



The Aviation Consumer Protection Framework

The Australian Government is delivering on its commitment to introducing new aviation consumer protections



The government has introduced legislation into Parliament, a key milestone toward establishing the Aviation Consumer Protection Framework (the ACP framework).

The ACP framework implements key Aviation White Paper commitments that will strengthen consumer protections and set clearer expectations for industry that will be subject to appropriate oversight arrangements. The framework effectively balances meaningful protections for passengers while maintaining a competitive and sustainable aviation sector.

The Aviation Consumer Protection Bill Package will create the legal basis for the framework, with details to be contained in regulations, instruments and rules. This subordinate legislation will be settled after the Bill Package and will be informed by further consultation with stakeholders.

Subject to the timing of the passage of primary legislation and drafting of subordinate legislation, it is expected that key elements of the framework will commence before the end of 2026.

The government will continue to work collaboratively and constructively with industry to support effective design and implementation, including in relation to arrangements for the Aviation Consumer Ombudsperson (ACO) and finalising the Aviation Consumer Protections Charter (the Charter).

Overview of the ACP Framework

The ACP framework will comprise two key elements:

- An Aviation Consumer Ombudsperson (ACO) that will provide a fair, accessible and impartial external dispute resolution services to assist with resolving individual eligible consumer complaints in relation to the supply of airline and airport services that can't be resolved directly with airlines or airports, and
- An Aviation Consumer Protections Charter (the Charter) that will set out the minimum standards that aviation consumers can expect from airlines and airports, which will be enforced by a regulator, the Aviation Consumer Protection Authority (ACPA).

The Aircraft Noise Ombudsperson (ANO) will be established in the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (the department). The current ANO administered by Airservices Australia is not supported by any legislation. As is currently the case, the ANO will conduct reviews into how Airservices Australia and the Department of Defence handle aircraft noise complaints, the community consultation processes regarding changes affecting aircraft noise, and how aircraft noise information is presented and distributed.

Regulated services

The ACP framework will regulate airlines operating domestic flights in Australia, airlines flying internationally to and from Australia, and Australian airports. It will apply to services offered or supplied to travelers by an airline or airport in relation to their flight, including services contracted out to third parties.

- An **airline service** will include, but will not be limited to, booking requirements, check-in and boarding, baggage, treatment during disruptions, delays and cancellations, complaints handling, availability of refunds and passenger assistance.
- An **airport service** is a service provided at an Australian airport to a traveller as a consumer in connection with their flight, which arrives or departs from that airport. This would include directly paid services like parking but exclude retail and food service inside the airport.
- An **airport accessibility service** is a service that is offered or provided by an airport or airline to a person who requires assistance in connection with their flight to or from an Australian airport.

The Aviation Consumer Ombudsperson

The ACO will be independent from government. The ACO scheme will be established and operated by an independent company limited by guarantee, with all regulated entities (airlines and airports) required to join the company. The company will be funded through company membership fees and subject to rules approved by the government.

The governance arrangements will assure the scheme's independence, transparency, and credibility for both consumers and industry; while ensuring it is purpose built to reflect the unique characteristics of the aviation sector.

The ACO will receive and handle eligible complaints from aviation consumers who have been unable to resolve their dispute with an airline or airport. It will provide consumers access to an impartial, accessible, and fair external dispute resolution services that can assist them with resolving eligible complaints in relation to the supply of airline and airport services.

The ACO will also:

- Provide community and industry education and guidance
- Promote best practice complaints resolution
- Refer misconduct to other bodies.

The Aviation Consumer Protection Authority

Feedback from stakeholders in response to consultation on the ACP framework has suggested that there is a need for a strong regulatory function to hold industry to account for meeting the minimum consumer standards.

The legislation provides the basis for systemic monitoring, compliance and enforcement of aviation consumer protection standards by a regulatory function that will be established within the department (the ACPA). The ACPA will be responsible for administering and enforcing the Charter.

While the ACO will work to resolve eligible individual complaints, the regulator will focus on investigating and responding to systemic and serious breaches of the Charter. It will have a range of enforcement and compliance measures that it will be able to use to ensure that regulated entities are complying with the Charter.

The ACPA will also have an education function, and in this capacity it will coordinate and collaborate with the ACO.

The Aviation Consumer Protections Charter

The Charter will provide a clear, comprehensive and consistent set of minimum protections and standards of treatment that aviation consumers can expect from airlines and airports when selling and operating flights and when disruptions occur.

This will give consumers greater certainty about what to expect when things don't go as planned when flying to or from an Australian airport.

This includes the minimum requirements when selling, checking in and boarding flights as well as the base level of assistance that airlines and airports must provide to passengers in relation to:

- flight disruptions, delays and cancellations, including the availability of refunds and passenger assistance
- lost/damaged baggage
- complaint handling
- providing effective support for passengers with disability across the whole aviation journey.

Proposed passenger assistance during disruptions, significant delays and cancellations caused by factors within the airline's control will focus on immediate support, such as food and overnight accommodation as well as rebooking or refunds where required.

Find out more



Visit our website to find out more the framework: infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure-transport-vehicles/aviation/aviation-consumer-protections



Read more information about the ACO scheme: infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure-transport-vehicles/aviation/aviation-consumer-ombuds-scheme



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