



Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process for RAAF Base Williamtown and Salt Ash Air Weapons Range 2025 ANEF (10 August 2011)



Consultation with Defence

Defence has an honest and open approach about the noise experienced by residents near RAAF Base Williamtown.

Defence is committed to listening to the community, which is why Defence regularly attends both the Williamtown Consultative Forum and the Port Stephens Council Aircraft Noise Reference Panel. Both have provided important feedback to Defence about the needs and concerns of the community.

A Noise and Flight Path Monitoring System (NFPMS) identifies noise emissions associated with aircraft at the Base; assists Defence to manage aircraft noise exposure near the Base; and provides information on aircraft noise emissions to the public. NFPMS reports are produced quarterly, and are available at www.defence.gov.au/id/nfpms.htm

The latest noise modelling shows that the F-35A Lightning II will be less noisy than current F/A-18A and F/A-18B Hornet aircraft in some phases of flight. This means that many residents in Port Stephens will experience less noise with the F-35A than with current F/A-18 Hornets.

Reducing the impact

Defence first released an Australian Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF) for 2025, in October 2009. Since then, Air Force fighter pilots have travelled to the United States to undertake a world leading assessment of the F-35A Lightning II aircraft. The aim of the assessment was to explore methods for reducing noise exposure, so that fewer properties are affected by the ANEF map in the Williamtown region.

To do this, Air Force has undertaken to:

- minimise the use of afterburner take-offs when operating the F-35A;
- reduce power settings during aircraft departures and arrivals;
- reduce the use of Salt Ash Air Weapons Range;
- revise flight profiles such as track changes, noise abatement profiles, limiting late night flying or flying during sensitive periods; and
- reduce over-flying of heavily populated areas.

Defence is doing everything it can to reduce noise impacts on Williamtown, whilst balancing the operational requirement for its aircraft. These recent changes have resulted in an ANEF map that has reduced the projected noise exposure forecast for 2025 at Williamtown.



What does the new ANEF mean for the EIS process?

Defence released a new ANEF for RAAF Base Williamtown and the Salt Ash Air Weapons Range on 10 August 2011. The new ANEF reflects the new departure and arrival flight profiles for the operation of the F-35A lightning II aircraft, as well as new 'strafe profiles' at Salt Ash Air Weapons Range.

By releasing a new ANEF, the community and the *Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities* will have the best information available for the EIS process.

Aircraft noise will never be eliminated at Williamtown, but Defence is doing everything it can to reduce noise impacts whilst balancing the operational requirement for its aircraft.

For further information about ANEFs and how they have changed over time visit www.defence.gov.au/id/anef_williamtown

How does the EIS Process work?

Under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, Defence is required to refer the introduction of the F-35A Lightning II aircraft to the *Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities*, to consider any environmental impacts. Part of this process, requires that Defence conducts an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Defence has taken the first steps toward this process with the Public Environment Report (PER) in September 2009. Submissions were invited from communities surrounding Williamtown, Katherine, Darwin and Townsville, where the F-35A Lightning II will operate. The majority of concerns from the Williamtown community related to a perceived drop in property values and loss of entitlement.

In November 2010, a supplementary report to the PER was released which consolidated the submissions received, and outlined the future EIS process.

In late 2011, there will be a formal public consultation process for the communities of Williamtown, Katherine, Darwin and Townsville. Residents will have at least three months to respond in a formal manner to the document and be able to make suggestions to further reduce the impact of the F-35A Lightning II. Examples that have already been suggested that will be considered include extending or moving the runway at RAAF Base Williamtown.

After all submissions have been considered, the *Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities* will make a recommendation to the Minister for the Environment about the future use of the F-35A Lightning II. The Minister will consider the impact on the environment, as well as any social or economic impacts.

Subsequent to the Minister for the Environment's approval, a new ANEF may be required to reflect how the F-35A Lightning II will be operated.

