Madeleine Foley

Director – Committees

Legislative Council

Dear Madeleine,

I am writing in response to our evidence at the Legislative Council Inquiry into Regional Aviation.

Immediately below are the related Questions on Notice taken during the hearing and our response.

1) Regarding Badgerys Creek Airport

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Do you have a view about Badgerys Creek?

Mr PERRY: I do not think it is a matter for Inland NSW—it probably is actually.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: You can take it on notice.

Mr PERRY: I will take it on notice. I would say I think there is an absolute need for there to be enough capacity. We do know that flights at the moment into regional areas tend to be first thing in the morning and last thing at night and that impacts people's time, particularly in business. Making sure that regional travel does not suffer and those developments do not impact time and efficiency is really important.

Ms PLAWUTSKY: I will just add that I know that a lot of our regions are concerned that their flights might be transferred to Badgerys Creek. For example, going back to the Sydney medical services, they want them coming out of Sydney first thing in the morning, up to the region for the day and back down at night.

There is concern that if it is out through Badgerys Creek it will greatly impact those services. It does impact the potential for building the dispersal through the international market if we are asking them to go through Badgerys Creek. There is concern from the regions that they don't want to see that.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are they being asked for their views?

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Is anyone surveying those views?

Ms PLAWUTSKY: When we prepared for this we spoke anecdotally to a lot of the different regions.

We spoke to people from Dubbo and our team in Moree. On the ground that was the feedback that we were receiving.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Wouldn't it be critical for those places to be involved in discussions about whether it is Badgerys Creek or Kingsford Smith? I would have thought rural and country organisations should be involved in the discussions.

Ms PLAWUTSKY: I don't know if they have been.

Mr PERRY: I am not sure they have been. I think they should be, I totally agree with that. We will take that on notice.

CHAIR: A number of submissions were strong on the view that they should be retained at KSA as opposed to Bankstown, because Badgerys Creek was not on the radar when we called for submissions for this inquiry. The people that come in from regional areas need to be close to the city because they want to get in and out of a city for a day's business and then home and vice versa if there are medical services going to the country towns.

Ms PLAWUTSKY: Yes.

Mr PERRY: It is important to say that Inland NSW is a regional tourism organisation and our major focus is with our local governments on destination management and helping them to grow the visitor economy.

There are other organisations that are lobbyists and are better placed to do that. I do not think we should abdicate from that, hence why we are here today, because we think we can represent our members. I think it is a matter of Inland working with those bodies to make sure that they are heard. It is a matter of Inland NSW working with those bodies to make sure that they are heard. I will take that on notice; I think it is an excellent point.

Response from Inland NSW:

Further to consultation with our members and ORANA LGA's Badgerys Creek will be important and valuable for international visitors, but we believe Mascot should be kept for intra-state and regional airlines in view of the importance of time factor with appointments etc. Already regional scheduling requires travellers to travel first thing in the morning and late afternoon. Badgerys' Creek would be too far out for many computers for a turn around in one day.

Our view is there would need to be some strong collaborative work done if Badgerys Creek/Western Sydney was considered as a destination for regional air services in the future. Feedback from the region at this point is while we support additional airport to reduce congestion, unless the timely and efficient on ground transport infrastructure was readily available to and from the city (business/tourism/medical etc) we couldn't support Badgerys Creek as a destination for regional air services into Sydney as an alternative to Kingsford Smith.

Regional economic development (tourism/event/conferences/business) will be vitally impacted by inefficiencies of on ground logistics within Sydney.

RDA Sydney have been very involved in the lobbying for Badgery's Creek and improved connection into Sydney over the mountains for freight (including air freight) could only enhance growth, but for passenger services there would need to be as good or better on ground transport to and from CBD Sydney.

Re regional consultation there is a need or comprehensive regional surveying and compilation of views and recommendations of all regional stakeholders to assess the current need and to identify the hidden need that should be unearthed. Much of this will sit within the regional communities and business and industry, not just agencies. This could encompass views regarding Badgerys Creek.

The submission from ORAN LGA's says an I quote:

"A regional network assessment of transport services is needed. Such a study would assess the current and hidden demands for services, examine other transport linkages including road and rail and consider the interdependency between the region's major towns. It would uncover the potential of expanding cost effective RPT services in the region.

Discussions of where RPT services could operate and be economically sustainable should be based on good research. We would ask for the Government's support in this endeavour. Past studies have shown that the GRP of an area with an RPT service will grow six times faster than an area without an RPT service. The Standing Committee have specifically requested information on the impacts of gaining or losing RPT services on the local business community and potential for future economic development. In our region the most immediate cost has been the loss of essential services to the community. This is inextricably linked to the strength of our economy, as Health and Community Services are the region's third most dominant sector (next to Agriculture and Mining)."

1) Disability access

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Road users pay registration fees because they are on the road, not because of the timing that they are on the road; you contribute to the asset being maintained. I am talking about the maintaining of assets or building capacity in assets. Regional areas do not have a lot of money in local government so an opportunity with mining where there is a huge amount of dollars going into it is a sunny season for a lot of those areas to build capacity on those regional airports. That is my point there. A final question: in number six of your submission you talk about the importance of considering the impact of service delivery on disabled access, "certain aircraft are not amenable to servicing the disabled community leaving them potentially without adequate transport options". Will you comment on that?

Ms PLAWUTSKY: This came out of discussions with Moree. With some of the services the flights are too small and they are not able to accommodate wheelchairs. When we speak of a 19-passenger plane often they are not disabled friendly from an access point of view. There are technical requirements when embarking and disembarking, and I will have to take on notice what those technical requirements are. Technically it is very hard to actually help them embark and disembark on certain services when they are too small and you are on the tarmac and carrying the person up if they do not have the portable infrastructure to help them embark. There is a disabled advocate in Moree who is trying to push for better services for the less mobile

Response from Inland NSW:

We would like to reiterate our response during the hearing. We have had further consultation with our stakeholders who confirm this view and particularly because smaller planes do not have the room for the disabled to turn internally within the plane.

1) Potential locations for new routes

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: You said there have been no new routes in the last five years, would you comment if you were to have some new routes where would they be?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Young.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: Cooma.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: You are a great ambassador.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Lambing Flat.

Mr PERRY: Actually Young is one of the destinations.

Ms PLAWUTSKY: Young council has actually put up their hand.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Those Chinese visitors will want to come to Lambing Flat and learn about the Lambing Flat riots.

Ms PLAWUTSKY: Interestingly they have done a lot of work. Young is to be commended for the work they have done around Lambing Flat. They have the Chinese interpretation and they have engaged with the academics at ANU to bring out the Chinese tourists to Lambing Flat for the festival. This year was particularly well done with all of the Chinese theming around it. Young is definitely an area that is looking to put their hand up.

Mr PERRY: We will take it on notice. From the list that we have here the ones that stand out are certainly Cobar, Bourke, Inverell, Lightning Ridge—particularly the Australian opal centre if something comes of that, which is a tremendous opportunity—and Walgett. Lightning Ridge and Walgett are in the same area.

Response from Inland NSW:

At this stage we do not have access to additional information that substantiates which routes would work at this stage. We propose that a proper study needs to be undertaken to determine the opportunities, and especially considering QantasLink's assessment that a minimum of 30k pax per annum are required for a route be commercially viable. Even Broken Hill and Moree don't meet this criteria, and our other smaller destinations fall well below that.

Kind regards

Graham Perry

Chief Executive Officer