

### Safeguarding Airports and Communities

In June 2009, the Government released a discussion paper, *Safeguards for airports and the communities around them*. The discussion paper, which was foreshadowed in the Green Paper, outlined the issues that need to be considered in the development of a unified national framework to safeguard both communities and airports from inappropriate off-airport developments, which could threaten public safety and the current and future viability of aviation operations at Australian airports.

Suitable locations for airports are scarce. In the interests of safety and public amenity there should be minimal development in the vicinity of airport operations. However, there is also a need for airports to be easily accessible to population centres. Inappropriate development around airports can result in unnecessary constraints on airport operations and impacts on community safety. There is hence a need to ensure that construction and development are undertaken in a way that is compatible with airport operations, both in the present and taking into account future growth.

A clear and coordinated national framework for land use planning and development controls will serve both aviation operators and the public. It will ensure that new development in areas near airports does not create unnecessary safety and operational issues, either now or in the future.

Such a framework will provide for:

- > protection of community safety by ensuring that commercial or residential developments do not occur in areas close to runway ends, where there is a higher risk of damage from aircraft; and
- > protection of the safety of aircraft operations by preventing developments that could present a physical obstacle to aircraft, interfere with communications or navigation equipment, or produce significant hazards in the form of smoke or turbulence.

A balanced framework will also provide for the reasonable amenity of areas surrounding airports and under flight paths.

The discussion paper *Safeguards for airports and the communities around them* signalled that the Australian Government will work cooperatively with the states, territories and local planning authorities to develop a risk-based national safeguarding framework. The framework will ensure an appropriate balance is maintained between the social, economic and environmental needs of the community and the effective use of airport sites.

The proposed Planning Coordination Forums for the primary capital city airports will play an important role in the application of a safeguarding framework to off-airport planning. However, safeguarding issues apply not only at the large federal airports, but in respect of large and small airports nationwide. This is particularly so in view of likely future growth in air travel.

The Australian Government received over 90 submissions in response to the discussion paper and is engaged in an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders about how a national framework may be implemented. There is broad agreement across stakeholders that the Australian Government's proposal for a national framework is worth pursuing and would substantially improve aviation and community safety.

Specifically, the Australian Government proposes to work with state, territory and local governments and industry stakeholders to:

- > work with jurisdictions on a national land use planning regime near airports and under flight paths, to minimise sensitive developments being located in areas affected by aircraft operations;
- > undertake a detailed examination of the implications of public safety zones in the vicinity of airports;
- > improve and enhance land use planning arrangements and supplementary public information relating to the impacts of aircraft noise, including to