

CURFEWS AT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS – A STUDY OF CURRENT PRACTICE

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Keywords: *curfew, operational restrictions, aircraft noise*

Abstract

BAC conducted research on curfew practices around the world. The research found that there are a wide range of curfew arrangements with significant differences in time, restrictions, exemptions and sanctions. Curfews are imposed to relieve communities in close proximity of an airport, but can also be a result of political motivation, increased air traffic and residential development.

Adopting ICAO's Balanced Approach including effective land-use-planning, aircraft noise reduction and noise abatement procedures is likely to assist in maintaining a curfew free status. Once implemented, curfews do have various impacts for airports and its surrounding communities.

1 Background and Purpose

The Australian Government's National Aviation Policy White Paper (2009) announced that a review of Brisbane Airport's curfew free status would be undertaken in 2012. Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC) considers the implications of the proposed curfew review a critical challenge to its sustainable operations. To inform and support the curfew review process, BAC conducted research on current curfew practices around the world.

The research was designed to generate a better understanding of airport 'curfews' and other operating restrictions as they are applied around the world, the many different social, environmental and political factors that drive decisions to implement curfews. The research also investigated the impacts that curfews have on an airport and its region.

2 Methodology

Primarily, information was collected by distributing a survey questionnaire to airports around the world, by researching existing studies and by consulting relevant industry partners such as international aviation organisations, representatives of international airlines, slot coordination Australia and the Australian Federal Department of Transport.

In total 107 airports were approached, with 42 completing the survey; 25 out of the 42 airports have additional 'curfew' restrictions and the remaining 17 do not have any additional restrictions.

3 Main Findings

The research found that there are a wide range of curfew arrangements which exists, with significant differences in time, restrictions, exemptions and sanctions. Curfew arrangements range from voluntary commitments to legally enforced restrictions. Curfews are also likely to remain and to get stricter with time.

The main objective for imposition of a curfew is to relieve communities in close proximity of an airport, but also other factors do contribute, including political motivation, introduction of jet engines, increased air traffic and residential development. Factors that contribute to a curfew free status are effective land-use-planning, noise management measures and the economic value of an airport. This is also in line with ICAO's Balanced Approach to aircraft noise management. ICAO states that operating restrictions should be a last resort in the management of aircraft noise, and should only be implemented after fully adopting the

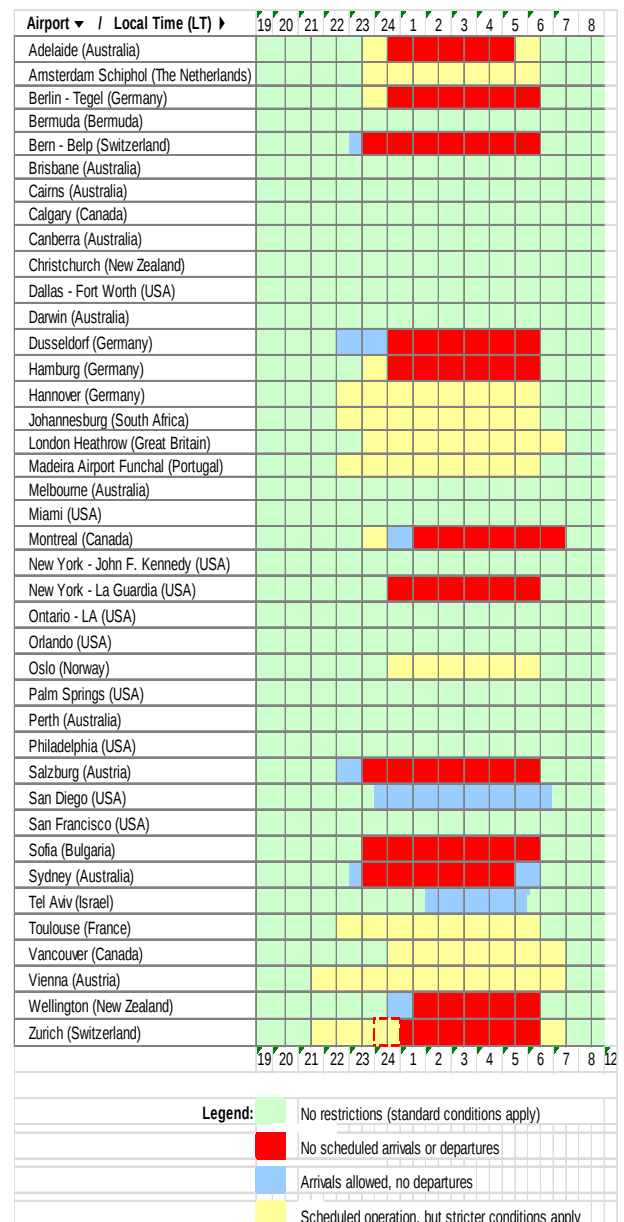
balanced approach. This approach includes reducing noise at source, land-use planning and noise abatement procedures.

Curfews do have various impacts for the airport and its surrounding communities. Benefits include less noise exposure during nights and a drive to further enhance aircraft and air traffic management procedures. On the other hand curfews can lead to changes in peaks, and curfews might even shift the night noise to another region. Additionally, curfews tend to limit airports' operating hours even beyond the curfew period as airlines apply buffer times. Generally, airlines consider curfews as a risk for its operations due to the decreased scheduling options.

4 Approach to Manage Noise and Curfew Issues

Airports that need to address noise impacts and the risk of a curfew might consider fully adopting ICAO's Balanced Approach, including improvement of land-use planning, further enhancement of noise abatement procedures and introduction of noise-related charging mechanism to encourage aircraft operators to use quieter aircraft. Active engagement with local communities is also essential to manage noise and perceptions.

Fig 1 Summary of curfew restrictions for regular public transport (jets only) at International Airports, as at May 2010



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