Chapter E4 Draft Runway Operating Plan

Summary of key findings:

So that the parallel-runway system can deliver Melbourne Airport's required capacity, the completion of Melbourne Airport's Third Runway (M3R) will be accompanied by changes to airspace architecture.

The safe and efficient movement of aircraft to and from Melbourne Airport is a fundamental objective of airport and airspace operations. The airport runway system's operating modes play an important role in achieving this.

Whole-of-environment outcomes (especially regarding aircraft noise and vibration, as well as social and health impacts on the community) were taken into account when designing the flight paths, air traffic management procedures and M3R's proposed modes of operation.

M3R provides new opportunities to implement different operating modes during night-time periods, when it is less busy. These were therefore considered when developing the preliminary airspace design for operation of M3R.

This chapter presents the Draft Runway Operating Plan for M3R that Melbourne Airport and Airservices Australia currently envisage will be adopted when M3R becomes operational. The airspace architecture (including flight paths and proposed operating modes) has been developed by Melbourne Airport with assistance from Airservices. This is detailed in Chapter C2: Airspace Architecture and Capacity, Chapter C3: Aircraft Noise Modelling Methodology and Chapter C4: Aircraft Noise and Vibration Assessment.

The preliminary airspace design, including this Draft Runway Operating Plan, is agreed in principle as being technically feasible to implement, and confirmed by Airservices as meeting its planning requirements. Although this preliminary airspace design meets the requirements of both Airservices and Melbourne Airport, the airspace architecture concepts are preliminary and subject to further development through the detailed airspace design.

Alterations to the future Melbourne Basin air traffic management network could result in changes to the proposed airspace architecture and may require changes to the runway operating plan. Opportunities to incorporate further mitigation of the environmental impacts of M3R operations, including aircraft noise, will continue to be explored throughout the detailed airspace design.

Work on the detailed airspace design, following approval, is also an opportunity for further community engagement. It is important to note that, before the flight path procedure and/or modes of operation can be finalised and implemented for M3R, a full detailed design process (including relevant safety case(s) for parallel runway operations and interaction with Essendon Fields Airport and other Melbourne Basin airports) must be completed by the air navigation services provider (i.e. Airservices) and approved by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA). This will happen before the opening and operation of M3R.