Submission to the Aviation White Paper

Dear Inquiry,

I appreciate the work of this Inquiry. Aviation is one of the most significant technological advances of the 20th century. It has been instrumental for many people to travel around the world (or more locally).

However, it is also true that aviation is an emissions intensive activity – indeed, arguably the most emissions intensive activity that the average person could do. A long-haul international flight could generate as much emissions as the average global person produces in a year. We are currently in a climate crisis, with the use of fossil fuels (since the Industrial Revolution, but steadily increasing with each generation) contributing to higher temperatures and more extreme weather events.

The world has a carbon budget, representing how much emissions can be produced, before a likely outcome of exceeding temperature limits such as 2 degrees Celsius. The small number of people who can fly each year have a disproportionate impact on emissions. The aviation sector has an industry has a significant responsibility to explore any and all technologies or methods to decarbonise air travel. Crucially, the White Paper seeks to analyse "how to maximise the aviation sector's contribution to achieving net zero carbon emissions." Developments in "sustainable aviation fuel and emerging technologies" will be critical for the aviation sector to prove that they can be sustainable.

It is not clear that the aviation sector is doing enough. Any "growth" that comes in the sector, or that the government seeks to promote, needs to be questioned if it cannot be compatible with reducing emissions. If an activity is causing damage, by contributing to greater emissions, it would only be sensible to ask whether we need *less* of it. Using up a limited carbon budget with emissions intensive activities, or the prospect of such activities being expanded (and thus using up the budget faster) is a dubious prospect.

This does not mean we need to give up travel (though it would be hubris to simply continue our current emissions-intensive practices and lifestyles and imagine that it would have consequences under the climate crisis). We can be smart about how we do things and imagining alternatives that are more sustainable and better for our communities.

There can be alternatives to air travel, such as by encouraging train travel or buses. On a personal level, I have decided not to fly any more, but I am still able to take trains or buses to visit family interstate.

The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns has also demonstrated the potential for connecting online. The frequency of air travel for business travellers may be unnecessary, compared to holding a meeting in a virtual format.

As a young person, I have a great interest and fascination with the world. I love learning about history and geography and looking at heritage sites and natural wonders around the world. I can appreciate the desire for, for example, travelling and seeing these things. But, I am also very conscious of the challenges we face as a world and the responsibility we must respond to the climate crisis. Not acting fast enough means we could lose many of these things, and a great suffering for people around the world (and including in Australia, as the 2019-2020 Bushfires recently attest).

Looking at it positively, aviation is a technological marvel and can be used for many good things. But, much more work needs to be done for it to lessen its emissions-impact within a Net Zero Transition.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Benjamin Cronshaw.