

Community health study

Melbourne Airport's third runway will help keep Victoria connected to Australia and the world and will deliver the extra capacity required to serve the state's growing population.

As part of delivering the third runway, Melbourne Airport is required to carry out an independent study into the health impacts of aircraft noise on communities surrounding Melbourne Airport.

While Melbourne Airport has undertaken analysis of potential health impacts of the third runway as part of the approval process, this is the first large-scale community health study undertaken by any major Australian airport. It will collect data before the runway opens and for 20 years after the new runway begins operations.

Community Health Study draft terms of reference

Melbourne Airport has appointed a team of independent health experts from Deakin and Liverpool universities to develop the draft terms of reference for the Community Health Study. These draft terms of reference will be submitted to the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development by September 2025 for approval, before the study can begin.

The draft terms of reference will:

- be developed in consultation with the Melbourne Airport Community Aviation Consultation Group
- set out the methodology for the study to include:
 - monitoring each of the community health impacts associated with aircraft noise identified in Chapter D3 Health Impact of the Major Development Plan, such as annoyance, sleep disturbance, myocardial infarction, communication interference, childhood reading comprehension and migraines
 - collecting data on each of the community health impacts in the years before the third runway opens
 - collecting data on each of the community health impacts each year for 20 years after operations on the third runway begin
- outline how the health expert/s carrying out the study will prepare an annual report on the results of the study
- outline how those reports will be provided and presented to the Melbourne Airport Community Aviation Consultation Group and published on the Melbourne Airport website.

The terms of reference will be published on the Melbourne Airport website once approved by the Minister.

A separate team of health experts will then be identified to undertake the health study according to the approved terms of reference. This team will be identified in 2026.

How will we know the Community Health Study is independent?

The Community Health Study must be carried out by suitably qualified and independent community health experts. Melbourne Airport has consulted with the Melbourne Airport Community Aviation Consultation Group to identify these experts. The experts were appointed in January 2025 and began work immediately.

What health impacts were assessed as part of the Major Development Plan?

To submit the Major Development Plan for the third runway to the federal government for a decision, Melbourne Airport undertook analysis into health impacts known to be associated with aircraft noise.

More detail about these is in Chapter D3 Health Impact of the Major Development Plan, but some effects include:



Sleep disturbance

Arising from night-time aircraft noise, sleep disturbance effects are projected to occur due to the third runway.

Flexible use of the three-runway system can enable periods of respite for the residential areas most impacted by noise. This is most important at night to reduce disturbance to sleep.



Communication interference

The airport's health assessments included outcomes for primary, primary-secondary (P-12) and special development schools. They found that no school would see an increase of more than 20 dB(A) in noise during school hours with the use of a third runway, with minimal potential effects on childhood learning, reading comprehension and cognitive function.

Other potentially vulnerable community facilities were also evaluated for noise impacts, including early childcare centres, kindergartens, aged care facilities, hospitals, places of worship and libraries. This also considers the effects of noise at levels that interfere with normal conversation and other communications like watching TV or listening to radio at home.



Annoyance

Large areas further away from the airport will experience new and increased daytime aircraft noise due to the flight paths serving the third runway. These communities are likely to experience increased annoyance and stress as a result. Awareness of the airport's development and growth, including changes to flight paths and how/why they are used, can significantly reduce this impact. Melbourne Airport educates and consults in communities further afield to equip people for their future experience of noise.



Further information and resources

Melbourne Airport information about the third runway project:

www.melbourneairport.com.au/runway