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Loud call for a curfew

By Rebecca Thistleton

THE call for a curfew on Canberra Airport resonated throughout the Legislative Assembly on Thursday night, with individuals and community groups from central and north Canberra suburbs uniting for their cause.

"We are not against reasonable airport development, we just want a night time curfew imposed to commercial flights so that Canberra folk can have the same undisturbed sleep that Sydney residents have," Hackett resident Peter Kelly said, following the public meeting.

The meeting was held by the ACT Greens and facilitated by their climate change and environment spokesperson, Shane Rattenbury, to bring together views on Canberra Airport plans.

Canberra Airport was represented by Noel McCann, who said airport development would provide significant economic and employment gains for the ACT.

Mr McCann said he was pleased to see residents representing North Canberra, Queanbeyan and Jerrabomberra.

"I had a good hearing, there was a good range of people and I think Rattenbury did a good job of moderating," he said.

Mr McCann also restated Canberra Airport's firm opposition to the proposed residential development at Tralee.

Curfew 4 Canberra president Jenni Savigny reiterated the action group's proposed 11pm to 6am curfew – the same as Sydney – which is supported by ACT Greens.

Verco Street, Hackett residents Rachel Wellsmore, Saxon, Imogen, Louise and Angus Cook, Dan Dwyer, Margaret Corcoran, Dave Wilson, David Dwyer, Ben Wilson, Leo Dwyer, Boyd Kelly, Laura Wills, Flynn Kelly, Jan Cleland and Peter Kelly are worried an airport freight hub will disturb their peaceful street.

"If night flights go ahead as proposed by the airport owner, we will all need industrial earmuffs to get any sleep."
- Hackett resident Peter Kelly

Canberra community groups, including the Hackett and Watson community associations, the North Canberra Community Council and the Gungahlin Community Council were also represented.

Mr Kelly criticised the Federal Government's consultation requirements, saying many residents were unaware of the noise impact that would result from Canberra Airport operating as a freight hub.

Verco Street in Hackett, where Mr Kelly lives, is home to many residents concerned their sleep will be interrupted, who argue their house prices will fall if Canberra Airport has a 24-hour freight hub.

Mr Kelly said the northern Canberra suburbs housed 46,000 residents who would be affected by increased noise.

He said a freight hub would bring in huge profits for the airport, and while profits gained would be privatised, the impacts of the endeavour would be socialised.

His neighbour, Dave Wilson, said he understood older planes were often used for freight, and he didn't want the airspace above Verco Street to be filled with the noise of "air trucks" each night.

Mr Wilson said while he wasn't against airport expansion, he believed the long term negative impacts of a freight hub would outweigh short term benefits of employment during construction.

Following the public meeting, Mr Rattenbury called for scrutiny of Canberra Airport expansion plans.

"There seem to be a number of unanswered questions about the exact noise impact on the suburbs of North Canberra, where the noise monitor in Hackett is currently located, and the airport's noise projections outlined in the master plan," he said.

Verco Street residents are making submissions for the master plan, with comments closing on Friday.

However, many were unhappy the airport was collecting responses rather than the Federal Government – a sentiment shared by Mr Rattenbury.

"It seems odd that, for what is the most significant piece of development in Canberra for a long time, that the proponent collects the public submissions, and that the public cannot then see what is submitted to the Federal Government," he said.

Thursday night's meeting was attended by about 80 people, with other issues raised including road traffic increases, greenhouse gas emissions, grasslands, and the planning impact on the rest of Canberra's town centres.