



Noise Abatement Procedure Review

November 2025

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Noise Abatement Procedures (NAPs) are the best way to help minimise the noise created by aircraft operations.
- 1.2 In June 2025, the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) reported to the Airservices Board following its review of complaints about usage of the Gold Coast's Instrument Landing System (ILS). The ANO's investigation uncovered large, unexplained increases in ILS usage, suggesting the relevant NAPs were not being followed. The report further identified general deficiencies with Airservices' monitoring of compliance with NAPs and recommended a systemic review of Airservices' capacity to effectively monitor and publicly report on compliance with NAPs.
- 1.3 The Board of Airservices responded to this report in August 2025. The response noted that Airservices had been working on new public NAP reporting to cover a total of 10 major and regional airports nationally from May 2025, accompanied by a monitoring and investigation process. The Board of Airservices agreed with the ANO that a review of these newly introduced practices should be undertaken with the following terms of reference:

Commencing in October 2025, the ANO will conduct a review of Airservices' systems and processes in place at that time for reporting and monitoring on Noise Abatement Procedures (NAPs) within the control of Airservices. The review will examine whether:

1. *Airservices' contemporary practice sufficiently acquits the requirements of Ministerial Direction 37/99 to monitor and report on NAPs,*
2. *the information reported publicly is clear and understandable to the community, and*
3. *the process to monitor and investigate non-adherence to NAPs is sufficient to improve NAP outcomes.*

The ANO will immediately alert the Board through the Chair of the Board Sustainability Committee if, during the review, it observes any material issues which it believes require prompt action by Airservices. A report in accordance with the ANO Charter will be provided to Airservices' Board in December 2025 providing the ANO findings and identifying areas requiring further review or improvement.

2 The review

- 2.1 The ANO was given a briefing by the Head of Airservices' Community Engagement and supplied several documents. The primary documents were a Noise Abatement Procedure Reporting Delivery Plan and a NAP Monitoring and Investigation Tracker. The review also examined other relevant documents.
- 2.2 NAPs for major airports are listed with Departure and Approach Procedures on Airservices' website.
- 2.3 Airservices has automated online reporting available at a variety of sites. The review interrogated the online reporting.

3 Ministerial Direction

3.1 Ministerial Direction 37/99 directed Airservices to more thoroughly acquit its environmental responsibilities as follows:

- (v) Develop and implement effective aircraft noise abatement procedures and monitor and report to the Secretary on compliance with those procedures at Australian airports.

3.2 As the direction refers to 'Australian airports' generally, Airservices has also considered two further clauses in the Ministerial direction:

- (vii) Provide, maintain and enhance public response and reporting services through a dedicated Noise Enquiry Service at airports covered by the *Airports Act 1996* and other major Australian airports.
- (viii) Install, maintain and operate noise and flight path monitoring systems at major Australian airports.

3.3 Airservices has also had regard to the extent of the Noise and Flight Path Monitoring (NFPMS) coverage as well as those locations with high complaint numbers and Post Implementation Review outcomes in relation to NAPs.

3.4 Having regard to all of the above, Airservices interprets the Ministerial direction to monitor and report to the Secretary on NAPs to apply to 'major' Australian airports which it has determined are as follows:

- Sydney
- Melbourne
- Brisbane
- Perth
- Adelaide
- Canberra
- Hobart

4 Compliance with Ministerial Direction

4.1 Compliance with the Ministerial direction is currently carried out by report to the Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (the Department). NAPs reporting is embedded in a general quarterly report of other matters that Airservices also reports upon to the Secretary.

4.2 The ANO received a copy of the latest NAP reporting to the Secretary of the Department. The form of reporting limits the extent and clarity of the information provided. The document does not convey any information which is meaningful enough to allow someone without an intense, ongoing focus on NAPs to determine with any precision whether compliance is being monitored and, if so what level of compliance is satisfactory.

- 4.3 Airservices accepts that the report to the Secretary needs improvement and has invited the ANO to contribute towards making it more effective.
- 4.4 The Ministerial direction requiring Airservices to report its monitoring of compliance with NAPs to the Secretary of the Department was made in 1999. It appears the intent of the direction, taken together with governments public positions on NAPs at the time and since, is to provide assurance to the public that NAPs are being monitored and some level of compliance measured. Accessible public reporting would satisfy the objective of the Ministerial direction and reporting to the Secretary could consist of reference to the publicly accessible reporting of compliance.

5 Noise Abatement Procedure Reporting - Public

- 5.1 Part 2 of the terms of reference of this review require the ANO to examine, with respect to the monitoring and reporting of NAPs, whether *the information reported publicly is clear and understandable to the community*.

Introduction

- 5.2 Public automated reporting on NAPs has been coming online on the Aircraft In Your Neighbourhood website since July 2024 with more locations added throughout the investigation which led to the systemic review. Those locations are the major airports about which Airservices reports to the Secretary listed above, as well as Gold Coast, Cairns and Sunshine Coast.
- 5.3 There is difficulty in quantifying how many NAPs there are at these locations due to their complexity and different ways of defining what is an individual NAP. Accepting the definitions and approach used by Airservices, there are 127 NAPs at the major airports (excepting Sydney which had pre-existing reporting under the Sydney-specific Long Term Operating Plan).
- 5.4 As of 1 October 2025, Airservices are reporting on 72 of them. The locations with outstanding NAPs are Brisbane (3), Adelaide (4), and Gold Coast (1). This means that there are 49 NAPs which Airservices considers it cannot report upon, in addition to this there are a further 7 at Sydney under review.

The variable nature of NAPs –

Clear NAPs

- 5.5 It appears from Airservices' work in this area that the capacity to monitor, and therefore report on compliance with NAPs, is variable. Some NAPs are clear and easy to interpret, and compliance is capable of being monitored through existing flight record systems. A good example is a NAP recently introduced for arrivals to Hobart airport which routes traffic around more densely populated areas from 2 pm to 8 am. This NAP was devised in the context of a Post Implementation Review at Hobart which had the benefit of involvement from the community and a broader range of

Airservices' staff beyond Air Traffic Controllers (ATC). The procedure for implementation of this NAP was the subject of a previous ANO report to the Board¹.

5.6 Avoidance of the more densely populated areas is assured by clear instrument flight procedures as follows:

b) LANDING RWY 30

- i) Prior to 0800 Local aircraft arriving at Hobart can expect processing via the RNP Z approach only.
- ii) Between 0800 and 1400 Local no specific procedures apply.
- iii) After 1400 Local aircraft arriving at Hobart can expect processing via the RNP Z approach only.

The procedure is clear to pilots and ATC, and capable of straightforward monitoring and reporting. Indeed, compliance with this NAP is clearly and publicly reported by Airservices showing high levels of compliance.

Unclear NAPs

5.7 NAPs of this nature are less clearly defined and relevant information and data to establish a meaningful measure is lacking. These include NAPs such as those relating to preferred runway usage or usage of the Gold Coast ILS. In measuring the use of such NAPs, ATC direction and weather conditions are large factors, and meaningful reporting of compliance would include the impact of these factors.

Currently unmeasured and/or unmeasurable NAPs

5.8 One type of NAP (reproduced below) which appears to be currently unmeasured involves the climb rate of departing aircraft. Steeper climb rates lead to reduced noise impacts for areas further from the airport. Measurement of such NAPs requires data from airlines which currently does not appear to be collected.

Jet noise abatement climb procedures apply for the following runways:
Runway 16R 2300-0600 HR local time
Runways 34L & 34R at other times.

5.9 There are also NAPs which broadly refer to avoiding noise sensitive areas or staying above certain levels over densely populated areas, where it is not impractical to do so. One example of one of this type is set out below:

ATC will route aircraft over less noise-sensitive areas to the various runways whenever possible. Frequent use will be made of seaward tracking during the night hours.

5.10 A NAP of this nature is at the discretion of ATC and there are currently no systems in place to measure usage or report usage against reasonable benchmarks. The provenance of such NAPs is obscure and there appears to have been no formal procedure for their generation and establishment. These presumably older NAPs

¹ ANO, 'Investigation of complaints about the proposed Hobart Noise Abatement Procedure trial', July 2024, viewed 20 October 2025, [Investigation of complaints about the proposed Hobart Noise Abatement Procedure trial – Aircraft Noise Ombudsman \(ANO\)](#)

provide maximum discretion to ATC and demonstrate little concern as to their capacity for measurement and reporting.

5.11 Despite their broad terms, such NAPs could be improved by definitions or diagrams which show the relevant noise sensitive or densely populated areas; along with clear instructions for pilots on how to avoid them such as by using waypoints to identify when they are entering or have passed the area.

Analysis of online reporting

5.12 For the major airports noted above there is a variety of reporting available, and a standard format has been adopted. This format is expanded at locations where there are additional items to report upon. For example, at Gold Coast, usage of the Instrument Landing System and curfew compliance.

5.13 The reporting is mostly clear and accessible in providing information about adherence to the NAPs, where the NAP is clear. Where the NAP is less clear the information could be improved in various ways. A significant issue on which Airservices is working on is adding details on weather. These weather conditions are particularly important in relation to understanding preferred runway conditions which are heavily weather dependent. This is intended to be added in Tranche 3 of Airservices' plan, scheduled to commence from the start of October 2025.

5.14 The reporting could be improved in other ways. For example, usage of the cross runway at Perth often draws criticism from the community. If there were explanations about why the other runways were not used, including issues such as maintenance in addition to weather, this would create a better understanding of the usage.

5.15 As noted above, the extent to which airlines provide relevant data regarding the usage of NAPs is unclear. In the case of usage of the Gold Coast ILS, for example the reasoning behind instances of pilot nominated usage which occurred on a particular day would improve public accessibility and understanding. It is also hard to understand how many ILS movements occurred on a particular day.

6 Process for investigating non-adherence

6.1 Point 3 of the terms of reference requires review of whether the *process to monitor and investigate non-adherence to NAPs is sufficient to improve NAP outcomes*.

6.2 The ANO has been advised by Airservices for many years that it raises instances of non-adherence to NAPs with the airlines concerned. The first case the ANO is aware of where this occurred was during the ANO's review of usage of the Gold Coast ILS and the response of the airlines was unclear. Apart from Airservices's assurances that this occurs as a matter of policy, there appears to be no written procedure regarding the circumstances in which this will be done.

6.3 As noted from the review of Airservices' public reporting of compliance with NAPs above, the monitoring and reporting system is relatively new and only partly delivered. A more detailed process to investigate non-adherence to NAPs is similarly only recently developed.

6.4 Using the publicly available information at the major airports listed above, Airservices will scrutinise the data on compliance with NAPs once per month and has adopted a method using a spreadsheet to track this. A procedure is noted in the spreadsheet,

comprising of three parts. First the accuracy of the data is confirmed; if accurate, further investigation will occur; and finally, if an anomaly is identified it will be investigated. Although this process is relatively well defined it is not formalised and available to the public in the same way that other procedures are.

- 6.5 It is also unclear what the parameters are that trigger the investigation process. Airservices has adopted a benchmark of 80% NAP adherence, and it is not clear what this figure is based upon and how it applies to all NAPs. It may lead to situations where if there is adherence above 80%, a continually non-adherent flight may not be detected. Compliance with NAPs regarding usage of preferred runways is variable, dependent upon location and weather. This is despite Airservices' aspirational target for 2026 of '100 per cent aircraft compliance with preferred runway use in accordance with NAPs at large metropolitan airports, subject to weather and operational conditions'². It isn't clear what percentage of usage meets this target for individual locations and this stifles effective monitoring. Without laying out the parameters in a document it makes it difficult to detect problems with the parameters and could also lead to irregularities between persons conducting the monitoring and investigations.
- 6.6 An issue the ANO has identified with the public reporting which affects monitoring of adherence is that the reporting does not show the details of the flights that are adhering to the NAP and those which are not. This makes it difficult to identify where there is repeated non-adherence and to determine what the reasons are for the non-adherence or which flights are maintaining adherence. Similarly, it is unclear what action will be taken if the non-adherence persists after being brought to the attention of the relevant aircraft operator.
- 6.7 Documents such as the Manual of Air Traffic Services, the Aeronautical Information Publication Book and Local Instructions provide some guidance on how and when ATC should apply NAPs. The monitoring and investigation process does provide some oversight of this application, but how ATC compliance in this regard is specifically addressed is not articulated.
- 6.8 There does not appear to be any provision for public reporting on the investigation process outcomes where monitoring discloses non-adherence. This is despite the Aviation White Paper calling for Airservices to improve transparency about aircraft noise impacts and to produce a quarterly report on noncompliance with NAPs. The two case studies below are practical examples of problems with improving adherence to NAPs.

Hobart

- 6.9 A particularly contentious instrument flight procedure for some sections of the Hobart community has been the use of the RNP-AR approach which flies over more densely populated areas.
- 6.10 A NAP directs aircraft onto the longer RNAV approach rather than the shorter RNP-AR approach between 2pm and 8am. Adherence has been high, around 95%. However, the ANO and Airservices became aware through community complaints that a Virgin flight which arrives after the tower has ceased operations was not adhering to the NAP. The same flight did not adhere at least four times and Airservices has been in

² Airservices Australia, '2024-2030 Environmental Sustainability Strategy', p.12, viewed 10 November 2025, [Environmental-Sustainability-Strategy2024-2030.pdf](https://www.airservicesaustralia.com/-/media/assets/strategy-and-planning/2024-2030-environmental-sustainability-strategy.ashx)

touch with Virgin to determine what has been causing the issue since August and it does not appear that any changes to airline behaviour are being made.

Gold Coast

- 6.11 The Instrument Landing System has conditions of usage attached to it as a NAP, when there is poor weather, for operational requirements or during emergencies. The ANO review uncovered there were large, unexplained increases in usage, particularly in relation to pilot nomination.
- 6.12 Reporting shows that there is pilot nomination which does not appear to be correlated with the requirements for usage (because it does not correlate with nominations by ATC). Airservices has followed up on this usage with airlines, but the ANO is unaware of any outcome or improvement in adherence to the NAP.

7 Findings

- 7.1 Airservices is compliant with Ministerial Direction 37/99 in that it reports quarterly to the Secretary of the Department etc on its monitoring and reporting on compliance with NAPs. Airservices accepts that the reports could be improved and has invited the ANO's assistance in this regard.
- 7.2 The quality of the information publicly reported by Airservices regarding the monitoring and reporting of compliance with NAPs is variable. In some cases, it is clear and understandable to the community, but in others the reporting could be improved by the inclusion of more relevant information, the incorporation of weather data and the establishment of clear benchmarks for acceptable levels of compliance.
- 7.3 The process to monitor and investigate non-adherence to NAPs is new and requires further clarification. Whether it proves sufficient to improve NAP outcomes is highly dependent on the degree of cooperation of aircraft operators and consequently difficult to predict.

8 Recommendations

- 8.1 The issue of whether monitoring and reporting non-compliance with NAPs is sufficient to improve adherence is dependent on the cooperation of aircraft operators. As such, Airservices should consider other means to create adherence. In the US, where airports handle noise complaints, airports such as Los Angeles have a [Fly Quieter Program](#), whereby airlines are incentivised to adhere to NAPs. Given that Airservices handles noise complaints and reports upon NAP adherence in Australia, they should deliver such a program in accordance with their legislated responsibilities for environmental protection. Airservices should also consider identifying flights to show adherent and non-adherent flights in its public reporting and penalties for non-

adherence if NAP outcomes are to be improved, as are imposed in other jurisdictions³⁴⁵.

8.2 While Airservices has considerably improved its public reporting on compliance with NAPs, significant work remains to be done. I recommend the Board agree to terms of reference under Part 8 of the ANO Charter providing for the ANO to monitor the effectiveness of Airservices' monitoring and public reporting of compliance with NAPs.

³ Aviation Noise Impact Management through novel Approaches, 'Summary of Balanced Approach policy (At Source and Operating Procedures) in European Member States', viewed 17 October 2025, [1.4_table_2.pdf](#)

⁴ Tweed New Haven Airport, 'General Aviation Noise Abatement Guide', 2023, viewed 17 October 2025, [Tweed-General-Aviation-Noise-Abatement-Guide-2023.pdf](#)

⁵ Heathrow Airport, 'Departure Noise Infringement Fines', viewed 17 October 2025, [Departure Noise infringement fines | Heathrow](#)