

KEMPSEY AIRPORT FLY NEIGHBOURLY ADVICE (FNA) REVIEW

Prepared for: Kempsey Shire Council



DOCUMENT CONTROL

Document Title: Kempsey Airport – Fly Neighbourly Advice (FNA) Review

Activity ID: YKMP04

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Reviewed by: J Rainbird

Released by: J Rainbird

Revision History

<i>Version</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Transmitted</i>	<i>Reviewed by</i>	<i>Date</i>
0.1	First draft	5 May 2025	KSC	6 May 2025
1.0	Final	7 May 2025		

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Kempsey Shire Council acknowledges the land of the Thunggutti / Dunghutti Nation. We pay respect to Elders past and present. We acknowledge the role of emerging leaders to continue to guide us in the future. We acknowledge the Stolen Generations and the need to change practices to be inclusive. This land always was and always will be Thunggutti / Dunghutti land.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction

Kempsey Shire Council established a Fly Neighbourly Advice (FNA) in 2019 in response to community concerns regarding increasing aircraft activity at Kempsey Airport, primarily associated with pilot circuit training operations, and aircraft noise impacts on local amenity.

The Fly Neighbourly Advice is a voluntary code of practice established between the airport, aircraft operators and the community aimed at reducing aircraft noise associated with local and visiting aircraft conducting circuits in the vicinity of Kempsey Airport.

It is noted that the primary focus of the Fly Neighbourly Advice is the conducting of multiple / repetitive circuits of the Airport by aircraft operating as part of a flight training school (both local and visiting), and that the principles / restrictions outlined in the FNA do not apply to aircraft (including those of flight training schools) that are simply operating in the circuit to conduct a single arrival or departure at Kempsey Airport in accordance with standard aviation procedures.

This report presents the findings of a review of the Kempsey Airport Fly Neighbourly Advice and community and stakeholder engagement undertaken.

1.1. Scope of review / methodology

The scope of work and methodology for the review included:

- Review background material provided by Council including aircraft movement data, aircraft noise complaint data etc
- Review existing Noise Management Plan and associated Fly Neighbourly Advice
- In conjunction with Council staff, facilitate local face-to-face stakeholder engagement meetings with local residents / resident groups and aircraft operators
- Prepare a report providing an overview of the review and stakeholder engagement undertaken, and any changes recommended
- Update the Fly Neighbourly Advice as required, including liaison with Airservices Australia to obtain endorsement of the revised Fly Neighbourly Advice and facilitate the associated update / publication of the noise abatement procedures in the En Route Supplement Australia (ERSA) for Kempsey Airport.

2. CURRENT OPERATIONS

Kempsey Airport caters for a range of general aviation activities including commercial charter, business, flight training and aircraft maintenance services, private and recreational aviation, and emergency service operations including aeromedical and aerial firefighting services.

An analysis of aircraft movement records was undertaken using data supplied by Kempsey Shire Council from the industry standard Avdata Australia and Hoeksec ABaSS (Aircraft Billing and Surveillance System) systems. The analysis is based on an 'arrival' = 1 movement; a 'departure' = 1 movement; a 'landing' = 2 movements (ie a landing plus a corresponding take-off) and a 'touch and go' or similar flight training circuit activity = 2 movements (ie a landing plus a take-off).

The analysis which covered the past three (3) financial years indicates that:

- Aircraft movements (ie a landing, take-off, touch and go etc) are steadily increasing post COVID with 5,736 aircraft movements recorded in 2023-24. This equates to, on average, approximately 8 aircraft landings plus 8 aircraft take-offs per day ie 16 aircraft movements per day
- This number is well below the peak recorded in 2017-18 when over 31,000 aircraft movements were recorded for the year – associated with a significant level of flight training activity at the Airport (source: Final Kempsey Airport Noise Management Plan and Fly Neighbourly Advice 2019). This equates to, on average, over 40 aircraft landings plus over 40 aircraft take-offs per day ie over 80 aircraft movements per day
- Approximately 40% of aircraft movements recorded in 2023-24 were associated with a designated 'touch and go' flight training activity with an approx. 50/50 split between local and visiting aircraft.

The location of Kempsey Airport in relation to the local community is shown in Figure 1.

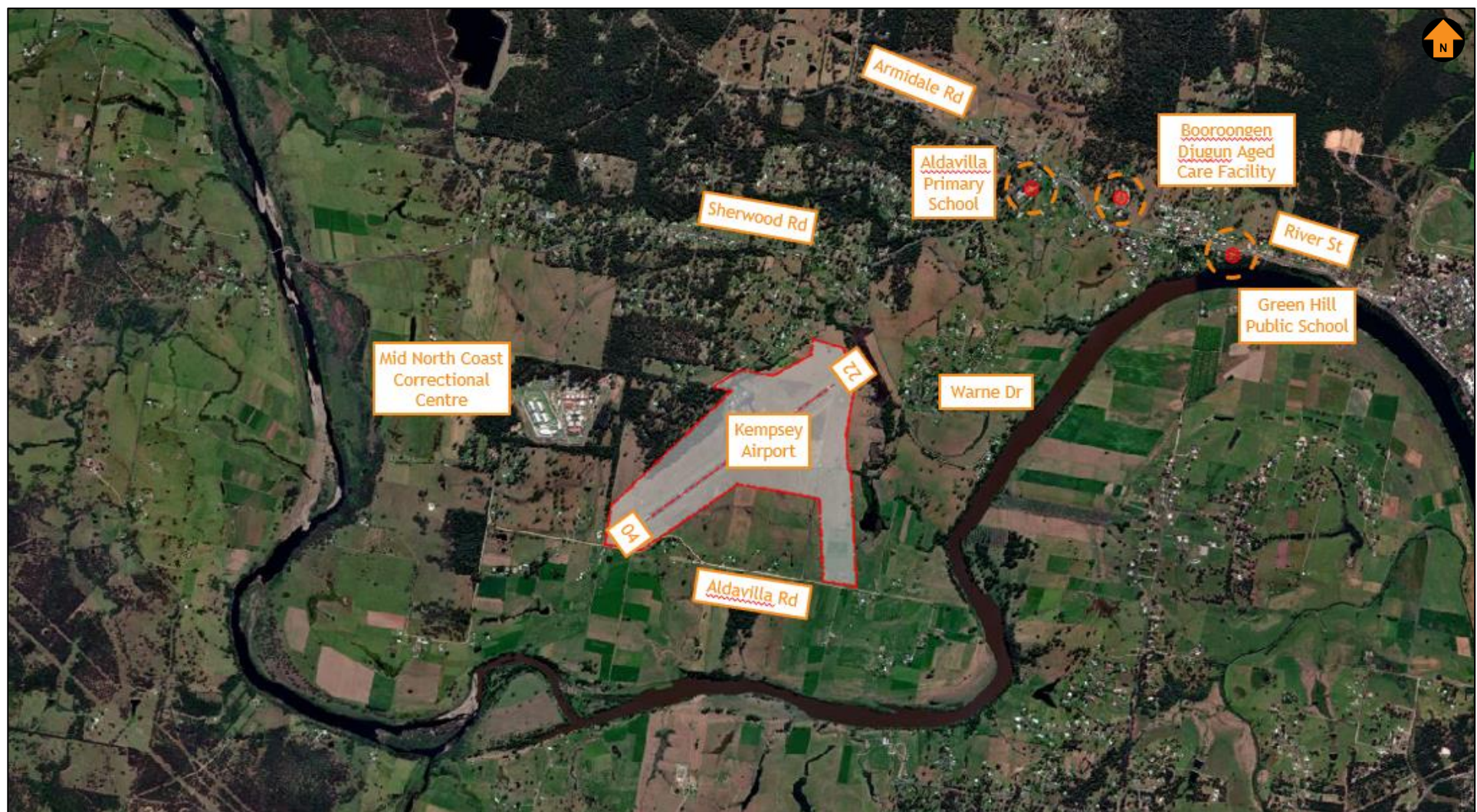


Figure 1 Location – Kempsey Airport

3. CIRCUIT PROCEDURES

Circuit training is the first stage of practical pilot training, focused on take-offs and landings. It involves the pilot making approaches to the runway, touching down and then applying power to take-off again (source: Airservices Australia).

There is no common circuit procedure that will cater for every situation, and the size of the circuit area around an aerodrome may vary subject to a range of factors including though not limited to, the specific aircraft type / performance characteristics, standard operating procedures, runway configuration and prevailing weather conditions (i.e. wind speed and direction).

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) does however publish a guide to the typical circuit procedures at non-controlled aerodromes, such as Kempsey Airport, and an extract is provided for information purposes only at Figure 2 (source: CASA).

CASA also publishes Advisory Circular AC 91-10 v1.3 *Operations in the vicinity of non-controlled aerodromes* (source: CASA) which provides guidance on procedures that, when followed, will improve situational awareness and safety for all pilots when flying at, or in the vicinity of, non-controlled aerodromes. A non-controlled aerodrome is an aerodrome at which an air traffic control service is not operating / available.

A typical training circuit as shown in Figure 2 consists of five legs – the take-off, crosswind, downwind, base and final approach to the runway. The take-off and final approach stage of the circuit is usually flown into the direction of the prevailing wind, as this is the safest way for an aircraft to operate. The standard circuit direction, which applies at Kempsey Airport, requires all turns to be made to the left.

At Kempsey Airport this typically means that during summer months and afternoons with a prevailing north-easterly wind direction, circuits will primarily be conducted off Runway 04 to the north and west of the Airport. During winter months and mornings with a prevailing south-westerly wind direction, circuits will primarily be conducted off Runway 22 to the south and east of the Airport. The typical training circuit at Kempsey Airport is shown in Figure 3 with the circuit indicated at a nominal distance of approximately 1 nautical mile (1.85 km) abeam of the runway alignment and runway ends.

An analysis of prevailing winds at Kempsey Airport undertaken in conjunction with the previous Final Kempsey Airport Noise Management Plan and Fly Neighbourly Advice 2019 (source: Kempsey Shire Council) has indicated that annual runway usage at Kempsey Airport is split approximately 50/50 between Runway 04 and Runway 22 with the corresponding circuit activity generally split between the east and west of the Airport.

Standard circuit heights are based on the performance characteristics of the aircraft, with medium performance aircraft required to operate at 1000 feet above ground level and low performance ultralight aircraft required to operate at 500 feet above ground level.

During the initial climb-out following take-off, the left turn onto the crosswind leg should be appropriate to the performance of the aircraft but in any case, not less than 500 feet above ground level, so as to be at the required circuit height (typically 1000 feet for flight training aircraft at Kempsey) when turning onto the downwind leg. It is noted that the current Fly Neighbourly Advice requires aircraft conducting circuit training at Kempsey Airport to extend the initial climb-out following take-off and to maintain the runway heading until reaching a height of 1000 feet above the aerodrome elevation before making the left turn onto the crosswind leg.

On the downwind leg, the applicable circuit height (typically 1000 feet) should be maintained until commencement of the base leg turn, with the base leg turning position typically where the aircraft is approximately 45 degrees from the runway threshold (end).

The turn onto final approach should be completed at least 500 feet above ground level to allow sufficient time for the pilot to ensure that the runway is clear for landing.

The *Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998* regulation 91.265 relates to minimum heights for aircraft flown over populated areas. While typically this regulation stipulates that an aircraft must be flown at or above 1000 feet above ground level, the requirement does not apply in circumstances where the aircraft is taking off or landing at an aerodrome, is engaged in a missed approach or practice emergency procedure or is performing training circuits at an aerodrome.

As described above, while training aircraft should typically operate the downwind leg of the circuit at Kempsey Airport at 1000 feet above ground level, aircraft will operate at lower levels at various stages of the circuit and in the process of landing and taking off in accordance with mandated aviation safety requirements.

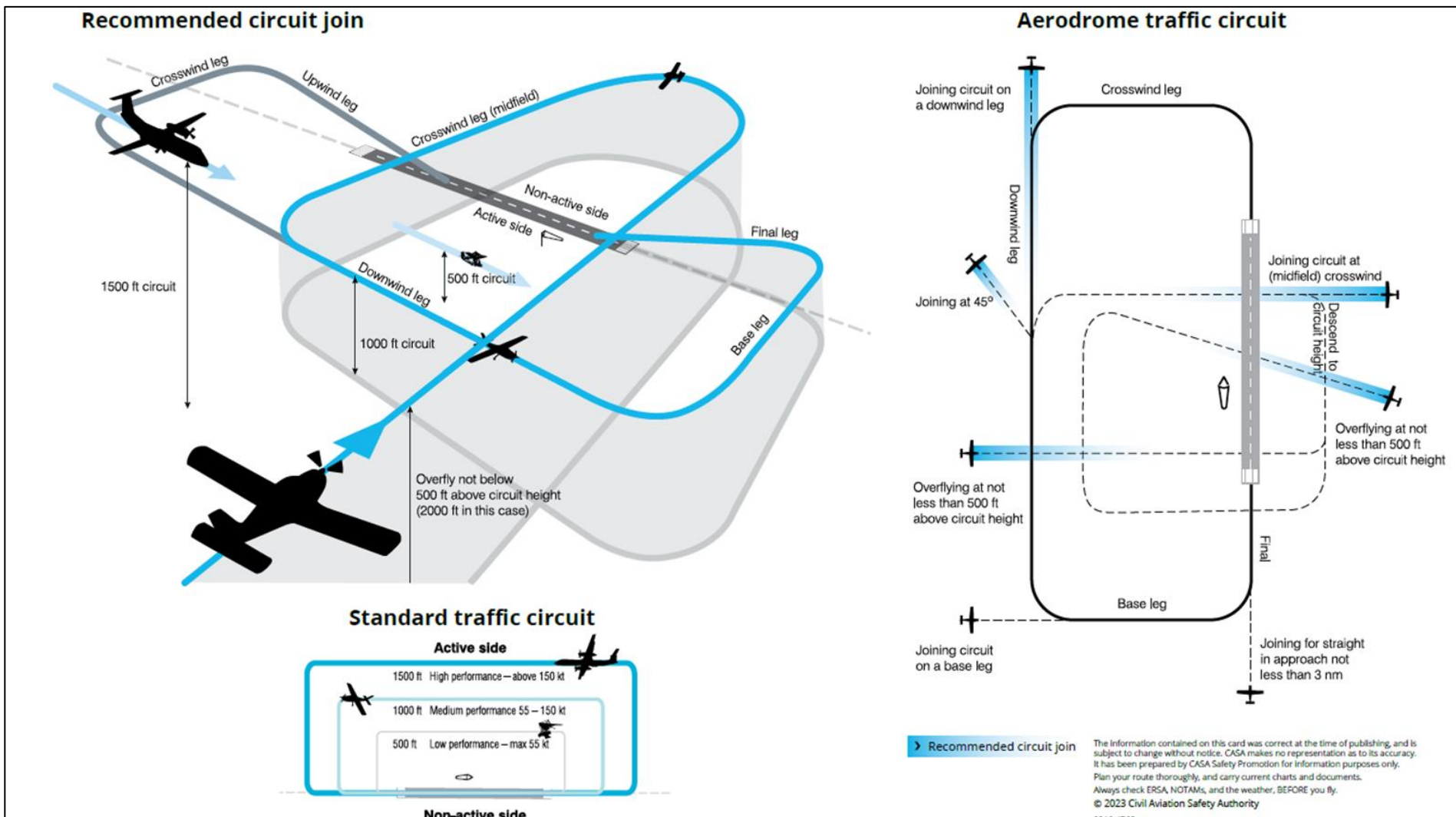


Figure 2 Circuit Procedures – Non-Controlled Aerodromes



Figure 3 Typical Circuit – Kempsey Airport

4. CURRENT FLY NEIGHBOURLY ADVICE UNDERTAKINGS

The current Fly Neighbourly Advice undertakings are published as noise abatement procedures in the En Route Supplement Australia (ERSA) for Kempsey Airport, reference https://www.airservicesaustralia.com/aip/current/ersa/FAC_YKMP_20MAR2025.pdf (source: Airservices Australia, FAC, effective 20 March 2025). The undertakings include:

1. Three facilities, located under the extended centreline of RWY 04/22 to the NE of the Kempsey Airport, are noise sensitive areas. These are the Aldavilla Primary School, the Greenhill School, and the Booroongen Djugun Aged Care Facility.
2. When landing on RWY 22, pilots should use the minimum power necessary on approach to minimise noise over noise sensitive areas.
3. Where practicable, pilots should use the full RWY length for take-off.
4. Pilots should, where safe, practicable and consistent with expected training outcomes, maintain RWY heading after take-off until reaching a height of 1,000FT above aerodrome elevation before making a turn into the circuit.
5. Simulated engine failure practice should not be conducted over noise sensitive areas.
6. Engine ground running, such as during pre-take off checks, may be conducted at any time, but should be kept to the minimum time operationally necessary.
7. Pilots of transponder-equipped aircraft should ensure that, at all times, the transponder is selected to ON/ALT (Mode C).
8. Users of Kempsey Airport should refer to the Kempsey Airport Fly Neighbourly Agreement (FNA) which may be downloaded from the Kempsey Shire Council website at: <http://bit.ly/ksc-fna-dec-19>.

9. Circuit training, as part of flight training school operations by local and visiting operators, is permitted only between the following hours:

a. Local Aircraft Operators:

(i) MON-FRI (except public holidays)

- Between 0700-1900 Local (excluding HDS*) 7 am – 7 pm
- Between 0700-2200 Local HDS* 7 am – 10 pm

* (Hours of Daylight Saving ie typically Oct – Apr)

(ii) SAT (except when Saturday is declared as a public holiday)

- Between 0800-1900 Local 8 am – 7 pm

(iii) SUN (except when Sunday is declared as a public holiday)

- Between 0900-1800 Local 9 am – 6 pm

(iv) NSW public holidays

- Between 0900-1800 Local 9 am – 6 pm

Note: Circuit training is not permitted on Christmas Day

b. Visiting Aircraft Operators:

(i) MON-FRI (except public holidays)

- Between 0800-1900 Local 8 am – 7 pm

Note: Circuit training is not permitted on SAT, SUN, public holidays or Christmas Day.

Local aircraft operator is defined as any aircraft operator that has a tenancy agreement in place with Kempsey Shire Council for a building structure located at Kempsey Airport or is a resident or is a business operating in Kempsey Shire.

Visiting aircraft operator is defined as an aircraft operator that does not have a tenancy agreement in place with Kempsey Shire Council for a building structure located at Kempsey Airport or is not a resident or is not a business operating in Kempsey Shire.

For aircraft noise assessment purposes, it is noted that Australian Standard AS 2021:2015 *Acoustics – Aircraft noise intrusion – Building siting and construction* defines ‘daytime’ as 0700 hours to 1900 hours (ie 7 am to 7 pm).

In addition to the published noise abatement procedures, the original Fly Neighbourly Advice report adopted by Council in 2019 also included the following requirements:

- Standard Circuit Heights – at Kempsey Airport, all aircraft conducting circuits are required to climb to 1,000 feet above the aerodrome elevation prior to making a turn onto cross-wind (with the exception of those aircraft that operate at circuit heights lower than 1,000 feet)
- Low Level Circuits – Circuits below 500 feet above ground level (AGL) are not permitted.
- Acknowledgements of emergency services – It is acknowledged that emergency services operators, including police, fire, air ambulance, RFDS, military, search and rescue and infrastructure monitoring operations may not always be able to adhere with the Fly Neighbourly Principles in this FNA. It is understood that where possible, these operators will adopt Fly Neighbourly Principles, provided they do not interfere with the safety or key outcomes of their operations.

It should also be acknowledged that while the current Fly Neighbourly Advice has been established between the airport, aircraft operators and the community, with formal noise abatement procedures endorsed and published by Airservices Australia, the FNA is a voluntary ‘agreement’ and cannot be enforced under aviation law.

Mandatory aviation operating and safety procedures have precedence over the FNA in all circumstances.

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 25 June 2019, in addition to adopting the Final Kempsey Airport Noise Management Plan and Fly Neighbourly Advice 2019, Council also resolved to prepare an Airport Master Plan inclusive of updated aircraft noise modelling and the development of a formal Australian Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF) to inform Council’s land-use planning instruments in the vicinity of the Airport.

Conducting an ANEF study as well as the production of ‘Number Above’ N60, N65 and N70 contours for Kempsey Airport was a key recommendation of the Noise Management Plan.

This work was completed in 2023 with Council adopting the Kempsey Airport Master Plan 2042 at the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 27 June 2023. The Master Plan includes a 2042 forecast ANEC (subsequently endorsed for technical accuracy by Airservices Australia in December 2024 as a 2042 ANEF) along with supplementary aircraft noise N-above contours providing a range of aircraft noise data associated with the operation of Kempsey Airport. This information is available from Council’s website at <https://www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/Business/Business-facilities/Kempsey-Airport/Kempsey-Airport-Master-Plan-2042>.

5. NOISE COMPLAINT DATA

A further recommendation of the Kempsey Airport Noise Management Plan was the establishment of a noise complaints register as a mechanism for appropriately managing complaints related to aircraft noise disturbances at Kempsey Airport.

Council subsequently established an Aviation Related Complaints register in January 2020. A record of complaints received by Council is available from Council's website at <https://www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/Business/Business-facilities/Kempsey-Airport>.

Since January 2020, 15 complaints have been received by Council. In general, the complaints have related to aircraft noise and low flying aircraft (below 1000 feet) associated with pilot circuit training activities at the Airport.

As noted at section 3, while training aircraft should typically operate the downwind leg of the circuit at Kempsey Airport at 1000 feet above ground level, aircraft will operate at lower levels at various stages of the circuit and in the process of landing and taking off in accordance with mandated aviation safety requirements.

Caution is also advised regarding flight data available via websites such as Flightradar24 and FlightAware as aircraft elevation data is displayed based on standard barometric altitude. At low altitudes aircraft fly with reference to local pressure which can make the uncorrected standard pressure altitude values at these lower heights appear unrealistic (source: Flightradar/FlightAware).

Notwithstanding the above comments, it is important for aircraft operators wherever possible to operate in accordance with the typical circuit arrangement described in section 3 and as shown in Figure 3 to avoid overflying noise sensitive areas at altitudes below 1000 feet.

It is also noted that Airservices Australia operate a *Noise Complaints and Information Service (NCIS)*, which can be contacted either online, by telephone or by post.

CASA also operates a *Low flying aircraft complaints* portal which is available online at <https://www.aviationcomplaints.gov.au/aviation-safety>.

6. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In conjunction with the review of the Fly Neighbourly Advice, Kempsey Shire Council invited feedback from the community and aircraft operators via:

- *Your Say Macleay* online community engagement portal – Council invited responses via an online survey and/or written submissions on the Fly Neighbourly Advice during the period 1 – 30 April 2025
- Direct engagement with the 3 currently identified noise sensitive facilities: Aldavilla Primary School, Greenhill School, and the Booroongen Djugun Aged Care Facility
- Two stakeholder engagement sessions held on Monday 14 April 2025 facilitated by Aviation Projects, including an Aircraft Operators workshop and a Community workshop. The workshops were attended by the following Council staff:
 - Peter Allen, Group Manager Commercial Business
 - Noel Cheers, Airport Operations Coordinator.

Attendees and feedback received via the stakeholder workshops is outlined below:

Session #1 – Aircraft Operators Workshop (9.30 am – 10.30 am)

- Darren Gibson Macleay Aircraft Maintenance (Hangar 4 / 5)
- Julian Booth Macleay Aircraft Maintenance (Hangar 4 / 5)
- Greg Parnell Safety Manager, Australian International Aviation College, Port Macquarie

In addition to the above, Ross Costanzo Chief Flying Instructor of the Kempsey Airport based Mid Coast Flying provided feedback to Council staff via email on 31 March 2025.

Session #1 – Aircraft Operators Workshop Feedback

- Circuit training hours of operation for local operators are generally satisfactory
- Circuit training hours of operation for visiting aircraft on Saturdays are considered too onerous, and a request was made for consideration of permitting limited operations of visiting aircraft (associated with solo navigation training) on Saturdays eg 10 am to 3 pm or similar
- A request was made for there to be no distinction between local and visiting aircraft and the corresponding circuit training hours of operation
- Australian International Aviation College (AIAC) commented that it values being able to operate at Kempsey Airport and that it respects and operates in accordance with the current Fly Neighbourly Advice undertakings and corresponding noise abatement procedures
- The wording of FNA undertaking #3 and the requirement for aircraft to use *‘the full RWY length for take-off’* was noted as being ambiguous, with a suggestion made to review the wording for greater clarity
- It was noted that FNA undertaking #4 and the requirement for aircraft to *‘maintain RWY heading after take-off until reaching a height of 1,000FT above aerodrome elevation before making a turn into the circuit’* had the potential unintended consequence of extending the initial climb-out phase following take-off increasing the spread and duration of potential aircraft noise impacts on identified noise sensitive areas to the north of Runway 04
- Noting the current reduced level of aircraft activity (compared to 2017-18), the FNA was noted as being unnecessary with a request to discontinue.

Session #2 – Community Workshop (11.30 am – 12.30 pm)

- Dick Pearson Secretary, Save Kempsey Airport Action Group Inc.
- Ross McIntyre President, Save Kempsey Airport Action Group Inc.

Session #2 – Community Workshop Feedback

- A request was made for the Warne Drive locality to be formally identified in the FNA as an additional 'noise sensitive area', with a corresponding request for aircraft to avoid overflying the Warne Drive area on the base leg when landing on Runway 22 as per the typical circuit layout shown in Figure 3
- The current provision that no circuit training is permitted for visiting aircraft on Saturdays should be retained unchanged in the FNA
- Noting the current reduced level of aircraft activity (compared to 2017-18), there is some acceptance regarding an increased level of circuit training activity at Kempsey Airport by visiting aircraft operating Monday to Friday (except public holidays) 8 am to 7 pm strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Fly Neighbourly Agreement and typical circuit layout and aircraft heights described in section 3 and Figure 3 to avoid overflying identified noise sensitive areas.
- Total aircraft movements at Kempsey Airport up to an overall total of approximately 10,000 aircraft movements per annum (including local and visiting aircraft) may be an appropriate balance to assist Council in the long-term financial sustainability of the Airport while protecting against a return of high intensity, 'industrial scale' flight training activities and associated aircraft noise impacts on the surrounding area
- No more than one training aircraft should be permitted in the circuit at the same time conducting 'touch and go' circuit training activity
- Correct the ambiguity regarding the wording of FNA undertaking #3 and the requirement for aircraft to use '*the full RWY length for take-off*'.

There were no formal written submissions received by Council via the *Your Say Macleay* online community engagement portal during the engagement period.

Two survey responses were received during the period:

- The first acknowledged that the airport has been in its current location for many years and that an element of aircraft noise should be expected in the vicinity of the airport
- The second response was from a resident who lives within 2 km of the airport stating that they don't have any complaints about aircraft noise and that the occasional low flying aircraft after take-off does not cause them any concern.

Feedback was sought from the 3 identified noise sensitive facilities: Aldavilla Primary School, Greenhill School, and the Booroongen Djugun Aged Care Facility.

Aldavilla Primary School confirmed that they do not have any issues with the operation of the Airport.

Verbal feedback was provided by a representative of the Booroongen Djugun Aged Care Facility on 7 May 2025 advising that they have no concerns regarding aircraft noise and the operation of the Airport.

No response was received from the Greenhill School.

7. FLY NEIGHBOURLY ADVICE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While the volume of aircraft movements and in particular the extent of circuit training operations currently being conducted at Kempsey Airport has reduced significantly since 2017-18 and the subsequent establishment of the Fly Neighbourly Advice in 2019, it is recommended that Council continue with the Fly Neighbourly Advice as a voluntary code of practice between the airport, aircraft operators and the community aimed at reducing aircraft noise impacts in the vicinity of Kempsey Airport.

Based on the review undertaken of the current FNA and in consideration of the stakeholder feedback received, minimal changes are proposed to the current FNA – these include the addition of the Warne Drive locality as an additional noise sensitive area, and rewording of the FNA undertaking #3 to clarify the intent / interpretation of the undertaking.

No changes to the circuit training hours of operation for local or visiting aircraft are proposed noting however that community representatives have acknowledged that some increase in circuit training activity by visiting aircraft Monday to Friday may be acceptable strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Fly Neighbourly Agreement and typical circuit layout and aircraft heights described in section 3 and Figure 3 to avoid overflying identified noise sensitive areas including the Warne Drive locality.

While the FNA undertaking #4 has been identified as having the potential to extend the initial climb-out phase following take-off increasing the spread and duration of potential aircraft noise impacts on identified noise sensitive areas to the north of Runway 04, feedback received from the noise sensitive facilities has not indicated any specific concerns with the current FNA and level of aircraft operations / noise. As such it is proposed to retain the current provision. It is also considered that there is sufficient flexibility within the current wording of the undertaking for aircraft operators to vary the circuit as necessary to limit overflying of the identified noise sensitive facilities.

The proposed changes include:

1. Three facilities, located under the extended centreline of RWY 04/22 to the NE of the Kempsey Airport, are noise sensitive areas. These are the Aldavilla Primary School, the Greenhill School, and the Booroongen Djugun Aged Care Facility. **A further residential area located at Warne Drive to the NE of the RWY 22 THR is also a noise sensitive area.**
2. **Where practicable, pilots should commence the take-off run at the start of the RWY. Intersection departures from TWY A are not permitted.**

Subject to endorsement by Council and Airservices Australia, the proposed changes will be reflected in the noise abatement procedures published in the En Route Supplement Australia (ERSA) for Kempsey Airport.

8. REFERENCES

- Airservices Australia, Aeronautical Information Package; including En Route Supplement Australia (ERSA) effective 12 June 2025
- Airservices Australia, *Circuit training*,
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<https://www.airservicesaustralia.com/community/environment/aircraft-noise/about-making-a-complaint/>
- Australian Standard AS 2021:2015 *Acoustics – Aircraft Noise Intrusion – Building Siting and Construction*, dated March 2015
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