Communication and consultation protocol
Contents

Foreword 3
Purpose 4
When we consult 6
Our obligations 7
How we consult 8
Foreword

This Communication and Consultation Protocol outlines our approach to engagement with the communities in which we operate, the value we place on that engagement and the various methods of consultation that we use.

As the nation’s provider of air traffic control and aviation rescue and fire-fighting services, we recognise the crucial importance of our role to the economy and to our customers. This means we need to be open and transparent about our operations and services.

We safely manage 11 percent of the world’s airspace; four million aircraft movements, carrying more than 140 million passengers annually. We provide this service from 29 air traffic control towers, two major air traffic services centres and four terminal control units throughout Australia. We also provide aviation rescue and fire-fighting services at 26 of Australia’s busiest airports.

We understand that the way we carry out our activities is as important as what we do. Our success is reliant on how well we engage with our stakeholders and how well we understand the impact that our activities, and those of the aviation industry, have on local communities.

Our aim is to minimise the impact of our operations while ensuring we can provide the critical infrastructure required to support social and economic growth at a regional and national level.

We are committed to providing information to stakeholders and the community on significant changes that may affect them, and to incorporating stakeholder feedback into our planning, decision-making and implementation processes. We are also committed to engaging with our stakeholders through regular consultation to develop a common understanding of current and future service delivery requirements.

**Jason Harfield**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Airservices Australia

4 July 2016
Purpose

The Communication and Consultation protocol describes Airservices communication approach and various consultation methods. It provides a framework for engagement with the community and is subject to regular review on the basis of our experience in implementing changes and in the development of future projects.

The effective management of our services and delivery of our infrastructure program, including flight path design and the impact of aircraft noise, is a partnership with a number of stakeholders:

- aircraft operators, including airlines
- airport owners and operators
- federal, state and local governments
- communities around airports which may be impacted by infrastructure, aircraft noise or emissions
- state and local planning authorities who determine land use around existing airports.

Community Aviation and Consultation Groups (CACGs) have been established for all federally-leased airports (excluding Mount Isa and Tennant Creek) and some privately-owned airports to provide an effective avenue for local community engagement on airport planning and operations, including aircraft noise. Although we do not have formal membership of CACGs, we actively participate in these meetings to engage with the community on issues that might affect them, including changes to procedures.

The role of the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) is to conduct independent administrative reviews of our management of aircraft noise-related activities, including the handling of complaints or enquiries made to us about aircraft noise, community consultation processes related to aircraft noise and the presentation and distribution of aircraft noise-related information. More information about the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman and charter can be found at www.ano.gov.au
When we consult

Airservices is committed to open and timely communication and consultation. We engage with the community in relation to a range of issues:

- services (air traffic control and aviation rescue and fire fighting)
- flight path changes, particularly if residents are newly overflown
- airspace design
- our infrastructure projects
- managing and responding to safety and environmental issues.

According to the level of change and likely impact, different forms of communication and consultation activities can be used. Airservices seeks to provide the community and stakeholders with the opportunity to learn and understand how a change may impact them, why it is necessary and to provide an opportunity for feedback, where practicable.

We commit to:

- listening to the community and stakeholders
- acknowledging and considering feedback (noting that some changes are required for safety considerations)
- communicating decisions and the reasons for them.
Our obligations

Our legislative accountabilities are expressed in section 9(2) of the Air Services Act 1995. This states the organisation is obliged to, “… exercise its powers and perform its functions in a manner that ensures that, as far as is practicable, the environment is protected from… the effects of the operation and use of aircraft.”

Section 10 further states that: “Airservices must, where appropriate, consult with government, commercial, industrial, consumer and other relevant bodies and organisations (including the International Civil Aviation Organization and bodies representing the aviation industry).”

Flight route changes or infrastructure projects with safety implications, or those undertaken for national defence or security reasons, may be exempt from these provisions.

Airservices accepts our responsibility to inform the community of the reasons for such changes or projects wherever possible, and to provide an opportunity for feedback on their impact.
How we consult

Airservices adopts a wide range of communication and consultation tools and processes based on individual situations and operational needs. Our consultation may range from one-way communication through to more comprehensive, interactive discussions and participation by stakeholders in the project planning and design process.

Where practicable, as part of our planning for consultation for significant changes or major projects, we will consider appropriate engagement to:

- set the scope for the consultation process
- identify key stakeholders
- inform stakeholders, including the community
- provide an opportunity for further information to be obtained
- make information accessible and easily understood
- invite feedback
- consider feedback before making a final decision
- communicate our decisions to stakeholders and the community
- continuously review our consultation to ensure we are effectively communicating with stakeholders
- provide balanced information on potential impacts and benefits of a change
- provide information on the processes required to implement a change (including legislative processes).

Consultation will be undertaken in a transparent and accessible manner.

The methods of consultation used will be appropriate and proportional to the change being proposed or project being undertaken, the number of stakeholders involved and the available time and resources.
Consultation will be tailored using some or all of the following methods:

**Method 1: Stakeholder briefings and/or correspondence**

Depending on the type of project or change proposed, Airservices may conduct industry briefings and make direct contact with key industry stakeholders such as airlines, airports, Commonwealth, state and/or territory government agencies, Federal Ministers, councils and local members, members of parliament, senators and representatives of community groups.

**Method 2: Community Aviation Consultation Groups**

All major airports have established CACGs. The CACGs address planning and development issues as well as operational matters such as aircraft noise which may affect the local community. They also provide an opportunity for communication and consultation, although they may not be public forums.

While not a formal member, Airservices is represented at each of the CACGs. We will provide information to, and seek feedback from, the groups on issues of interest.

**Method 3: Information on Airservices website**

We will make information available on our website in a form that is easy to understand and addresses the nature of the change or project to be undertaken. Information on how to provide feedback is also included. Where relevant, social media may also be used directing people to the Airservices website. Information will also be provided on proposed changes that prove not to be viable, beneficial or effective.

**Method 4: Press advertising and media releases**

Advertisements in local and/or national newspapers may be arranged to advise the community about a change or project affecting their area. The advertisements advise where to obtain more information and how to provide feedback (generally via our website).

Airservices also issues media releases announcing major changes or projects supported (where relevant) by the use of social media channels.

**Method 5: Direct mail to residents**

We may directly (or with the support of other key stakeholders, such as an individual airport or airline) write to residents directly affected to outline the nature and scope of the proposed changes or project. Residents will be invited to provide feedback.

**Method 6: Information kit**

An information kit may be developed and made available to the community and/or media including:

- reason for the change or project
- a factsheet outlining the change or project
- frequently asked questions
- maps or images as required
- information on feedback processes
- information on legislative processes
- an analysis of impacts and benefits of the proposed change.

The information kits may be distributed through any one of the other methods of consultation described.
Method 7: Face-to-face communication

In the case of significant changes or a major project, we may seek to engage the community face-to-face in an information session or other discussion. This engagement could take several forms.

We may conduct a public information session at a local community venue, through the CACGs if these are public forums, or through displays at public spaces in the community such as a shopping centre or town hall. When these are smaller gatherings, they allow groups of people to meet with our staff for meaningful discussion about the project.

Where public information sessions are to be used, notices will be published in local newspapers before any session. A media release may also be issued (supported by use of social media channels where relevant), notification provided via relevant CACGs or local councils, through direct mail or the web.

Method 8: Social media

Where appropriate, we will engage and inform the community through the use of social media including Twitter and YouTube. This will largely be in support of other methods as indicated and will not be used as a stand-alone consultation medium.

Method 9: Validation or assessment of a trial

In the case of a minor procedural change or the introduction of new technology to achieve improved noise outcomes, a short-term trial may be undertaken for a defined period as part of the design process of a project or to gather further data to help inform the decision.

The community will be informed before, during or after the trial and feedback considered as part of reviews of the effectiveness of the trial.

We will provide information on the processes (including legislative processes) required to implement a change as part of the consultation information.

Method 10: Post-implementation reviews

In the case of significant changes or a major project, we may undertake a post-implementation review (PIR), not before twelve months of the change (trial or permanent) being implemented. PIRs will consider the change and whether it achieved the intended outcome.

NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING RESIDENTS

Airservices is committed to helping people access information and services in their own language. This includes information about noise complaints, flight path changes and our air traffic control and aviation rescue fire fighting services.

Where we are proposing changes that will have a direct impact on communities, we will consider making information available in languages other than English. This may include providing a translation service to assist in communicating with people from non-English speaking backgrounds, providing access to materials in other languages or making use of local community groups where appropriate.

Our Noise Complaint and Information Service (NCIS) also offers access to a free interpreter assistance service.