

**To: Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

I am delighted that the new Minister, Anthony Albanese, has commenced a process to develop a comprehensive National Aviation Policy Statement, and has invited submissions on this Issues Paper.

Though I am indeed a member of the travelling public for the Airlines, and am very interested in your planning there, my main interest is in General Aviation.

I have been a private pilot for around 20 years, having started with Recreational Aviation, and then moved into General Aviation about 15 years ago. Besides allowing me to enjoy what I feel must be the most wonderful recreational activity in the world, as a Sydney-sider for most of this time, aviation gave me a whole new view on life in country Australia, such as the ability to visit towns I would never have visited by car, to stay with friends in the country and participate in life in country towns, and considerable insight into a number of regional issues. I also got the opportunity to encourage and assist some younger people in their careers in the aviation industry. Thus I wish to make suggestions on some issues that seem to me to be a threat to General Aviation. I have also had the good fortune to have dealings with a large number of women pilots over the last 6 years, and I know I am also expressing the view of the majority of these women, (plus the view of most of our flying brothers), in my comments below.

My points in general relate to sections 1.3, 1.4 and 2.1 of the Issues Paper.

1. I believe General Aviation serves at least 3 main purposes:-
  - a. It is a form of Transport
  - b. It can be a Sport.
  - c. It can be a training ground for people moving into other parts of the Aviation Industry.

I have comments and concerns related to each to these aspects, the majority in connection with Airports.

2. Australia is possibly the country in the world most suited to Aviation. It has the motivation of long distances and a sparse population (as mentioned in your introduction), it has generally flat terrain, few excessively windy areas, a large land mass without the need to cross water or foreign territory to travel between portions of the country, very little ice and snow, an educated and reasonably affluent population, a strong tradition of mechanical expertise, of innovation, and of organisation, and indeed excellent traditions of Aviation skill, training, safety, and pioneering (for instance Australian Aviators were the very first in the world to cross most if not all of the world's Oceans.)

3. Thus my dream for Australia and for Aviation, is that Australia could lead the world in allowing flying to become a commonplace method of personal and family transport. There are a couple of things that probably need to be fixed before this can become a full reality – for instance, the danger of arriving at the ground needs to be lessened by having less flammable fuel, ability to land slower (possibly incorporating some of the properties of parachutes but in a more controlled way), and the dangers of collision needs to be reduced by having ways for planes, especially the larger ones, to save themselves either by avoiding the other object, or by repelling it away. And another improvement would be for planes to be able to land and take off in the length of house block or two. This may be a few years away, but Australia could well be the country to pioneer this new low-risk aviation for all.
4. However at present there seem to be a number of forces conspiring to squash general aviation here before it can ever reach that stage. I feel we are looking at a case similar to the historic limiting of the speed of horseless carriages by requiring someone to walk ahead with a red flag. Here we are allowing various forces to spoil the inherent convenience of flying and thus dissuade would-be customers from using and progressing aviation, in this most suitable country.
5. By far the most serious threat to General Aviation as I see it, is the disappearance of Airports. Scarcity of Airports impacts all three purposes listed above.
6. In the few years that I have been flying, and just around where I live, I have seen the following Airports close:- Schofields, Hoxton Park (in just a few days now), Cooranbong, Aeropelican (Swansea); and these appear to be threatened:- Warnervale, Goulburn, Jindabyne, and possibly General Aviation at Canberra; and Bankstown's operations may have been even more severely curtailed by now had it not been for an influx of overseas students.
7. This would not be so bad if we had hundreds of airports, but this is not the case, thus it is starting to make the whole proposition of travelling by small planes on the east coast of Australia unworkable. There is nowhere to go in case of an emergency, or of the pilot becoming tired or ill. There are becoming so few airports that there are insufficient places to use as alternates in the case of poor weather or a problem with lighting at night, (and it also undermines CASA's attempts to improve safety by mandating planning of alternate airports).
8. And this seems to be all because some developers can see profit in using those few hundred metres of tarred but frequently swampy land to turn into housing estates. Australia is a very large empty country. It seems appalling to me that developers have to cast their eyes on those few handfuls of tarred levelled land that are the lifeblood of aviation. It is shocking for country councils to deny their citizens air connection with the rest of the world, and even more despicable for cities to deny their country cousins that means of travel to the cities.

9. This is akin to allowing local property owners to dig up the Hume Highway as it runs past their property, if they feel so inclined, just because it might make a nice corn paddock.
10. I believe it would be better if those few dozen threatened paddocks were bought back by the Australian Government to re-open the gates of free and unhindered movement by this form of transport between communities.
11. Also worrying, is the situation where operators of some of the larger airports have been handed a gift on a plate by governments to run a monopoly on that piece of infrastructure. Again, this is rather similar to some of the European Barons of old extracting tolls from anyone needing to pass through their valley.
12. Besides throwing away this marvelous opportunity in Transport to lead the world in personal aviation for many of the trips our citizens make every day, we are damaging our Training prospects, too. Why shoot ourselves in the foot when we could be the Aviation training powerhouse of the world, supplying pilots to overcome the world pilot shortage. While it would be a waste not making the most of our opportunity to train overseas pilots, (albeit with vetting), in my books it is more absurd, mean, and almost criminal, to deny this career to our own young people, in this country best suited to Aviation, just because a few people coveted those tiny bits of infrastructure, the airports, in this wide empty land, as places to dig up or build a few houses on.
13. I can see that in a few situations, it might be more appropriate for an airport to be moved further out of the city, but closing them down completely is so short-sighted. (And if we wish to capitalise on Australia being able to be a clever country in terms of aviation skills of all types, too, we must remember that the bulk of people do live and work in cities.) Nor do I believe that aviation is, or should be restricted to being, a pastime of the rich only.
14. To capitalise on our great advantages as the country most suited to aviation, I also believe that the Department of Transport should set up an authority, of equivalent size to CASA, devoted solely to encouraging aviation in Australia, and capitalising on our natural advantages,

Summarising, I believe:-

- Airports, being a significant piece of transport infrastructure in this country, should be bought back by the Australian Government. (Or at the very least, protected by legislation which will neither let them be sold, nor disabled by allowing building to encroach on approach slopes or to cause turbulence.) In fact, I think the Australian government should legislate for, and own, some extra safety area at the end of runways, at least of any new airports to be built.
- Considering the vast spaces in Australia, young Australians should not be hindered in taking up an aviation career, because someone wanted to build shops and housing on the tiny piece of land that was their local airport. In fact I think the Australian

government could do more to aid and abet people who currently devote many years of their life on low pay to prepare for these important and responsible jobs.

- Considering the travel distances involved within and from Australia, for the benefit of all Australians, some agency of the Australian Government should be set specifically to encourage this industry, rather than just regulate it.

Thank you very much,

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