

## **Air Force response to Mrs Beverley Male – Salt Ash resident and representative on the Williamtown Advisory Group**

**Clarification around the arming up and deployment of weapons around the Salt Ash Air Weapons Range (SAAWR). This response refers to questions 1, 2, 3, 4 of Mrs Male's query.**

- Salt Ash Air Weapons Range has been Gazetted and in use since 1946 and was re-authorised for air to surface use in Gazette Number 27 dated 7 July 2004. The Restricted Airspace associated with the Salt Ash Gazettal is R596, promulgated by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority.
- The restricted airspace R596, larger than the lateral confines of the Defence Practice Area (DPA), has been promulgated for military flying training conducted at SAAWR. The lateral confines of the SAAWR DPA (which are articulated in the Gazette issued under the provisions of Defence Force Regulations 1952) are designed to protect the public from Defence use of SAAWR.
- The restricted areas directly associated with the SAAWR are promulgated by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority and administered under the Airspace Act 2007 with which Defence complies.
- The SAAWR Restricted (airspace) Area is somewhat larger than the lateral (ground) confines of the DPA since it is principally designed to protect other airspace users from high levels of military air activity whilst the range is active.
- Aircraft can initiate their gunnery firing (first firing point) outside the lateral confines into the DPA. Defence is required to ensure any item released from aircraft will land within the confines of the DPA.

### **Further explanation:**

Australian military aircraft have the right to operate over the land mass and waters of Australia. Military operations on Salt Ash Air Weapons Range (SAAWR) are conducted within Defence Standing Instructions and Regulations.

Military aircraft 'arm up' for gunnery operations in the immediate vicinity of the SAAWR boundary. (Arming up military aircraft for gunnery is akin to taking the safety catch off a rifle.) Aircraft captains do not arm up until the aircraft is in a position such that if any store is subsequently released or fired, it will impact in the designated impact areas. Even in the unlikely event of a weapon malfunction, the angle or flight/trajectory of jet aircraft will ensure the aircraft (and weapon) is contained within the DPA boundary.

The safety template for the SAAWR is designed to ensure stores are contained within the Range lateral boundaries.

## **5. Are private land & home owners covered under the OH&S/ Workplace Safety Act ?**

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (which replaced the OH&S Act), requires that Defence ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of other persons is not put at risk from Defence activities.

Air Force takes its responsibilities for Work Health and Safety very seriously. Noise monitoring around SAAWR, by both Defence and private residents, has confirmed that military flights over residential areas at Salt Ash **do not** exceed short-term noise peak limits, nor do they exceed the limit for total noise dose averaged over a working day in the Work Health and Safety Regulations. Comcare has investigated Air Force activity at SAAWR and found there to be a “low risk to the health and safety of those in the surrounding area of the weapons range and that the RAAF is taking all reasonably practicable steps to mitigate this risk.”

Defence is doing everything it can to reduce noise impacts around Williamtown, whilst balancing the operational requirement for its aircraft. This approach will continue with the F-35A.

## **F/A 18F Super Hornet operations out of Australian military bases**

The introduction of the F/A-18F Super Hornet was assessed in accordance with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth) (EPBC Act). This included the preparation of a Public Environment Report (PER) which is available at the following website:

[http://www.airforce.gov.au/Flying\\_Operations\\_of\\_the\\_Australian\\_FA-18F\\_Super\\_Hornet\\_at\\_RAAF\\_Base\\_Amberley/?RAAF-LPs+BYDB/qsVyHSLku4PB/esw5dxiv/](http://www.airforce.gov.au/Flying_Operations_of_the_Australian_FA-18F_Super_Hornet_at_RAAF_Base_Amberley/?RAAF-LPs+BYDB/qsVyHSLku4PB/esw5dxiv/)

All visiting fighter jet aircraft that use RAAF Base Williamtown comply with our ‘Fly Neighbourly’ policy – which is designed to minimise noise impacts of fighter jet operations during landing and takeoff on local communities.

FA-18F Super Hornet aircraft will continue to use RAAF Base Williamtown on occasion for essential training. The F/A-18F Super Hornet’s main operating base will continue to be RAAF Base Amberley.

## **Process for raising concerns from Williamtown Advisory Group (WAG) with the Williamtown Consultative Forum (WCF)**

The Williamtown Advisory Group (WAG) facilitates information sharing with a number of different groups, and acts as a forum for discussion and engagement between all of the representative groups.

The Senior Australian Defence Force Officer for RAAF Base Williamtown is responsible for present the concerns of the community from the WAG to the Williamtown Consultative Forum (WCF).

Due to the variety of community views, sometimes community concerns raised cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties. Community concerns will be raised and discussed – but not necessarily resolved by the group.

### **EIS, and the JSF**

**TNIP – Can a member of the public have information on flight paths? As a Salt Ash community representative, (can I) have access to data through the NFPMS for use on my (Mrs Male) computer?**

Yes. General information about flight paths is available through Noise and Flight Path Monitoring (NFMPS) reports at [www.defence.gov.au/aircraftnoise](http://www.defence.gov.au/aircraftnoise) .

However, because RAAF Base Williamtown is an operating military base, the information is subject to a delay. Due to security issues, Defence cannot provide the same level of data that some civilian airports may provide. However changes to the NFPMS website – to be operational in the near future - will provide additional and much improved information to local residents.

An Australian Noise Exposure Index is currently being developed for the F-35A Environmental Impact Assessment process and will be available for review as part of the technical documents being produced as part of the EIS.