



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Main Committee

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Airservices Australia and Perth Airport

SPEECH

Monday, 19 October 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Monday, 19 October 2009 Page 11 Questioner Speaker Moylan, Judi, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (8.06 pm)—It is with great frustration and disappointment that I bring this private member's motion before the House today. Constituents in the electorate of Pearce and in the wider Perth metropolitan area could be forgiven for thinking that they live in some autocratic polity devoid of representative democracy that upholds the right of the individual. In essence, this motion highlights a lack of process, which denies fundamental democratic rights to a fair and consultative approach by government via a Commonwealth agency.

Airservices Australia holds within its power the ability to determine and change air-traffic routes without open and accountable public consultation, thus affecting the lives of people. Quality of life, health and wellbeing and property values are all denied consideration by an organisation that now has, it seems, unfettered power to make decisions to change air-traffic routes without considering the fundamental rights of citizens. As it stands, there is no remedy available to an aggrieved member of the public about decision-making processes. As Airservices Australia is a corporate entity, gaining its operating funds from industry, it seems that there is no separation of power. The public is left without recourse to a just hearing and without remedy.

This is why, along with the member for Canning and the member for Swan—whom I thank for participating in this debate—I am calling on the government to establish an inquiry into the current legislation and to establish an open and accountable public process that is nationally consistent. There must be some separation between a government agency with the power to make changes that so drastically affect people's lives and the airline industry from which it derives its considerable financial benefit. Airservices Australia have made significant changes to the flight paths in Western Australia without providing adequate information, even to the Perth Airport Noise Management Consultative Committee—and I spoke on that in this place at another time. They have not extensively consulted the public either, but they have extensively consulted the airline industry, on their own admission.

All efforts to obtain information to support the need for change, which we were told was based on safety, have been unsuccessful. It reminds me of the American linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky's comment:

The most effective way to restrict democracy is to transfer decision-making from the public arena to unaccountable institutions: kings and princes, priestly castes, military juntas, party dictatorships, or modern corporations.

This certainly should not be the case in an Australian democracy, but it would seem that this statement fits perfectly this situation. It is incumbent on the government to re-examine the act governing Airservices Australia to ensure rigorous public accountability and to make provision for a more consistent approach to changes to air routes.

It is a pity that time is so restricted for this debate, because I have had a huge amount of correspondence and phone calls coming from the electorate of Pearce. People's lives have been dramatically impacted. There are people who have bought houses who checked to see where those air routes were and thought that they were buying free of aircraft noise up in the peaceful areas of Perth Hills. This is about people not being able to sleep. This is about people having to take time off work because they are sick because they have not slept. This is about people who bought five-star retreats in the hills area to find that they are faced with the prospect of having to sell. None of the public comments I have heard speak louder than those of one of my constituents who recorded 18 flights between 6.10 am and 7.10 am. She feels selling her house is the only option available to her. This is a very unsatisfactory situation. I think the public has a right to expect an open and accountable process. I call on the government to give serious consideration to the items incorporated in this motion before this House today. I would like to thank my colleague the member for Canning for seconding this motion and my colleagues for participating in this very important debate. (*Time expired*)