30 May 2019

Hon. Natasha Fyles MLA Member for Nightcliff

**Re: Aircraft Noise reporting procedures for Darwin**.

I was bird watching in the mangroves at the Western end of the runway, under the flight path between 9am and 11 am on Wednesday 8 May. Numerous fighter aircraft were landing and overflying the airfield. The noise generated in the landing phase of the aircraft was in the thresh hold of pain.

Later that day I tried to speak with defence authorities about a couple of concerns raised by what I had experienced.

1. Is the noise generated by aircraft movements being monitored in the vicinity of the Minmarama Aboriginal Community and around Darwin’s airport?
2. Are the noise reporting procedures laid out in the enclosed document (Aircraft Noise Management Strategy) being taken seriously?

 The reason I write is because of the difficulty I had contacting anybody in in the Defence Department to discuss my concerns.

On Wednesday 8 May p.m. my quest for anyone interested in aircraft noise started by phoning the Darwin International Airport Management Centre. The receptionist had no knowledge of any noise reporting number or procedure and suggested I try the Defence Department. The N.T. Government switch put me through to someone at the RAAF base at Richmond NSW who was unable for security reasons to give me a direct number. The Richmond operator put me through to Defense in Darwin but was unable to give me a contact name or number. I spoke to someone who wanted to know my personal details but was unable to give me theirs for security reasons. They said they would get back to me. I received no call that day.

On Thursday 9 May I went through a similar procedure and spoke to a chain four people the last acknowledging my previous enquiry. I gave my personal details again and receiving a promise that someone would get back to me.

Someone (Eric) did get back to me later in the day and discussed my concerns at some length.

However my queries had not been addressed.

1. Is aircraft noise being monitored in any serious way in Darwin as they are I understand at the Tindal, Townsville and Richmond air bases?
2. Did the Aboriginal liaison officer retained by the RAAF get to speak with members of the Minmarama aboriginal community as suggested by Eric?
3. Are the procedures established by the PR firm and printed in impressive, glossy broachers after the public consultations into the introduction of the F35 aircraft that concluded in 2015 being taken seriously?

On access to the Internet on 23 May I contacted [www.defence.gov.au/aircraftnoise](http://www.defence.gov.au/aircraftnoise) when asked to speak to the noise ombudsman I was returned to the same person who takes noise queries and not an independent person. This put me through to Richmond RAAF base who transferred me to someone in Darwin. F Sgt Irish who put me through to Cpl Thomas who took the details of my query and had a record of my previous unanswered question. He said someone would get back to me which they did the following day. We again discussed whether the noise generated by the current aircraft activities were being monitored. The answer was no because they had been previously monitored during a Pitch Black exercise and the aircraft type and operations were the same. I was told aboriginal liaison officers; Mr. Cooper and Fijo had been contacted and that there were no problems with noise at the Minmarama aboriginal community. He was uncertain whether there was continuous monitoring of noise at the three RAAF bases mentioned previously.

On May 30 I phoned the Noise Ombudsman on a separate number from the defence website. Our conversation was recorded and I said I would send a copy of this letter to the ombudsman.

I believe that because of the unknown number, type and frequency of visiting military aircraft in the future the establishment of a base line of aircraft noise around Darwin is important.

I am concerned that a current frustrating reporting system would conclude that there is little public concern about aircraft noise and therefore the silent majority is happy with the present arrangements.

Yours Sincerely Graham Kirby

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