



Australian Super Hornet

Noise Mitigation and Complaint Resolution Strategy

Version 1.2

AMENDMENT CERTIFICATE

V1.1 July 2016

The following items have been reviewed, and where appropriate, changes have been incorporated in this version of the Noise Mitigation and Complaint Resolution Strategy:

- Australian Super Hornet Noise Management Plan 3.0
- Review of Australian Super Hornet Flying Operations at RAAF Base Amberley August 2015 (Aircraft Noise Ombudsman)
- Air Force Aircraft Noise Communication Strategy
- Aircraft Noise Ombudsman and Defence Memorandum of Understanding

For a full list of changes, refer to Annex A.

V1.1 June 2020

The following items have been reviewed, and where appropriate, changes have been incorporated in this version of the Noise Mitigation and Complaint Resolution Strategy:

- Australian Super Hornet Noise Management Plan 3.0
- Air Force Aircraft Noise Communication Strategy
- Aircraft Noise Ombudsman and Defence Memorandum of Understanding
- Compliance Audit of Australian Super Hornet Flying Operations at RAAF Base Amberley October 2019 (Aircraft Noise Ombudsman)

The Strategy was reviewed to ensure currency with extant orders, instructions and procedures and commitments made in previous versions.

Only minor edits were required. For a full list of changes, refer to Annex A.

V1.2 April 2026

The Strategy was reviewed to ensure currency with extant orders, instructions and procedures and commitments made in previous versions, and to bring up to date with the 2023 amendments to the conditions of approval.

For a full list of changes, refer to Annex A.

Version History

Version	Date	Ministerial Approval Date	Comments
1.0	June 2012	April 2014	Submitted to DSEWPaC for approval
1.1	August 2016	Unapproved	Includes changes from annual review
1.1	June 2020	Unapproved	Minor amendments to update website addresses.

Version	Date	Ministerial Approval Date	Comments
1.2	April 2026	n/a	Updated to make current.

Annual Review

Year	Date	Reviewer
2016	August 2016	WGCDR Stephen Crawford, A35 HQAC
2020	June 2020	SQNLDR Ken van Raay, PLANSO 23SQN
2026	April 2026	MR Sean Cummins, WGCDR Ashleigh Gomba

Proposals for amendment to this document are to be forwarded to RAAF Amberley Air Base Executive Officer.

DEFINITIONS

Definitions applicable to the Variation to Conditions attached to Approval of the Australian Super Hornet Flying Operations, RAAF Base, Amberley, QLD (EPBC 2008/4410)¹, and this Strategy:

Approved	A document approved in writing by the Minister.
Department	The Australian Government agency responsible for administering the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cth).
Minister	The Australian Government Minister administering the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cth), including any delegate thereof.

¹ Webpage link [<https://epbcpublicportal.environment.gov.au/all-referrals/project-referral-summary/project-decision/?id=37dd7269-00e0-ed11-a7c7-00224818abd2>]

ENDORSEMENT / APPROVAL

Approved

Ashleigh Gomba

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BACKGROUND

1. The Australian Government announced in March 2007 the acquisition of 24 F/A-18F Super Hornets to replace the F-111 capability at Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Amberley.
2. As part of the introduction of the Australian Super Hornet (ASH), Defence conducted a staged environmental assessment process. The key element of this process was a Public Environment Report (PER), completed in December 2009 in accordance with the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The PER identified potential environmental and social issues relating to ASH flying operations at RAAF Base Amberley and how these issues will be managed. Note that the 2009 Public Environment Report comprises two documents²:
 - a. Draft Public Environment Report for the Flying Operations of the F/A-18F Super Hornet at RAAF Base Amberley
 - b. Australian Super Hornet Public Environment Report – Supplementary Report for Flying Operations of the Australian Super Hornet at RAAF Base Amberley November 2009 (EPBC No 2008/4410)
3. In March 2010, after considering the PER, the then Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts approved Super Hornet flying operations at Amberley subject to ten conditions, later varied in January 2012, April 2014 and December 2023³. Condition 3 required Defence to implement a Noise Mitigation and Complaint Resolution Strategy approved by the Environment Minister.
4. Air Force must implement the latest version of the Australian Super Hornet Noise Mitigation and Complaint Resolution Strategy in accordance with Condition 8 and its subparts.
5. The Commonwealth Ombudsman provided the independent aircraft noise complaint and review mechanism for Defence from 1 June 2012. The Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) was established in September 2010 following a proposal outlined in the Government Aviation White Paper ‘Flight Path to the Future’. In January 2015 the ANO, Airservices and Defence signed a Memorandum of Understanding and amended the ANO Charter to extend the ANO role to provide the independent complaints and review mechanism for Defence.

Purpose of the strategy

6. To outline the strategy by which Air Force will comply with Condition 3 of the environmental approval issued under the EPBC Act for Australian Super Hornet flying operations at RAAF Base Amberley:

The person taking the action must implement the approved Australian Super Hornet Noise Mitigation and Complaints Resolution Strategy.

² PER documents can be accessed from the [Australian Super Hornet flying operations](https://www.defence.gov.au/about/accessing-information/environmental-compliance-reports/australian-super-hornet-flying-operations) website [<https://www.defence.gov.au/about/accessing-information/environmental-compliance-reports/australian-super-hornet-flying-operations>].

³ EPBC Number: 2008/4410 Variation 3 [<https://epbcpublicportal.environment.gov.au/all-referrals/project-referral-summary/project-decision/?id=37dd7269-00e0-ed11-a7c7-00224818abd2>]

Scope

7. This strategy describes:
- a. the roles and functions of the ANO;
 - b. how Air Force will consider recommendations made, including measures identified by the ANO, and communicate to affected persons any decisions or actions to be taken;
 - c. how Air Force will make available to the public the recommendations made and the measures identified by the ANO, as well as the action taken by Air Force in response;
 - d. how Air Force will resolve appeals against decisions made by the Air Force in relation to decisions or actions with respect to complaints;
 - e. the timeframe for the implementation of the Strategy; and
 - f. the review and update process for this document.

Relationship to other plans

8. This strategy is one of four required by the Minister as a condition of approval for Super Hornet flying operations at RAAF Base Amberley. The three other plans, and their relationship to this strategy, are:

- a. **Australian Super Hornet Noise Management Plan (Condition 1).** This plan describes:
 - (1) planned Super Hornet flying operations from RAAF Base Amberley, including the number and timing of aircraft movements and design of flight paths and flight procedures to reduce aircraft noise effects;
 - (2) how Super Hornet flying operations that do not conform to planned operations will be managed;
 - (3) how the RAAF will address potential impacts from aircraft noise to non- work related activities on the Base;
 - (4) a communications strategy; and
 - (5) the review and update process for the document.
- b. **Australian Super Hornet Noise Monitoring and Complaints Handling Strategy (Condition 2).** This strategy describes:
 - (1) how Air Force will monitor Super Hornet flights and aircraft noise;
 - (2) how Air Force will compare actual measured Super Hornet noise levels with those predicted in the PER;
 - (3) how Air Force will compare actual flight paths and procedures with those described in the Australian Super Hornet Noise Management Plan;

- (4) protocols to receive, record, report and respond to noise enquiries about Super Hornet flying operations;
 - (5) a consultation and communication program that seeks to engage local people and groups about Air Force flying operations at RAAF Base Amberley, including aircraft noise issues; and
 - (6) how this strategy and resultant reports will be made available to the public; and how Air Force will review and update the Strategy.
- c. **Australian Super Hornet Air Quality Monitoring Plan (Condition 4).** This Plan describes how Defence will:
- (1) monitor air quality near in close proximity to, or on, RAAF Base Amberley;
 - (2) validate the accuracy of Super Hornet air quality impacts modelled in the PER;
 - (3) determine the sources of pollutants, in cooperation with the relevant State authorities, and facilitate potential mitigation measures, in the event that the measured air quality values exceed relevant air quality objectives;
 - (4) make available the results of rain tank water quality testing conducted in accordance with the PER; and
 - (5) take appropriate measures to mitigate rainwater quality degradation in the event that contamination is found to occur as a result of Super Hornet operations.

DESCRIPTION OF PLANNED SUPER HORNET FLYING OPERATIONS

9. Air Force will conduct Super Hornet flying operations at RAAF Base Amberley to achieve the following two objectives:

- a. to provide initial conversion training to aircrew learning to operate the aircraft; and
- b. to conduct operational practice for qualified aircrew, so they are ready to take part in air combat operations if and when required by Government.

10. The majority of Super Hornet flights will be conducted at RAAF Base Amberley. The rest will be flown during exercises or on military operations at other locations around Australia or overseas.

11. Super Hornet operations will only be conducted on Runway 15/33. Runway 04/22 will only be used in exceptional circumstances, such as emergency or when Runway 15/33 is obstructed.

ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE AIRCRAFT NOISE OMBUDSMAN

12. The ANO is an independent administrative office that:

- a. reviews the handling of complaints or enquiries made to the Department of Defence (Defence) about aircraft noise;

- b. monitors and reports on the effectiveness of community consultation processes relating to aircraft noise undertaken by Defence;
 - c. monitors and reports on the effectiveness of the presentation and distribution of aircraft noise-related information; and
 - d. provides targeted reviews of specific aspects of aircraft noise management as requested by Defence.
13. The ANO is independent of Defence executive management structures and may make recommendations to the Chief of Air Force for improvements relating to these matters. The ANO Charter ensures that the ANO is independent and is not subject to direction by Defence staff. More information about these powers can be found on the ANO website.
14. The elements of Condition 3 which the ANO is responsible for investigating either on receipt of a complaint, or on the ANO's own motion are:
- a. considering noise complaints generated by ASH flying operations which are not resolved under the Noise Monitoring and Complaints Handling Strategy;
 - b. assessing the complaint against the compliance requirements of the ASH Noise Management Plan;
 - c. conducting an independent review of the handling of a noise complaint; and
 - d. making recommendations and identifying measures to the person taking the action to resolve complaints.
15. Complaints to the ANO can be made online by contacting the ANO's office by telephone (1800 266 040 toll free); by email (ano@ano.gov.au); in writing (GPO Box 1985, Canberra City ACT 2601); or via the ANO's online complaint form at <www.ano.gov.au>.

AIRCRAFT NOISE OMBUDSMAN RECOMMENDATIONS TO AIR FORCE

16. The ANO may make recommendations and identify measures to Air Force in relation to:
- a. compliance with the procedures in the Australian Super Hornet Noise Management Plan;
 - b. compliance with the Noise Monitoring Strategy in the Australian Super Hornet Noise Monitoring and Complaints Handling Strategy;
 - c. compliance with the Complaints Handling Strategy in the Australian Super Hornet Noise Monitoring and Complaints Handling Strategy;
 - d. compliance with the procedures in the Australian Super Hornet Noise Mitigation and Complaint Resolution Strategy for the consideration of recommendations and of appeals against decisions;
 - e. compliance with the communication strategy in the Australian Super Hornet Noise Management Plan, the Australian Super Hornet Noise Monitoring and Complaints Handling Strategy and the Australian Super Hornet Noise Mitigation and Complaint

Resolution strategy; and

- f. improvements to complaint handling strategies.

IMPLEMENTATION OF AICRAFT NOISE OMBUDSMAN RECOMMENDATIONS

17. Recommendations made to Air Force in accordance with paragraph 16 of this Strategy will be considered by the Senior Australian Defence Force Officer (SADFO) Amberley.

18. SADFO Amberley will advise affected persons in writing of the recommendations made by the ANO and the specific action taken by Air Force in response. Where the action taken was other than implementation of the recommendation in full, SADFO Amberley will advise affected persons and the ANO of the reasons for the decision.

19. If an affected person is not satisfied with a decision made by the SADFO in relation to the implementation of a recommendation from the ANO, the complaint will be referred to the Air Commander Australia (ACAUST).

20. Upon receipt of a referral under paragraph 19, ACAUST will review the decision of SADFO Amberley and decide whether it is appropriate to implement the recommendation. ACAUST will communicate this decision to the affected person and the ANO. Where the decision is other than implementation of the recommendation in full, ACAUST will advise the affected person and the ANO of the reasons for the decision.

21. SO Aircraft Noise Management – Air Force is to coordinate an inclusion in the ASH Annual Noise Report that details:

- a. all recommendations that have been made by the ANO during the reporting period in relation to the Australian Super Hornet Noise Management Plan and the Australian Super Hornet Noise Monitoring and Complaints Handling Strategy;
- b. the action taken by Air Force in response to each recommendation; and
- c. where the action taken was other than implementation of the recommendation in full, the reasons for the decision.

22. The annual report is published on the ANO website <<https://ano.gov.au>>.

TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION

23. The Commonwealth Ombudsman provided the independent aircraft noise complaint and review mechanism for Defence from 1 June 2012 and was transferred to the ANO in January 2015.

24. A Noise and Flight Path Monitoring System (NFPMS) has been installed in the vicinity of RAAF Base Amberley and will be used for the collection of noise data and to support the independent process. The Minister approved the collection of NFPMS data for a minimum of three cycles of the Annual Super Hornet Noise Report, in accordance with the undertakings outlined in the Australian Super Hornet Noise Monitoring and Complaints Handling Strategy. The NFPMS remains in place and will continue to collect data for the foreseeable future. Relevant data will be made available to the ANO, noting this data may have limited value in

regards to individual noise complaints.

MAINTENANCE OF THE STRATEGY

Internal Reviews

25. The document is to be reviewed as required and at least every five years by RAAF Base Amberley Senior Australian Defence Force Officer or their delegate, in consultation with relevant Force Element Group and other applicable stakeholders.

26. Reviews are to occur with 'Track Changes' function engaged. All reviews must be provided to the Environment Manager in Air Force Headquarters before being sent for signature of the Senior Australian Defence Force Officer.

27. A revised plan must be submitted to the Department, unless the taking of the action in accordance with the revised plan would not be likely to have a new or increased impact. In this case the approval holder **must**:

- a. notify the Department in writing that the approved plan has been revised and provide the Department with an electronic copy of the revised plan;
- b. provide the Department with an electronic copy of the plan marked up with track changes to show the differences between the approved action management plan and the revised plan;
- c. provide the Department with an explanation of the differences between the approved action management plan and the revised plan;
- d. provide the Department with the reasons the approval holder considers that taking the Action in accordance with the plan would not be likely to have a new or increased impact;
- e. provide written notice of the date on which the approval holder will implement the plan (plan implementation date), being at least 20 business days after the date of providing notice of the revision of the plan, or a date agreed to in writing with the Department;
- f. implement the revised plan from the plan implementation date; and
- g. for the life of the approval, maintain a record of the reasons the approval holder considers that taking the action in accordance with the revised plan would not be likely to have a new or increased impact.

28. Otherwise, the last approved plan **must** be implemented until the Minister approves the revised plan, at which point the revised plan **must** be implemented. The revised plan **must** be published on the Australian Super Hornet flying operations⁴ webpage within three (3) months of being approved.

External Reviews

29. To confirm Defence is meeting the Conditions of Consent, the Aircraft Noise

⁴ [Australian Super Hornet flying operations | Defence](https://www.defence.gov.au/about/accessing-information/environmental-compliance-reports/australian-super-hornet-flying-operations) [https://www.defence.gov.au/about/accessing-information/environmental-compliance-reports/australian-super-hornet-flying-operations]

Ombudsman (ANO) undertook an audit of Defence's compliance in 2015. The ANO found that Defence was meeting the intent of the conditions and is managing aircraft noise effectively. The ANO considered that Defence had generally complied with the intent of the Noise Management and Complaint Resolution Strategy, albeit one area would benefit from improvement. The report is available in the Australian Super Hornet flying operations webpage⁵.

30. The ANO conducted a second audit of Defence's compliance in 2019. The ANO considered that Defence had complied with the intent of the conditions of approval in relation to managing the effects of aircraft noise on the community and the environment. However, it also identified that Defence had some work to do to establish effective systems to facilitate the necessary administrative, records management and reporting frameworks required to substantiate its performance against the conditions. The ANO considered that while Defence had generally complied with the intent of the Noise Management and Complaint Resolution Strategy, two aspects would benefit from improvement. The report is available in the Australian Super Hornet flying operations webpage.

31. In accordance with the EPBC Act approval Condition 7, the Environment Minister may request specific revisions to this strategy at any time, should the Minister believe it is necessary or desirable for the better protection of the environment.

Record keeping

32. Accurate records substantiating all activities associated with the implementation of this strategy must be maintained. These records must be made available upon request from the Department and may be subject to audit by the Department, or an independent auditor, or used to verify compliance with the conditions of approval.

⁵ <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/accessing-information/environmental-compliance-reports/australian-super-hornet-flying-operations>

ANNEX A – DETAILS OF PLAN UPDATES**Version 1.2, April 2026**

Unless specified otherwise, the following changes are in reference to V1.0, 2012 (the last version approved by the Minister), and encompass changes made to all versions in the interim up until V1.2, 2026.

Document Reference	Change	Justification
Section AMENDMENT CERTIFICATE	New section that describes background of changes to this version of the Strategy.	To improve record keeping and transparency.
Paragraph 2	Minor rewording.	To improve accuracy and readability.
Paragraph 3	Updated to reflect recent history.	To keep document up to date.
Paragraph 4	Minor rewording.	Rewording, no change to requirements.
New Paragraph 5	<i>New paragraph.</i> Added historical context as to the change from the Commonwealth Ombudsman to the ANO.	To provide useful context.
Paragraph 5	Updated for clarity.	Rewording, no change to requirements.
Paragraph 4	Updated to cater for changes made under Condition 8B, which do not require ministerial approval.	To bring up to date with Condition 8B.
Paragraphs 6-7	Removed, as the Commonwealth Ombudsman has been replaced by the ANO. New paragraph 4 contains the current context.	Text no longer relevant. Changes explained in new paragraph 4.

Document Reference	Change	Justification
Paragraph 8	Minor rewording to change Commonwealth Ombudsman to ANO.	To make text current.
Paragraph 9	Minor edits.	To improve readability.
Paragraph 10	Minor edits.	To improve readability.
Paragraph 11	Update to remove cap on number of Super Hornet flights occurring at RAAF Amberley. Instead of 60% of Super Hornet flights conducted there, the figure has been removed and wording provided to acknowledge most Super Hornet activity will occur at Amberley.	Update to reflect approved changes to the rate of flying effort at RAAF Amberley. Although this is an increase and would otherwise represent a new or increased impact, an increase was first approved in the Noise Management Plan V3.0 when the cap was raised to 70%. Then, in V4.0 there are no restrictions on what proportion of Super Hornet activity can take place at Amberley. Hence this change is an update to reflect an already approved change, and does not constitute a new or increased impact.
Paragraph 12	Minor edits.	To improve readability.
Paragraphs 13-15	Removed. Replaced by new paragraphs 12-15	Requirements retained and context updated in new paragraphs 12 to 15.
New Paragraphs 12 - 15	Updates to set out role and function of the ANO. Obsolete references to Commonwealth Ombudsman removed..	Reflects replacement of Commonwealth Ombudsman with the ANO. Roles and responsibilities remain unchanged with respect to implementation of this Strategy.

Document Reference	Change	Justification
Paragraph 16	Minor edits.	To bring up to date.
Paragraphs 17 – 20	Update references to the Commonwealth Ombudsman, now the ANO.	Reflects changes to the Commonwealth Ombudsman.
Paragraph 21	Responsibility for annual reporting on ANO recommendations has transferred from SADFO AMB to SO Aircraft Noise Management – Air Force. Reporting will occur within the Annual Noise Report.	Update to reflect change in administration and reporting.
Paragraph 22	Website of published annual reports updated.	To bring up to date.
Section TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION	Replace references to Commonwealth Ombudsman with ANO, update record with changes in history.	To bring up to date.
Section INTERNAL REVIEWS	Updated to bring in line with Approval notice - variation 3 - 2008/4410 ⁶ , dated 4 December 2023, specifically the amendments to Condition 8, 8A, 8B, 8C, 8D and 8E.	Required to maintain compliance with updated Conditions of Approval.
New Paragraph 25	Annual reviews changed to as required and at least every five years.	Changing annual review periods will not have a new or increased impact on the environment as noise management is now embedded within standard operating procedures which are subject to continual monitoring and improvement.
Section EXTERNAL REVIEWS	Updated to provide historical context.	To bring up to date.

⁶ <https://epbcpublicportal.environment.gov.au/all-referrals/project-referral-summary/project-decision/?id=37dd7269-00e0-ed11-a7c7-00224818abd2>

Document Reference	Change	Justification
Annex A	Removed. Referenced a definition of Condition 3 that has been since replaced by the April 2014 variation to the conditions.	References to obsolete conditions removed; requirements have not changed and are still embedded in the document.