

From David Sayer  
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Friday 23 May 2008

Re: Development of a National Aviation Policy Statement Issues Paper:  
Submission/Comment

Dear People

Aviation has been part of my life since the 1950s, firstly in the form of model aircraft followed by 20 years in the RAAF and now currently the recreational aviation scene as a member of RA-AUS for many years.

I consider myself widely read of material from Australia, England and the USA.

Whilst I recognise that commercial Aviation is vitally important to many, many Australians in a myriad of ways – I would suggest that recreational aviation is just as important to a large number of Australians. RA-AUS alone has more than 8,000 members. Its aircraft fleet outnumbers that of the combined commercial fleet and the RAAF, and numbers continue to increase. This and all other sporting aviation bodies, through their activities, provide jobs for Australians and considerable input to the economy of this fair land.

I notice in the summary/précis of the Issues Paper that General Aviation is purported to nurture future commercial pilots and aviation workers. What is not recognised or even mentioned is that the lighter end of town (recreational aviation) can and does have the same function for many who can not afford many of the costs involved in the general aviation scene.

All aircraft need to share the same sky and require similar infrastructure.

As a minimum need, the recreational pilots in Australia deserve equal and equitable access to airspace for all users without the imposition of onerous costs that would stifle the current vibrancy in the recreational sector.

Please do not let ignorance and unfair ideology impact unfavourably on the lighter end of town just because we don't have the same budget as Qantas or Virgin etc.

I wish to advise that many local governments in Australia have a poor track record when it comes to supporting and retaining airfields in their areas. In many cases, as housing moves closer to long standing installations, the wishes of the new inhabitants of that housing causes the demise of the installation. There is no way this can be seen as fair. This practice needs to stop happening.

People move into an area, knowing full well what exists there already. They need to accept that situation as it is, and as it has been long before they arrived. There are no logical grounds to wish the demise of these airfields just because they decide to knock them "after" they move into the area. This is nothing like a "fair go" and is totally un-Australian.

The other thing that happens is that some councils see a large lump of land (an airfield) as being just an asset in terms of what it would sell for to a cashed up developer. (Evans Head, NSW?)

In the UK, for several years now, it has been federal government policy to protect all existing airfields using appropriate legislation. They have realised the value of these facilities to the communities involved.

In the USA federal funds are used to build lovely airstrip facilities in many small communities. How good it would be to see that here, but I doubt if I will ever see that happen.

Our Executive (RA-AUS) keeps telling us (the members) that they are always attending meetings involving CASA and the industry to ensure that decisions are not being made at those forums which may be detrimental to our aspirations. History tells us that someone is always out there ready to curtail our freedoms to their own benefit and our loss. Let us see some learned leadership please to stabilise our future and assure us that fair and logical decisions will be made only after full consultation with recreational aviators. Australia is not ruled/governed by a dictatorship. No one can afford to have ill informed bureaucrats imposing their will on the community to the detriment of that community.

I personally do not agree with the position Australia has where big business pays big dollars to lobbyists who have the ear of politicians. If politicians are working for Australians (and I'm pretty sure that should be the case) then they should ask all involved with the outcome of any decision for their input before making up their minds.

Please do not just pay lip service to the needs of individual groups whilst bowing to the big power brokers that certainly are out there in appalling numbers. Give us an equal voice in policy that affects us. Keep our activity affordable and wide ranging. Create for us a stable environment so we can grow and prosper. Get the real story on any issue. No group should be under constant fear of attack. Widen our horizons where it can be shown that we can safely fit in. Unfair/illogical limitation is not what any Australian wants in their endeavours.

Put your thinking caps on people. Change the image of bureaucracy from "Big Brother is watching" to a caring and thoughtful nurturer of aviation in all its forms

Sincerely

David Sayer