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Spitfire Memorial Defence Fellowship
at
Australian Defence Force Academy
Canberra

National Aviation Policy Statement Submission
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development
And Local Government
GPO Box 594
Canberra ACT 2601

27 June 2008

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to comment on Australia's Aviation Infrastructure as I have been very concerned for some time now about:

1. The loss of good airfields which were turned over to local government in the early 1990's without any thought being given to what might happen to those airfields in the future.
2. The failure of government to plan adequately for pilot and crew training so that we now have a pilot and engineer shortage.
3. The failure of the Federal government to plan for aviation for the future.

Loss of airfields

When I moved to Northern NSW in 2005 I witnessed the potential loss of two significant airfields in the Richmond Valley Council area, one at Casino at one at Evans Head.

A large portion of Casino's jet airport was sold off cheaply for residential development several years ago and part of the main runway was fenced off for housing development. What was once a jet airport and potential transportation hub for Northern NSW has been lost. Casino is a transportation gateway for road and rail. The addition of an air freight centre at Casino would have placed Casino's depressed economy in a much better position. Now that option has been lost.

The Aerodrome at Evans Head, which has four runways, is ideally placed for RPT, GA traffic, pilot training, airpark and related aviation industry yet local Council is planning to allow a retirement village to be built 110 metres from the main runway and for residential development to also to be built at the end of the main runway just as in Casino.

With its four runways Evans Head is ideally placed for cross wind conditions unlike Ballina Airport which has only one strip. When Ballina and Lismore are closed Evans Head often remains open for aviation. Last year during the Bushfire Emergency at Evans Head the six water bombers brought in to fight the fire used all four runways for their attack. If Council has its way those runways will be lost for this purpose.

I have been so concerned about the loss of Evans Head and its potential for aviation that I have taken up flying again at the age of 90 so that I can see for myself what's happening

at Evans Head from the air. As a World War II pilot with experience of four campaigns I feel I am well placed to understand the needs of aviators and aviation.

I understand that there are at least three proposals for an airpark development at Evans Head which have been ignored by Council. One of them is worth at least \$50 million. Why is it that Council is encouraging a retirement home to be built which will destroy the aviation potential of Evans Head? You can build a retirement village anyway, but not an aerodrome, particularly one which has four airstrips.

Pilot and LAME training

I am well aware of the pilot and aviation engineer shortage both here and overseas. Evans Head is in the box seat for aviation training particularly with its four airstrips to deal with cross wind conditions and open country for flying from a safety perspective. Evans Head has a large high school and is half an hour from Southern Cross University and various TAFE colleges. If the Federal Government is thinking about establishing or helping to establish flying colleges to deal with our aviation shortages Evans Head would be an ideal location.

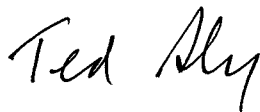
Planning for the Future

For many years now aviation policy seems to have been left to the market place to sort out. It is very clear that the market place has failed to preserve essential aviation infrastructure such as the airfields at Evans Head and Casino. The Federal government needs to step in and stop further losses of ALOP airfields before it is too late. As a first step it should place a moratorium on further development at Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome with a view to resumption of this airfield by the Federal government for future aviation use for the whole of Northern NSW and Australia.

I also understand that there is a need to clean an area of contamination on the Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome to enable the construction of the retirement village mentioned previously and that the cost is \$6 million to the Federal Government. With the current Government claiming good fiscal management why waste money cleaning up the area when there are much more suitable areas available for retirement villages in other places off the aerodrome. The establishment of an airpark would generate income and only require minimum contamination cleaning, if at all.

Finally, Evans Head trained many aircrew during World War II. Twenty percent of Bomber Command casualties were Australian. Many Australian Airmen are in unmarked graves in the oceans and fields of the world. Evans Head should be retained as an airpark and as a 'Living Memorial' to their sacrifice.

Yours sincerely



Ted Sly, DFC

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