

Media Statement

June 6th, 2018

Busselton-Margaret River Airport expansion gets conditional approval from the EPA

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has recommended conditional environmental approval for the Busselton-Margaret River Airport Expansion proposal, with restrictions on noise levels and night-time flying.

EPA Chair Dr Tom Hatton said the airport's proposed expansion by the City of Busselton could result in larger planes like a Boeing 737 or Airbus A320 utilising the airport, and the noise impacts on the surrounding areas would have to be carefully managed.

"The proposal includes significant changes at the Busselton-Margaret River Airport, with larger aircraft types using the airport as well as changes in operating hours, this would allow flights from new destinations such as Sydney and Melbourne," Dr Hatton said.

"During the assessment process the EPA's main consideration was the potential impact of noise emissions on the local surrounding areas, particularly on nearby properties at night-time.

"The City of Busselton must continue to manage noise and the EPA's report released today sets out noise management parameters and limits the airport's hours of operation."

The airport is located 6.5 kilometres south-east of Busselton's town centre and is surrounded by agricultural land, with isolated noise-sensitive residences.

The proposed changes could potentially result in an additional 10 weekly aircraft movements in 2018–19 and 32 weekly movements in 2038–39 of larger jet aircrafts.

During the assessment process the EPA did not support all aspects of the proponent's changes. As a result, the EPA recommended a condition which requires the implementation of a Noise Management Plan, which includes:

- hours of operations (placing a limit of five nighttime flights per week between the hours of 2300 and 0600);
- processes / criteria to ameliorate impacts on noise affected residences;
- complaints response.

The EPA also recommended a condition to require a review of the effectiveness of the noise management plan after three years of operations.

Dr Hatton said the EPA supports the City of Busselton's investigations into alternative flight paths, which may further minimise noise impacts to residences.

"Before adopting any flight paths, it is expected the City of Busselton would undertake noise modelling of the new flight paths to show where noise emissions are likely to be distributed

and that there are no new residential areas likely to be unreasonably impacted,” Dr Hatton said.

“We also expect the City to consult with the community on the revised flight paths.”

Airservices Australia is the primary agency responsible for aircraft noise on air routes across Australia.

The EPA’s report to the Minister for Environment is now open for a two-week public appeal period, closing Wednesday 20th June 2018. Appeals can be made at www.appealsconvenor.wa.gov.au

The Minister for Environment will make the final decision.

EPA Report 1616 is available at www.epa.wa.gov.au

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