

From: [Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts](#) on behalf of infrastructure.noreply@govcms.gov.au
To: [aviationconsumer](#)
Subject: submission to: Aviation Consumer Protections – primary legislation [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 1 October 2025 9:30:08 AM
Attachments: [251001-submission-aviation-consumer-protections-consultation-on-smaller-airports-bsc.pdf](#)

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Submitted by: Anonymous

Submitted values are:

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Berrigan Shire Council

Short comment

Berrigan Shire Council as the owner of Tocumwal Airport welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Aviation Consumer Protections Consultation Paper released on 8 September 2025. While we support the Government's objective to strengthen consumer protections in aviation, we are deeply concerned that the framework, will place disproportionate and counterproductive burdens on smaller regional airports such as ours.

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- [251001-submission-aviation-consumer-protections-consultation-on-smaller-airports-bsc.pdf](#) (182.9 KB)

Step 2: Contact details

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Consultation name

Aviation Consumer Protections – primary legislation

OFFICIAL



01 October 2025

Impact of Aviation Consumer Protections Consultation on Smaller Airports

Berrigan Shire Council as the owner of Tocumwal Airport welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Aviation Consumer Protections Consultation Paper released on 8 September 2025. While we support the Government's objective to strengthen consumer protections in aviation, we are deeply concerned that the framework, will place disproportionate and counterproductive burdens on smaller regional airports such as ours.

Tocumwal Airport is a vital asset for our community, supporting -

- Health services – including access to the Royal Flying Doctor Service air ambulance.
- Emergency response – during floods, fires and other natural disasters.
- Freight and business use – such as crop-dusting and small agricultural charters.
- Tourism and events – including the Tocumwal Airshow, held biennially.
- Training and recreation – for fixed-wing, glider and recreational pilots.

Despite this critical role, Tocumwal Airport averages only a few thousand aircraft movements annually — a fraction of the 250,000 plus movements at major airports such as Melbourne or Sydney. Around 60% of council-owned airports already operate at a financial loss, relying on subsidies from overstretched local governments. Tocumwal is no exception. While grant programs such as the Regional Airports Program (RAP) and Regional Airport Upgrade Program (RAUP) are welcome, they are competitive and short-term and provide no sustainable funding pathway. In 2024, for example, almost \$30 million in grants supported only 40 airports out of more than 2,000 nationwide.


At Tocumwal, we employ just four part-time staff, primarily for groundskeeping, maintenance, inspections and compliance paperwork. Additional regulatory and levy obligations would divert scarce resources away from these essential tasks, jeopardising our airport's operations.



We note that the Government has committed to reducing red tape as a national productivity priority. Imposing new obligations on very small airports directly undermines this commitment. Accessibility and consumer protections are already comprehensively regulated under existing legislation, including:

- the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.
- the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (currently under review).
- the Australian Consumer Law, which governs cancellations, refunds and service guarantees.

Airports are also actively working with Government on aviation-specific disability standards, with more than 145 initiatives already underway nationally. Adding yet another compliance framework risks confusing passengers, duplicating obligations and shifting effort into overlapping regimes rather than improving services.

Berrigan Shire Council

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It is also important to note that no other country requires airports to participate in consumer protection schemes of this kind. The Consultation Paper itself acknowledges that airlines — not airports — are responsible for the majority of consumer-facing operations. Without a minimum threshold, the proposed scheme will impose unsustainable costs on smaller airports, with little, if any, benefit to consumers.

We therefore urge the Government to:

- **Exempt airports with fewer than one million passengers annually**, consistent with international best practice such as the UK's Aviation ADR scheme, which covers 91.7% of passengers by focusing only on larger airports.
- **Ensure that costs are proportionate**, with levies primarily recovered from airlines, who hold the direct contractual relationship with passengers.
- **Align the framework with existing legislative and regulatory obligations** to prevent duplication and unnecessary compliance
- **Provide flexibility and staged implementation** to avoid further undermining the financial viability of regional airports.

Strengthening consumer protections should not come at the expense of regional connectivity, emergency response capability, community access or national productivity. We respectfully ask the Government to reconsider the current approach and ensure that reforms are effective, proportionate and sustainable for smaller regional airports such as Tocumwal.

Yours
sincerely,



Dr Julia Cornwell McKean GAICD
Mayor Berrigan Shire.

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