

Meeting notes
WLM Advisory Group – 11 October 2012

Attendees

GPCAPT Mike Kitcher, WGCDR Glen Johnson, GPCAPT Chris Wheaton, Defence Support Group – Brenin Presswell , Natalie Clark; Northern NSW Environment Manager Helen Horn, West Medowie rep - Sue Hirsch, SAAWR rep - Bev Male, , East Medowie rep - Bill George, Kristen Keegan – HBC; Marcus Lancaster – NAL; Gary Oakey – NSW Planning, Aaron Spadaro – NSW Premiers; Kerrie Jamieson - Salt Ash Public School Principal; Oyster Cove rep Tricia Phillips, NSW NPWS – Laurence Penman; NSW Trade and Investment Malcolm St Hill.

Apologies: Andrew Smith – Worimi LALC; Raymond Terrace rep - Paul Le Mottee; Trevor John – RDA Hunter; Dean Taylor HWC, Peter Marler – PSC; Rob Corken – NCC

1. A/Senior Australian Defence Force Officer (SADFO) Welcome

Introductions:

Each member of the group identified themselves and outlined their roles within their organisation, or community group.

2. Actions Items

| Action: | Group response |
|---|---|
| WAG members were invited to review the draft Terms of Reference and provide input into opportunity to look to the future and common ground. | Group agreed to adopt the Terms of Reference for the Williamtown Advisory Group |
| Minutes distribution timeframes: - Request from community members for WAG to approve minutes out-of-session and be distributed within 4 weeks of the WAG meeting. | Group agreed to review, and adopt minutes out of session to facilitate their distribution to the local community |
| Request from community attendees (additional representative) to be included in any information/agenda/minutes at the same time as the WAG members | Group agreed to include the broader group in information/agenda/minutes at the same time as the WAG members minutes distribution |

3. Updates: *(Each representative provides an update that might be relevant to the meeting)*

**WG CDR Glen Johnson
Air Base Exec Officer**

- Since 7 June 12 meeting base flying units have being heavily involved in Exercise Pitch Black in the North of Australia over the July/Aug 12 period. Locals would have noticed a lull in flying activities over the period.
- In late Aug/early Sep flying recommenced with use of Salt Ash Air Weapons Range and flying elsewhere in the region.

- Base personnel continue to deploy to the Middle East on a regular basis in support of whole of government directed operations.
- Base personnel have participated in many recent local representative events such as Battle for Britain, Battle for Australia, National Servicemen's day etc with activities to commemorate Remembrance Day occurring shortly.
- Base redevelopment activities remain on hold pending further funding and direction from government which is also affecting infrastructure development for the Joint Strike Fighter.
- Base is developing plans over the Christmas period for recall of staff if required to assist emergency staff managing natural disasters in the local region i.e. flooding, bushfire etc.
- Joint operation- RAAF, Police and NPWS in late November/early December on the SAAWR

SADFO:

United States Military Aircraft – fighter jets and cargo

- In the first 3 months of 2013 there will be an increase in flying activities from the base as aircraft from the United States (fighter and cargo) as well as Super Hornets from Amberley. This will be advertised widely in the local media as well as on the web site. Expected start will be early February 2012 through to mid April.
- The jets will be here to support a **Fighter Conversion Instructor Course** (similar to the US Top Gun Course). The Course will be held over a 6 month period, and US jets and the super hornets are here to support the course. Air Operations will be conducted primarily over the water, and western airspace. Increased departures and recoveries from the airfield, night flying will also occur in conjunction with this course. We will advise the community and Base neighbours well in advance. Course deploys to Tindal and Darwin as well.

Operational Change:

Fly Neighbourly –

- Operating since July 2012 – however aircrew were in Northern Australia during July/August so we have delayed community information programs..
- Aircrew reviewed Fly Neighbourly program for impact on operations
- Have had fewer complaints in key areas such as people living near the Base, areas of Raymond Terrace and Medowie. These are all areas that should experience the main benefit from these programs.
- Will look to promote for November/December – with general community for feedback etc although will do a review with Base neighbours etc; WAG contacts, as we don't want to disadvantage anyone with the changes.

Website – Flying Program

- Provides a monthly picture of scheduled flights
- Useful but broad tool – not every flight, just planned ops over air spaces
- Updated weekly, RSS alerts
- About to promote it widely – media, Hunter Councils meeting, send link out to local councils, neighbours, groups, business etc
- Link: <http://www.airforce.gov.au/flyingareawilliamtown>

Newcastle Airport Ltd (NAL):

Marcus Lancaster

- Reiterated the close working relationship between the Base and NAL
- Jetstar and Virgin are set to have double daily flights.
- Look to develop and implement the Airport Master plan over the next 12 months.
- Air port received no noise complaints over the past few months.

Port Stephens Council

Bruce Peterson – Environment

Port Stephens Council Local Environment Plan will be on exhibition early next year. Looking for public input in the process, flagged there was no rezoning around the air base. Flagged there would be changes to land use zones – ie rural to environmental zoning.

PSC looking to develop a strategic planning process for Williamstown, and will guide appropriate land use around the base. EG High tech industries to support the base, educational facilities/training centres and looking to the constraints posed by the areas such as road infrastructure and drainage.

Action: Seek PSC to conduct presentation at next meeting regarding the LEP, and strategic planning update for around RAAF Base Williamstown.

NSW Premier and Cabinet

Aaron Spadaro outlined the Hunter Regional Action Plan which localises the provisions of the Government's NSW 2021 Plan. Release of the action plan is expected in before the end of 2012.

The Regional Action Plan will:

- Outline the NSW Government's strategic priorities for the Hunter, including specific delivery agencies and delivery partners
- Introduce greater integration and government accountability for addressing impediments to effective land use planning
- Incorporate new place-based approaches to human services delivery
- Address issues surrounding resource extraction and the return of infrastructure to the Upper Hunter
- Actively seek to promote and grow the defence industry in the region, particularly in support of (and leading up to) the commencement of JSF capabilities at RAAF Williamstown

NSW Planning –

Gary Oakey

Advised group the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy (2006) will be updated as necessary. A new strategy needs to be developed as the 2006 version didn't look at transport and infrastructure needs.

A draft discussion paper will go on exhibition – with community and industry.

It is due to go to cabinet before Xmas 2012 followed by a public exhibition process, receive submissions and a revised strategy planned to go on exhibition around May 2013.

No major changes to this part of the world are expected – not looking for additional residential housing blocks in the areas around the airport as the area is unsuitable.

NSW Trade and Investment

Malcolm St-Hill

- Base recognised as a key economic driver for the Hunter and used to attract business and investment for the Hunter.
- Worked with companies – Jetstar, Forgacs to encourage them to operate out of the Hunter and look to increasing employment opportunities.

- Have a project officer to work with small to medium enterprises to be able to bid for Defence work.
- Work with prime contractors and look to forge relationship with Defence for the benefit of local businesses.
- Close relationship with NAL and it's a significant asset to the region, as well as the planned Williamstown Aerospace Centre.

HBC

Kristen Keegan

- Hunter Defence Strategy (worked with Hunternet) is ready to go and will be submitted to local MPs, NSW and Federal Government
- HBC is concerned that State government has reduced funding on Defence Industry Engagement.
- Looking to firmly pitch NSW as a Defence friendly state

NPWS

Laurence Penman

Outlined NPWS manages surrounding lands such as Tilligerry State Conservation Area which encompasses the old Hunter Water lands and protects the Tomago sandbeds.

Worimi Conservation Lands (Stockton Bight) amended for five years and it's a high visitation area. NPWS lands immediately adjoin the Base/Weapons range.

- Advised that twice a year NPWS conducts helicopter weed spraying and Base Air Traffic Control has stopped the activity. Continuing discussions with Defence to establish a manageable process to conduct the weed spraying in coastal areas around Port Stephens.
- Indicated that alternative runways would create bigger environmental issues, and if areas were to be rezoned there would be long term impacts.

GPCAPT Kitcher advised that the EIS for the Joint Strike Fighter would examine the environmental impact of runway options.

***Action:** Commitment from A/SADFO to seek a resolution to the weed spraying airspace issue and make it possible for NPWS to conduct the works*

Next Air Combat Capability (NACC) Project Update:

Defence – GPCAPT Chris Wheaton:

Outlined the F35A Environment Impact Statement (EIS) engagement with stakeholders thus far in the process and gave group an update of the project.

The Federal Government has committed to the first 14 F-35A, and Defence is planning to seek approval for a further 58 in 2014. Early aircraft will initially be delivered in the US for pilot training purposes. Aircraft deliveries to Australia are planned to begin late 2018, 2 years later than earlier planned, as a consequence of announcements in the May budget. The planned timing of new facilities at Williamstown has also been adjusted. All Williamstown aircraft will be delivered before the time horizon of the current ANEF (2025), so the ANEF remains valid.

Key areas for study in the Environment Impact Statement include:

- Noise
- Air Quality
- Aircraft Hazards
- Biodiversity
- Water Quality
- Social Impact

- Planning and Land Use

The EIS will assess existing noise levels, as a baseline against which to compare future noise. An ANEI (Aircraft Noise Exposure Index) will be produced utilising existing data. Scenarios to be modelled include the effect of no noise mitigation procedures on JSF operations, and the noise effects of two additional runway configurations - translation and duplication.

The baseline runway option is an extension from 8,000ft to 10,000ft, mainly for operational safety and training efficiency reasons, keeping the runway within the current Base boundary. This was also the basis for modelling the current ANEF. The translation and duplication are public suggestions, and will be assessed by the EIS for environmental impacts, including noise. Any subsequent decision on runway options will include consideration of the EIS assessment.

| | WLM | Salt Ash | Total | From 2012 |
|-----------------------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------|
| (2002) 2012 ANEF | 1700 | 500 | 2200 | |
| 2025 ANEF | | | 4300 | Up 90% |
| (2011) 2025 ANEF | 1200 | 100 | 1300 | Down 40% |

GPCAPT Wheaton showed a comparison of the land planning implications of the ANEFs released in 2002, 2009 and 2011. Effectively, the replacement of the F/A-18A/B by the F-35A will reduce the number of land parcels (not dwellings) inside the 20 ANEF contour. The EIS, with the assistance of Port Stephens Council, will analyse this in more detail.

Malcolm St Hill

Advised the DAREZ looked at the runway options ie expansion/duplication and economic benefits

DSG – Estate Planning

Brenin Presswell

- Outlined some of the changes set to occur with the Noise and Flight Path Monitoring System (NFPMS) for RAAF Base Williamtown as a result of contract renegotiations.
- 2011 – Q3&4 should be uploaded to the web in the next week or so.
- 2012 – Q1 should be uploaded by December.
- Stressed the need for the re-design of the noise data to improve the style and the format of the documents
- Aim is to improve the design and critique the work being done – this will include changes to the Executive Summary
- Advised the intention was to place additional (temporary) noise monitors for areas around Salt Ash/Medowie/Swan Bay by January 2013.
- Discussions centred around difference between civil and military noise and the need to use different processes to monitor aircraft noise.
- Looking to continually improving the noise data, by a number of means – one being the need to improve the system through an audit process. The noise monitors are being relocated from other Defence sites.

Bev Male:

- Commented that it was too hard to read the NFPMS reports.

- Queried whether the system could determine the height the jets fly over the range, and could some tracks be highlighted. Can a civilian stakeholder get a print out of overflights at a certain location?
- Wanted to know the number of data loggers to be used for Salt Ash and Medowie.

Brenin Presswell response: Exact number will depend on the funding – hopefully three additional loggers.

Bill George: Wanted to know if mobile data loggers could be supplied to get an instantaneous reading linked to a particular event. Provision of a readily available units which are already calibrated.

Action: Defence/RAAF Base Williamtown reiterated commitment to consult with community over location of the monitors around Salt Ash AWR

Action: A/SADF0 committed to another Salt Ash meeting before the end of this year.

4. Other Business

Bev Male:

- Requested for no acronyms be included in the Minutes
- Provided a 2003 Media Release from Robert Hill which outlined a statement regarding the High School Certificate Examination Certificate.

**Exerpts from Senator Robert Hill Media Release
Monday 27 October 2003**

Conditions of Consent for the HAWK LEAD-IN FIGHTER

... In addition to the restricted curfew, the Air Force is also sensitive to the needs of students engaged in the Higher School Certificate examinations and will minimise operations during this period.

RAAF Base Williamtown response:

Squadrons are aware of the Higher School Certificate examination periods and remain committed to minimising flight activities during this time.

The end of the year is also very important for trainee pilots. The pilots have to achieve core competencies for their training programs. This involves flying in a number of areas around RAAF Base Williamtown including Salt Ash Air Weapons Range, the Great Lakes area and in western areas of NSW out to Coonabarabran - as well as considerable time spent on the simulators. The Hawk trainee pilots are entering a phase in their training program whereby they need to practice on the Salt Ash Air Weapons Range.

20CU Squadron Hornet conversion pilots are also entering an important phase in which their programming cannot be altered and it includes work on the range.

There is to be no night flying over the range at this time and sporadic night flying operating from the Base and into the western, and eastern (overwater) airspace.

Air Force checked with the SQNs, and the pilots and trainers will conduct their activities at an absolute minimum over the next few weeks.

Bev Male:

- Requested for jet aircraft to not use the SAAWR during school holidays. Grandchildren and visiting relatives get no respite during school holidays and stressed that this was relevant to a good neighbour policy
- Bev requested from Salt Ash residents if Air Force could fly outside school holidays or at least conduct minimal flying on the range during the school holidays. And don't fly Melbourne Cup Day!

RAAF Base Williamtown response:

Air Force are mindful of school holiday periods – however there are key times when air crew must conduct sorties over the range in accordance with their training program. Further discussion will be held around this matter.

5. Set date for next meeting

Advised group next meeting will occur in early March 2013 to align with the Williamtown Consultative Forum meeting.

Actions:

| What | Who | When |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Action: Seek PSC to conduct presentation at next meeting regarding the LEP, and strategic planning update for around RAAF Base Williamtown. | Bruce Peterson to confirm | March 2013 |
| Action: Commitment from A/SADFO to seek a resolution for NPWS to conduct aerial weed spraying | SADFO/ABXO | Before end of 2012 |
| Action: Defence/RAAF Base Williamtown reiterated commitment to consult with community over location of the monitors around Salt Ash AWR | SADFO/DSG | Before end of 2012 |
| Action: A/SADFO committed to another Salt Ash meeting before the end of this year. | SADFO | Before end of 2012 |
| | | |