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To: The Honourable Anthony Albanese MP

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Dear Mr Albanese,

Firstly, allow me to congratulate you on your winning the last election and the job done thus far.

I understand there is an Aviation consultation paper in the making, however I feel I need to voice a few items outside of it in order to state the view from a pilot and private aircraft owner.

The reason I am writing to you is about my concerns for the future of General Aviation (GA). I have been flying since 1990. Hold commercial licence and night/instrument ratings to fly most GA aircraft, singles and twins. Over the years, I have had the privilege of flying throughout much of this great country of ours, all in a private capacity and never having earned a cent from flying. Everyone should be able to experience this, and if they did, we would view our environment in a different light not to mention a better understanding of our fellow Australians. Compared to most other countries we have the best overall climate and relatively flat landscape which lends itself wonderfully to GA. Over the years I have seen just about every discouraging obstacle possible thrown at GA. The last one being priced out of Bankstown Airport and having to re-locate my aircraft to an airstrip in the southern highlands, some 2.5 hours drive away.

I realise GA does not rate highly in the voting stakes, however, recent natural world catastrophic events show that this is when GA (and easily accessible airstrips) are key in whether people survive or perish. Sydney basin is headed for a disaster in this respect. The airport sales were hurriedly approved by the then Minister John Anderson without due thought to the long-term effects. Three (3) airports were sold to one (1) buyer (BAL P/L), Bankstown (BK), Hoxton Park (HXT) and Camden airports (CN) at the bargain basement price of around \$160M. Whilst this in itself should be the basis for an inquiry, the effect has been to devastate GA at these airports within just a few short years. Rents to park an aircraft have tripled and the new owners are pricing us out of existence. Hangers sit empty, yet they claim there is no hangarage available. I believe the reason is so that they can come back to you in a few years stating that all this land is "surplus" and have it re-zoned. Up go the industrial and factory units. BK has already started with Bunnings, Aldi, KFC etc. The closure of the only North-South runway has already caused safety issues at BK.

This land grab shows no end. Look at Essendon Airport, Moorabbin, Canberra etc. Whilst I would partly support this as a means of raising funds to keep GA alive, that is NOT the new owners intent. I urge you to review this situation and ensure they maintain the facility for AVAITION use as was part of their lease agreement. A weekend "flyaway" to Canberra cost \$80 to park on the grass miles away from the terminal. Further I urge you to ensure they are legislated against pricing us out of existence. Should the current trend continue, Sydney is left without viable, easily accessible and affordable airstrips. Hoxton Park is muted as being closed sometime in the next year to be converted into a housing estate. Camden is too far away and now very overpriced. I have included a submission from Mr Donald Stott trying to highlight issues at Canberra airport in 2001 to the then Minister, The Hon John Anderson. GA is now in such a serious decline that it may never recover.

→ Refer to Attachment

Airstrips are no different and every bit as important as football fields, cricket fields, parks and recreation areas. They get people out and about. Flying allows people to learn specific and exacting skills, helping them realise and deal with other goals in life. Airstrips encourage the formation of Flying clubs along with social benefits. If kids could be encouraged to join, they would rather be flying than roaming the streets. Further if an emergency were to occur, an airfield around the corner could quickly allow the transfer to where medical facilities are located.

The argument that they are expensive is totally unfounded. In essence, for GA, we are talking about installing and maintaining the equivalent of 1km or so of road! How cheap and easy! A transportable shed for a clubhouse. The club can easily run the airstrip. Many country strips run this way. We have many areas in Sydney that would easily accommodate GA airstrips.

The other issue is CASA's prehistoric regulations, however that may be a matter for another forum. However, it requires a brief to understand why we are in a mess. Suffice to summarise:

1. Back in the "30s, 40's when most of these regulations were drafted CASA meant well. There was no such thing as mass production; thus why such stringent (some may say draconian) regulations were passed to ensure that component #1 would be identical to #2 and #3 etc. CASA was somewhat right, as safety was the then concern.
2. 60 years on (today), we have cutting edge technologies available such as Computer Aided Design (CAD) etc. Countries like China can mass-produce 1, 10 or 1 million of the same component, all identical and at affordable prices to exacting specifications.
3. Yet, CASA is locked in a time warp. They defend their outdated regs today because little of the mass production equipment can be configured to produce ancient technology. Yet, they defend their existence in the name of safety. That was another era. CASA for the most part is still entrenched in the past. The only hindrance to safety TODAY is the regulations and regulator themselves. They prevent using the latest technologies or techniques. Should a manufacturer try to utilise 21st century technology CASA demands a convoluted process that it becomes totally economically unviable. Easier (and far cheaper?) to do what we have been doing for the last 60 years, rather than try and certify a new component. Thus, why very few new aircraft are produced in GA. And of those few, they are nothing more than a rehash of the original 1960's model. Rather like buying a new FJ Holden today. Same old inefficient engines, driveline, shape etc. Maybe a little better upholstery. Would today's car buyer be satisfied with such? I doubt it.
4. A quick example is the landing light in my aircraft. The Original and "certified" is a 13V 250W (22 Amp current draw) GE globe (\$60) with a 15 hr life. (Yes, it only lasts about 15 hours!). A fantastic alternative is a HID light retrofit (\$32) with a 3000hr life, drawing only 3.2A and some 5 times as bright. However, It would cost thousands and months/years for the paperwork to "certify" this HID light through CASA. It is a 5 minute job to install the 2 wires. Yet, every new car off the production line now utilises this technology.

The above mentality is entrenched across everything aviation. Nicely fluffed by CASA and those that benefit from these regulations (Mechanics, spare parts, Avionics techs, Manufacturers holding "certified type certificates" etc). It ensures little to no competition and if you do not like it, your aircraft is grounded. Just close your eyes and pay the invoice!

If any one tries to change these regulations, CASA will cry foul that "Safety will be compromised"!

Q; Why then, if everything aviation has to be "Certified" safe, are we continuing and have always had accidents?

And why, when an accident happens does "pilot error" seem to be the favourite outcome?

A classic example is the Lockhart River accident. The reality was that if:

- Components/parts were mass produced (ie Cheap and readily available), operators would just replace them, instead of trying to stretch out time limitations, repairing/restoring.
- Affordable, off the shelf/modified, latest technology could be used, such as Digital Radar altimeters linked up to a PC GPS monitoring the flight (along with various other sensors) all for minimal cost, the crew would have been alerted and avoided the terrain. CASA

should allow the use of such in an aircraft (provided they meet an "aviation standard ISO 9000 type system"). CASA HAS to review it's current outdated and irrelevant regulations.

- The Pilots could have practiced more flying, improving skills and gain more flight time (by having cheap aircraft to hire/buy).
- Antiquated avionics would have been replaced with innovative and latest technology items. (With few exemptions, the majority of avionics in use at present was designed and built in the 70's. The regulations prevent the use of anything not "certified". To certify a new unit would cost millions, so the manufacturer with the license just churns out the same old radio).

The pilots in this disaster could have been made aware they were below the required path, in imminent danger and could have easily taken evasive action to prevent the catastrophe. Yet CASA insists on the current system of regulating under the guise of "safety".

THUS, GA is faced with:

- Having to fly machines designed back in the 50's 60's and 70's
- Most people would be surprised to learn that most GA aircraft are now over 30 years old and that technology in the airlines is mostly based on 70's and 80's era.
- Using technology and equipment of that era
- associated costs of restoring these antiques, as few or no "off the shelf" type parts are available
- Now losing the very infrastructure we need to be able to fly in and out of – Airports!

I would like to highlight some of the Benefits of GA:

Please can you consider the following action for the survival of GA:

1. If there is any way to reverse the terrible mistake of selling airports, please undo.

At the very least, force the new owners to understand that:

- they bought full well in the knowledge that they were making a loss
- GA Airports will continue to make a loss if trying to recover funds from GA
- They have to ensure easy affordable access for all aircraft.

These airports ARE PART OF AUSTRALIA'S INFRASTRUCTURE and need to remain so. NOT as an easy land grab.

2. Should these airport owners refuse, look into opening airstrips around various parts of say Sydney. Currently, they have NO competition and as such are driving the fate to only one outcome – not aviation related.
Opening a handful of airstrips with limited operation to allow locals easy and affordable access. Imagine you are in your office, wander down to an airstrip, (say along the Cooks river), and be on your way to a meeting on the north coast within an hour.
3. Having this type of infrastructure would remove many cars off the road, less pollution, fewer accidents. Further, aircraft only require about a 1km of road (runway) to be maintained. Much more cost/environmentally effective than building and maintaining hundreds of thousands of km's of road. Most of which are always congested anyway. Strips could easily be installed in most parks.
4. Perhaps not your portfolio, but a look into relegating CASA and it's current regulations to a museum. A new department set up with modern day thinking to set up relevant regulations that will encourage and stimulate aviation manufacturing, flying operations and pilots. Regulations that will make Australia the Aviation Innovation capital of the world. The possibilities for jobs, manufacturing, research and development etc are endless. We have the environment here to blossom aviation into cutting edge leaders of the world. Boeing, Airbus and many other small manufacturers would likely relocate here if we provide the basics and a few incentives (Airstrips and regulations which encourage flying, manufacturing etc) bringing with them possibilities to turn the ailing NSW economy around.

5. GA is the breeding ground of new pilots, aircraft engineers, aircraft designers and manufacturers. We are facing a chronic pilot shortage because of the prohibitive costs GA is facing. These costs are directly related to CASA and government policies. The fact that I (and many other owners) have had to relocate our aircraft so far away from Sydney means less flying, less jobs in maintenance, re-fuellers, hangars, etc. Obviously, these new owners are encouraging this decline in order to re-zone the airports they picked up at bargain basement prices.
6. A final point – if these companies can manage to make so much profit, why shouldn't the government keep, maintain and run these for the benefit of the community today and all future generations?

I do realise my passion and views may be somewhat biased when it comes to aviation. You will find most pilots are. However, without a few of us aviators trying to bring it to the fore, it will soon disappear due to over-regulation, lack of government support, lack of aircraft and lack of airports. The only beneficiaries being the big multi-nationals by way of cheap land grabs... all compliments of the government. Many have commented that it is already too late. I firmly believe this is our last chance before we deny future generations easy access to this wonderful gift, and possibly lose the greatest progress mankind has ever made.

In Brief:

1. Airports MUST remain with Government (or at least under strict government control) as they are a vital part of PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE. If a little forward vision, they could easily be incorporated into playing fields, along rivers, reserves etc.
2. GA MUST be given a life-line to making it affordable and attractive to the next generation by:
 - Grants for student pilots
 - Grants to aircraft owners to relocate aircraft back to Primary city airports
 - Grants to pilots so they can fly more often thus remain current with flight experience
 - CASA must let go and let a new generation with new ideas and technology in.
Or... close up shop, for they may well find they will have no one to regulate.
3. Your government is in the best position ever to turn this terrible state of affairs around.
4. I have also written a submission to the Aviation green paper in the hope of saving GA.

Please Help.....!

Your sincerely



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