

# Hawkesbury City Council

Our Ref: customer, service providers-raaf matters

23 February 2009

National Aviation Policy Statement  
Dept. of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development &  
Local Government  
GPO Box 594  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Email: [aviationstatement@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:aviationstatement@infrastructure.gov.au)

Dear Sir/ Madam

## Submission to National Aviation Green Paper

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the National Aviation Green Paper - *Flight Path to the Future*, which will be the Federal Government's initiatives and policy setting for the civil aviation sector.

My Council area is home to RAAF Base Richmond. RAAF Base Richmond contributes significantly to Defence throughout Australia and is an important contributor to the local economy and social fabric. The Hawkesbury community has had a long association with the Base and expects that the association will continue for sometime.

However, RAAF Base Richmond continues to surface as an option for a second Sydney Airport and this possibility is fuelled by the Federal Government's own reviews that question the need for the Base, in Defence strategy or on operational costs grounds. At the local level a change in role of RAAF Base Richmond to civil aviation, would have an unacceptable impact on the community, in terms of the change in airport focus and scale of operation. Council is of the view that RAAF Base Richmond is not an option for any second Sydney airport and that it should remain a strategic Defence facility.

A decision on the future of Richmond RAAF Base is paramount for the Hawkesbury Local Government Area. It is also paramount for both the National Aviation Policy and the Defence Policy White Papers that are concurrently being prepared. The Defence capability of RAAF Base Richmond must precede any civil aviation needs.

Council encourages the Federal Government to provide clear vision and commitment to its initiatives and policy settings and to provide balance between community, passenger, freight, airport operator and users and aviation business needs. Council's submission to the Green Paper, on behalf of its community, is attached to this letter.

For any enquiries in regard to this submission, please contact Fiona Mann, Strategic Planner, with the General Manager's Unit on 4560-4579 or myself on the number below.

Yours faithfully,



**Peter Jackson**  
General Manager

Direct Line: (02) 4560-4410





## Hawkesbury City Council

*Hawkesbury local government area is located on the north-west edge of the Greater Sydney Region. It is the largest LGA in the metropolitan area and is centred on the upper reaches of the Hawkesbury River. Windsor is its civic heart and 72% of lands are National Parks.*

*Hawkesbury LGA is home to most of the Macquarie Towns (4) founded in 1810; most of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area; RAAF Base Richmond, the first in NSW and closest to Australia's largest population (Sydney).*

# SUBMISSION

February 2009

## National Aviation Policy GREEN PAPER

The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP (Rudd Federal Government), announced a National Aviation Policy Green Paper- White Paper to provide Australia's aviation future.

Hawkesbury City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide on National Aviation Policy directions on behalf of its community.

### Part A General Statements

- a. Submissions due by 27 February 2009.
- b. Council does not make a request that all or part of this submission is to remain confidential.

### Part B Scope of Submission

- a. Council endorses the Western Sydney Regional Organisation's submission to the National Aviation Policy Green Paper and is to be read in conjunction with this submission. WSROC's submission provides comment on matters of interest to Western Sydney as a region, which Hawkesbury Local Government Area is part.

WSROC represents its member councils of Western Sydney. Hawkesbury Council is a member of WSROC.

- b. In addition to the WSROC's submission, Council makes comment on the National Aviation Policy Green Paper as a matter of interest to Hawkesbury Local Government Area at the local level. See Part C.

## Part C Hawkesbury Comment on matters raised in the Green Paper

The Green Paper proposes four initiatives or principles to be the basis of the National Aviation Policy, which are supported by 10 Aviation Reform areas. The principles and reforms that Council specifically comments on as they relate to Hawkesbury Local Government are:

a. **Principle 3 – Infrastructure/ Reform 8 – Aviation infrastructure** (*Investing and planning for responsible growth*)

**Use of Defence airports for civil aviation.** The Green Paper, makes brief comment on Defence airports in reference to five of these airports (or RAAF Bases) providing some form of civil air passenger transport capability for commercial operators/ domestic airlines in a shared facilities relationship; and reference to two other Defence airports (including RAAF Base Richmond) provide some form of general aviation operations. The Green Paper also comments that some Defence airports operating on a shared uses model do not recover the full costs of providing air traffic control, rescue and fire fighting services and the like.

It is considered less than satisfactory that the operators of civil aviation from shared Defence airports do not fully contribute to their share of operator costs and that Defence and the Australian Tax pay is offsetting private business costs.

**Defence airports in the National Aviation Policy.** The Green Paper effectively suggests maintaining the status quo on Defence airports usage for civil aviation and it appears this position is held on the current less than satisfactory business models at the few shared Defence airports. The National Aviation Policy White Paper needs to consider any role or change in role for Defence airports in the National Aviation Policy mix to ensure the policy and community have a well round and full understanding of the complete civil/ commercial aviation sector. The matter goes beyond the issue of just access to Defence airports for civil aviation, but to the role these airports do and can play in sustaining local aviation businesses, skills development and to the contracts civil aviation/ airlines have with Defence airports and services for maintaining commercial fleets (as a business unit of Defence). Defence Airports are existing infrastructure and it would be in the interest of the Australian Tax Payer and the public that the use of all existing airports for civil aviation are optimised, provide their Defence role and Defence needs are not compromised.

Parallel to this Green Paper is the Defence Policy White Paper process which is underway. It is noted that Defence airports are primarily to support Defence capability and operations. However, there are cases, as indicted above, where there is civil aviation from Defence airports. With this in mind, it is essential that the National Aviation Policy provide direction on how any change or likely change in Defence airport needs for Defence could be utilised in the overall civil aviation presence in Australia.

- ▶ Council requests that the National Aviation Policy White Paper include greater direction on the role it sees Defence airports, or decommissioned Defence airports, playing in the National Aviation Policy.

**Planning for the Sydney region's long-term aviation needs.** It is noted that once the Sydney Airport Masterplan is prepared by the Sydney airport operator, the Federal Government will, once again, initiate the *processes to identify additional capacity for the Sydney region, consistent with the Government's policy of support for a second airport for Sydney.*

The issue of a second Sydney airport has been ongoing for some time and debate has largely centred on the perceived need for and the location of a second airport in the Sydney region. Locations investigated or proposed have included Wilton, Holsworthy Military Base, Badgerys Creek, Goulburn, Canberra and RAAF Base Richmond. The community is a significant stakeholder in the issue, especially in the Sydney region case, where an airport would be 'retro-fitted' into residential Western Sydney. It is also

interesting that the 2009 Sydney Airport Masterplan, prepared by the airport operator, appears to be driving the process for a potential second Sydney airport where ever it be located.

The discussion has largely taken place in a World in which the economic reality of decreasing oil supply long term and associated raising costs for travellers, aviation businesses and airport operators has not been considered adequately. The Green Paper, on the whole, advocates an aviation future of continued growth in passenger movements and Australian demand (whether International or domestic).

The current global economic crisis provides a window on a possible and no less likely aviation future that would see a downturn in passenger movements and demand. Despite the passenger growth forecasts in the Green Paper, the airlines and other aviation businesses are adjusting their business models in response to market downturns. Refer to 'High flyers search for fare savings' on 21/01/09; 'Freer hand urged for tourism growth' in 29/01/09; 'Joyce tries to put fight in Kangaroo' in 5/02/09; 'Airlines fasten set belts as demand dives' in 18/02/09 of The Australian Financial Review.

The Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics estimates the number of air passenger movements through Australian airports will grow by an average of 4% per annum to 2025-26 (Page7). This might be the case, but who are these passengers and where are they going? How was this continued growth in passenger numbers arrived at? The Green Paper comments that new longer-haul planes can carry more people from more remote locations to Australia. Is this a fair comment, when on average Northern Hemisphere originating passengers approach flight distances differently to Southern Hemisphere originating passengers? International travel for the 2000 Olympics was well over estimated. There is also considerable emphasis on International aviation's share of the sector, in terms of passengers, freight, jobs, economic performance of the Nation's economy (including tourism) and that of airline businesses.

In the way forward, the Federal Government is encouraged to disclose and consider a greater range of data for forecasting passengers and to use more qualitative measures (along side quantitative) in discussions about policy and with the community.

**What does additional capacity for the Sydney Region mean? What does a Second Sydney airport mean?** In the way forward, terminology needs to be clearly defined and intent needs to be clearly explained in addressing the second Sydney airport issue in the National Aviation Policy and following processes. Does 'additional capacity' mean making better use of existing airport facilities in Sydney, whether international, general or Defence airports? Could a second Sydney airport mean the transfer of a Defence airport to civil aviation, or a shared defence airport or an upgraded general aviation airport? Is it a new airport site and how far away could a new airport be to provide reasonable additional capacity?

**Badgerys Creek – Sydney West airport.** In the way forward, the Federal Government's and the National Aviation Policy statements that Badgerys Creek is no longer an option, needs to be addressed in legislation. The Airports Act, 1996, still identifies Badgerys Creek as the (new) Sydney West Airport and needs to be removed from the Act. In the way forward, the Federal Government needs to plan appropriate uses for the site in consultation with Western Sydney.

**RAAF Base Richmond.** RAAF Base Richmond is located in the Hawkesbury Local Government Area. While ever there has been debate on the second Sydney airport issue, public views and comments have been expressed on Richmond Defence airport's potential to be the second Sydney airport or to play a greater role in civil aviation to support Sydney Airport (civil), whether this be as shared defence airport or in its transfer to a federal leased airport, regardless of Defence needs.

Similar issues about the future of Richmond Defence airport has surfaced in Federal Government dialogue in the parallel Defence Policy White Paper process, which is looking at the future of all Defence Bases; and in the various Force Disposition Program reports that have specifically considered the importance and/ or relevance of RAAF Base Richmond to Defence. The speculation is unhelpful, when the importance of RAAF Base Richmond in Defence operations and capability (eg. secure point of departure in the Sydney Basin for Sydney/Melbourne/Canberra for large scale operations) has been acknowledged by the Minister for Defence, when Shadow Minister for Defence, Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP, indicating that:

*“Labour has no plans to alter the status of RAAF Base Richmond, and should we be elected to government later this year Richmond will continue as a permanent operational facility” (26/09/07);*

The speculation is unhelpful when ‘Defence bases, jobs at risk in cost-cutting’ in 17/12/08 of The Australian Financial Review and similar articles in tabloids indicate Richmond Defence airport is on the agenda as a site for the second Sydney airport (eg. The Daily Telegraph, 2/12/08). The Hon. Anthony Albanese, the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government when speaking at the launch of the Green Paper did not rule Richmond Defence airport out of the second Sydney airport proposition. So which Minister and portfolio takes priority?

In the way forward, for the National Aviation Policy White Paper and the Defence Policy White Paper, both must resolve the uncertainty and speculation surrounding the future of RAAF Base Richmond now. It is in the interest of the Nation, Western Sydney and particularly Hawkesbury Local Government Area that Richmond Defence airport’s future is known once and for all as continuing strategic Defence facility. This will enable all stakeholders to get on with their job of supporting a defence airport.

Hawkesbury City Council’s view on RAAF Base Richmond acknowledges that the Base is a significant contributor to the local economy and is of the view that Federal Government civil airport policy directions should not cloud/ distract from Defence Policy and its strategic and operational needs, which must include the retention of RAAF Base Richmond as a strategic Defence facility.

Council’s most recent resolution on RAAF Base Richmond (2 October 2008) is:

***“Council continue to support the need for the retention of the Richmond RAAF Base as both an important defence facility for the Nation and as an integral part of the local region’s economy and community and the retention and continued operation of the Airlift Group out of RAAF Base Richmond.”***

The following request was made by Hawkesbury City Council in its submission to the Defence Policy Discussion Paper on “Key Questions for Defence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” for the Defence White Paper:

- Council requests that as an outcome of the National Aviation Policy White Paper that the Government ensures RAAF Base Richmond is not an option in any other policies of Government and is retained as a strategic Defence facility.

In the way forward, Council would request to be fully engaged in any discussions about the future of RAAF Base Richmond, if there is any intention of the Federal Government that it may have a role in the National Aviation Policy and in a particular the second Sydney airport process. Council has recently adopted the Hawkesbury Employment Lands Study which identified, in part, that the RAAF Base Richmond is a significant generator of employment and multiplier employment in the area (whether on site or offsite), because of what it is, and therefore it is a strategic site in our (business strengths) and employment lands planning and development. Council on occasions

has also supported the possible commercial usage enhancement of land in the vicinity of Richmond Defence airport for the possible development of a 'technology park' for businesses and employment that support Defence aviation technology. Any Federal Government decision, contrary to RAAF Base Richmond's primary defence role would have considerable impact on Council's planning processes for its community.

- ▶ Council requests that the National Aviation Policy White Paper, informed by the Defence Policy White Paper, end speculation on the future of RAAF Base Richmond and its perceived civil aviation capacity.

#### **Part D Submission Enquiries**

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#### **Part E Submission Authorisation**



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