) Pty Ltd; and
- the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services and the Victorian Department of Infrastructure and the then Department of State and Regional Development.

The proposed Melbourne Airport Environs Strategy Plan provides progressive and long-term management of the airport environs. The Government supports the main thrust of the Strategy and considers it a key step in addressing the interface between airport operations and land management for the significant airport environs.

The Victorian Government recognises that Melbourne Airport is an important gateway to the State and a major destination in the national and international aviation network. It provides important links to the world for Victorian exports and tourism and is an important contributor to employment. The Commonwealth also supports transport systems which are safer, more efficient, internationally competitive, sustainable and accessible. The proposed Melbourne Airport Environs Strategy Plan enhances the performance of the airport, while addressing impacts on neighbouring communities. The implementation of the Strategy will be developed in stages, with amendments to planning policy to be given priority.

## Melbourne Airport Environs Controls

Land use planning for the Melbourne Airport environs commenced in the 1980s and led to the preparation of the initial Melbourne Airport Strategy (MAS), which was endorsed by all levels of Government in December 1990. The MAS introduced a degree of certainty and consistency in airport planning for the community, all levels of government and Melbourne Airport.

The introduction of the MAS also led to the formation of the Melbourne Airport Land Use Study Committee, which undertook some of the actions identified in the Melbourne Airport Strategy. The Committee reported in June 1992, and its recommendations have become the basis of the current planning controls for the Melbourne Airport environs. A key recommendation was the introduction of the Melbourne Airport Environs Areas (MAEA) Overlays 1 and 2.

The Minister for Planning approved the Melbourne Airport Environs Areas (MAEA) Overlay 1 on an interim basis in 1992, applying to the former municipalities of Broadmeadows, Bulla, Keilor and Melton. Overlays 1 and 2 were exhibited as planning scheme amendments in 1992, leading to an Independent Panel process in 1993. The Panel made significant recommendations, which were not resolved or adopted. The interim status of the MAEA Overlay 1 continued until the adoption of planning schemes in 1999, under the new Victoria Planning Provisions.

The Victoria Planning Provisions of 1996 provided two schedules within the Airport Environs Overlay, based on the principles of the 1992 Melbourne Airport Environs Area controls. Municipalities with these controls were subsequently required, when preparing new planning schemes, to include provisions to reflect the extent of the Melbourne Airport Environs in Schedules 1 and 2.

In December 1998 the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* was amended to introduce provisions relating to the preparation of a Melbourne Airport Environs Strategy Plan. The provisions seek to secure controls for the airport environs through the preparation of a Strategy, endorsed by both houses of Parliament. The existing planning scheme provisions will continue to apply until such time as the Strategy is endorsed. However amendments to local planning schemes are to be assessed for consistency with the approved Strategy.

In response to the need to prepare a Melbourne Airport Environs Strategy Plan a focus group was established in February 1999 to identify issues of concern and assist with the development of the project brief for the strategy plan. The Strategy was prepared by a Steering Group with appropriate representation.

### Current Planning Controls

The current suite of planning controls for the Melbourne Airport environs is contained in the Planning Schemes of the Melton Shire Council, Brimbank, Hume and Moonee Valley City Councils. These controls are underpinned by the State and Local Planning Policy Frameworks, along with the Airport Environs Overlay.

The State Planning Policy Framework makes substantial reference to the economic and transport importance of Melbourne Airport and the need for land use planning to ensure that the airport environs are compatible with the on-going operation of the airport.

Each of the four municipalities having land within the Melbourne Airport Environs acknowledges the role of the Melbourne Airport in its Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS).

It is anticipated that individual municipalities will acknowledge the Melbourne Airport Environs Strategy at the time they review their MSS.

The current framework of planning control for the airport environs has been in place since 1992. Since this time the application of the controls has changed, but the policy content has not been adequately reviewed. This was the case when local planning schemes were amended to conform to the current Victoria Planning Provisions but did not address the shortcomings which had been identified in the controls.

#### Need for Review

Since the introduction of airport environs controls in 1992 events have led to the situation where the controls are inconsistent and outdated. The legitimacy of the existing controls is questioned by stakeholders. The recommendations of the Independent Panel 1993 on use controls were not resolved. The extent of the overlays was interpreted and applied differently by the former municipalities. The preparation of the Melbourne Airport Master Plan following the sale of the Melbourne Airport lease has also highlighted inadequacies of existing controls.

The operation of the airport environs controls now provides years of experience to reflect on and assess the effectiveness of these controls. The Victorian Planning System provides appropriate tools to facilitate better land use planning for the environs of Melbourne Airport.

Issues addressed by the Steering Committee include the following:

- The location of the Overlay boundaries;
- The need for controls or other measures outside the Overlay;
- Ordinance provisions relating to the Overlay;
- The need for maintaining a referral authority; and
- Whether compensation to parties affected by aircraft noise is justified.



## Strategy Plan Recommendations

### 1 Overlay Boundaries

#### Key Direction

- 1.1 That the extent of the control boundaries of the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay be based on the Ultimate Capacity ANEF.
- 1.2 That the boundaries of Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 be amended to reflect the 20 and 25 ANEF contours. The Schedule boundaries to follow the ANEF contours except for lots in residential zones, where the boundary is to extend to include the whole lot.

#### The Report

The report recommends that the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay boundaries be based on the most recently approved Ultimate Capacity ANEF contours. The Overlay Schedules should follow the relevant ANEF contour, apart from land within residential zones where the boundaries should extend to the nearest cadastral boundary outside the contour so that the whole lot is included.

Schedule 1 of the Melbourne AEO would apply to the area within the 25 ANEF contour and Schedule 2 would apply to the area between the 20 and 25 ANEF contours.

The report referred, in some detail, to the airport noise modelling standards used in Australia. It noted that the Australian Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF) model is recognised as the most appropriate planning tool available to land use planners when assessing impacts of aircraft noise within airport environs. Commonwealth Government policy requires the use of the ANEF system for determining likely noise exposure around Australian airports. This system and the associated *Land Use Compatibility Advice for Areas in the Vicinity of Airports* are detailed in Australian Standard AS 2021 - 2000.

The Melbourne Airport Ultimate Capacity ANEF identifies potential noise impacts on the airport environs for different runway configurations, up to the ultimate operating capacity of the airport to the year 2051. The forecast methodology is conservative (worst case scenario) as it includes the impacts of all 3 runway configurations, while not all configurations will eventuate. The extent of this conservatism is not uniform and depending on the alignment of the third runway, the extent of the Overlay schedules may contract significantly in some areas and only marginally in others.

It was accepted that the ANEF contours represent a composite of worst case scenarios up to the ultimate 4 runway capacity of Melbourne Airport, with 371,000 aircraft movements. This compares to the 181,000 aircraft movements in 2000/01 with 2 runways. Importantly, the ANEF contours were endorsed by Air Services Australia for technical accuracy.

The ANEF contours are required by the Commonwealth *Airports Act 1996* to be reviewed every five years, as part of preparing revised airport master plans. Future changes to the ANEF contours may require revision of the Airport Environs Overlay. The historical trend has been for areas subject to aircraft noise to contract. Combining this trend with the conservative noise modelling, the report indicates that the forecast provides a conservative basis for airport environs planning.

The report questions the basis of the current AEO boundaries, which originate from recommendations by the Melbourne Airport Land Use Study Committee in 1992. The Melbourne Airport Environs Areas 1 and 2 do not accurately reflect the 20 and 25 ANEF contours. Rather, the boundaries included a tolerance, equivalent to half an ANEF contour interval. The AEO boundaries were also extended to the nearest convenient cadastral boundary. The resulting difference between the noise contour and the AEO boundary is significant at some locations, particularly in rural areas.

The report recommends that the AEO boundaries conform to the 1998 ANEF contours within rural areas. In residential zones the AEO boundaries should extend to the nearest cadastral boundary. This would avoid unnecessary complications in administering the Overlay in relation to individual residential lots.

Adopting this change will significantly reduce the area and the number of dwellings covered by the existing overlays. It will facilitate consistency with Australian Standard 2021 – 2000 and provide clarity in the policy basis for applying planning controls.

It was noted that the Federal Government has been working to standardise the ANEF modelling process and the current approved (1998) contours for ultimate capacity forecast for Melbourne Airport does not incorporate a tolerance in the boundaries.

## **Discussion**

The Australian Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF) for Melbourne Airport was approved in 1998 and is due for revision by December 2003. Melbourne Airport confirms that the ANEF will be revised next year as part of the Airport Master Plan review. It is intended that the Master Plan review will be exhibited from early May 2003 for 90 days. Submissions would be considered in August 2003 and lodged with the Department of Transport and Regional Services in September 2003. In the event that the revised ANEF produces amended contours, the AEO boundaries and Victorian Planning Provisions would require further amendment in 2003.

It is in the interests of the State and Melbourne Airport to have the Melbourne Airport Environs Strategy approved before the Master Plan 2003 is exhibited.

## **Government Response**

The recommendation to define the extent of the control boundaries of the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay on the basis of the most recently approved Ultimate Capacity ANEF is supported. This amendment would provide a clear policy basis for the Overlay boundary, and it provides consistency with Australian Standards.

The current 1998 ANEF was subject to a public process as part of the Melbourne Airport Master Plan. The 1998 ANEF is public knowledge and the 20 and 25 ANEF contours are an appropriate basis to define Schedules 1 and 2 of the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay. The proposal that Schedule boundaries follow ANEF contours except for lots in residential zones, where the boundary is to extend to include the whole lot, is supported.

## Actions

Government will undertake the following actions:

1. Airport Environs Overlay Schedules 1 and 2 for Melbourne Airport will be amended to conform to ANEF contours 20 and 25. Overlay schedules will be amended in the planning schemes of the Cities of Hume, Brimbank, Moonee Valley and the Shire of Melton.

## 2 Management of Aircraft Noise Outside the 20 ANEF

### Key Direction

- 2.1 That the 20 ANEF be used to define the extent of the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay controls and that planning controls not be applied to areas outside the 20 ANEF.
- 2.2 That information regarding aircraft noise within 15 km of Melbourne Airport is disseminated to the community.

### The Report

The report considered whether there was a need to extend planning controls outside the 20 ANEF contour to provide a buffer area to accommodate possible future variations in airport planning, or as a mechanism to alert people of the impact of aircraft noise adjacent to ANEF contours.

The reaction of individuals to aircraft noise is very variable. Significantly, most complaints of aircraft noise come from residents outside the 20 ANEF, and more than 50% of complaints come from residents outside the 15 ANEF. It was reported that some of the complaints are due to variations in the normal aircraft operation procedure such as a change to flight track or height, rather than the noise level. In 2000/01 Melbourne Airport received approximately 117 noise complaints.

It was noted that Australian Standard 2021 - 2000 does not require noise attenuation measures outside the 20 ANEF contour. The Community Report provides a 'Dose / Noise Curve' figure which illustrates the variable nature of community reaction to aircraft noise. At the 20 ANEF benchmark, 10% of the community is seriously affected by aircraft noise while 45% are moderately affected. The 1993 Independent Panel (which considered the 1992 report of the Melbourne Airport Land Use Study Committee) considered that extending planning controls outside the 20 ANEF would need to be based on sound principles, implying that such justification was not evident.

The report notes that the use of ANEF contours as planning control boundaries can encourage the interpretation of the contours as rigid lines, and that areas outside are not impacted by aircraft noise. The Steering Committee accepted Australian Standard 2021 – 2000 as the appropriate basis for planning controls and therefore the 20 ANEF contour should continue to be used as the benchmark for planning controls. In relation to the concept of an additional buffer outside the 20 ANEF to accommodate future variations in



airport planning, the conservative estimates for the Ultimate Capacity ANEF for Melbourne Airport already make this provision.

The report also noted that if the planning controls were extended to 15 ANEF contour it would impact on a significant number of properties, increasing from 11,769 to 45,531 dwellings. The expansion would affect three municipalities previously not subject to the Airport Environs Overlay (Whittlesea, Maribyrnong and Macedon Ranges).

In light of the variable community response to aircraft noise and the proportion of complaints originating from outside the 20 ANEF contour, the report recommends the dissemination of information on aircraft noise outside the 20 ANEF contour. This information would improve awareness of this issue for prospective residents, as well as informing existing residents of future aircraft noise forecasts.

The Steering Committee considered that the extent of notification should be consistent with the Australian Standard guide (Clause 1.3), which discusses the application of standards for buildings within 15 km of an international airport. This area is considered as a primary area and during the last three years 75% of noise complaints have originated within this area. Thus, this area would capture the majority of noise-affected properties. The depiction of the 15 km area should use a soft edge at the boundary to avoid misinterpretation of noise impact. It is noted that the 15km radius around Melbourne Airport extends outside the boundaries of the gazetted environs study area and would affect 5 additional municipalities: Macedon Ranges, Whittlesea, Moreland, Darebin and Maribyrnong.

The report concluded that the method of notification should be in the form of advisory maps and information made available from local Councils, Melbourne Airport and the State Government. The material should be made available widely, and the possibility of using street directories and phone books was encouraged. The option of using the planning system to advise the broader community was considered inappropriate.

The Steering Committee noted that notification of noise exposure within a 15km radius of an international airport has not been applied elsewhere in Australia. The notification recommendation was viewed as innovative, enhancing the protection of Melbourne Airport as a curfew free airport through better community understanding and awareness of aircraft operation and noise exposure. Better community awareness would be particularly helpful at future airport planning milestones such as decisions on new runways.

## **Discussion**

The State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF) currently provides that planning for the Melbourne Airport environs should strengthen the role of the airport as a key focal point within the State's economic and transport infrastructure. In respect of aircraft noise standards for airport environs planning, the SPPF refers to the Melbourne Airport Ultimate Capacity (1998) and the ANEF, endorsed in 1998. The SPPF does not identify which ANEF contours should form the basis of planning controls. To give proper effect to the Steering Committee's recommendation that the 20 ANEF contour be used to define the extent of the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay, the SPPF should be amended to clearly state this policy and make reference to the ANEF level. The appropriate wording for an amendment was not drafted as part of the report.

The recommendation that no planning controls be applied outside the 20 ANEF would, similarly, require a statement of policy in the SPPF. Appropriate wording for this provision will need to be drafted. The provision will clarify that, in the case of lots within a residential



zone, the boundary will extend to the whole lot. This is consistent with the intention of the report.

Dissemination of information to the broader community on aircraft noise falls outside the planning system. This proposal would involve exploring which information tools could be applied and who would be responsible for delivering this information. It is known that the Commonwealth is seeking comments on *Draft Guidelines for Selecting and Providing Airport Noise Information*. An option under consideration is the use of an interactive information tool on flight numbers and paths.

### **Government Response**

The principle of using the 20 ANEF contour to define the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay (MAEO) is supported. The practice of referring to the most current ANEF in the SPPF should continue, and the 2003 review of the Melbourne Airport Master Plan could lead to further changes.

The recommendation of specifically excluding planning controls outside the 20 ANEF is considered appropriate and is consistent with the above principle of using this contour to define the MAEO.

The recommendation to disseminate information on aircraft noise within 15 km of Melbourne Airport is supported. The development of information tools would be a project, involving appropriate parties, to explore the most appropriate delivery and responsibility.

### **Actions**

Government will undertake the following actions:

2. The State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF) be amended to provide that the 20 ANEF contour be the basis for defining the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay.
3. The State Planning Policy Framework be amended to clarify that Airport Environs Overlay planning controls not be applied outside the 20 ANEF contour.
4. A project is initiated to explore information tools and responsibilities for disseminating information on aircraft noise to the community within a 15 km radius of Melbourne Airport. The project will be managed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment and include representation from the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services, Australian Pacific Airports (Melbourne), EPA Victoria and Councils. The outcome of this project to be reported to the Minister for Planning.