

**Submission  
No 58**

## **INQUIRY INTO REGIONAL AVIATION SERVICES**

**Organisation:** Cowra Shire Council

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20 March 2014

The Chair  
Hon Rick Colless MLC  
Standing Committee on State Development  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Colless

### **NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Regional Aviation Services**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry regarding regional aviation services.

Cowra Shire Council operates the Cowra Airport, a certified Aerodrome under the Civil Aviation Safety Regulation (CASR) 1998. Cowra Airport is currently not serviced by a Regular Passenger Transport (RPT) route. Council acknowledges the important role that regional aviation plays in the economic and social development of regional NSW and in 2011 adopted the Cowra Airport Master Plan to guide development at the facility.

The Shire of Cowra is located in the central west of NSW, approximately 300 kilometres west of Sydney. The Shire covers an area of approximately 2,810 square kilometres.

Council recognises that the liveability of many towns is enhanced considerably by having access to regional air services. Economic impacts include:

- Business growth from local businesses that rely on aviation services
- Business investment as a result of the improvements in regional aviation
- Increased recreational use and aviation related tourism

Council is committed to continued development of the Cowra Airport and the restoration of RPT services through;

- Continued CASR Certification of the aerodrome
- Low administration fees for airport users, such as the current zero landing fees; and
- Maintenance of high standard airport facilities such as navigational facilities, landing lights and provision of aircraft parking and hardstand areas.

The Standing Committee on State Development – Economic and Social Development in Central western New South Wales 2012 acknowledged the important role that regional aviation services play in the economic and social development of central and western NSW. The committee

considered it essential that the regional ring fencing arrangement, which guarantees arrival and departure slots for regional airlines at Sydney Airport, remain in place. Recommendation 16 of the report states:

*“That during the preparation of the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan, Transport for NSW examine new approaches to the delivery of regional aviation services in NSW, including the subsidisation of targeted air routes, and the establishment of a ‘hub and spoke’ model to manage access to Sydney Airport.”*

Given Australia is a vast country with a relatively small population it is obvious that high quality regional aviation services are essential if regional and remote communities are to continue to develop. These services should be seen in the same light as health, education and telecommunications, that is, a vital part of any town's infrastructure.

It is essential that Government recognise that it is difficult for private operators to justify the initial introduction of RPT services to a community where no airline service exists and no data regarding the number of potential users is available. To break this ‘chicken and egg’ scenario Government needs to establish guidelines for the comprehensive assessment of growth potential for regional business if air services are available. This information should be sourced on a location specific basis and be readily available to potential operators and the associated business community.

All operational models should be considered when attempting to establish and maintain RPT services to the highest number of regional location. For example the ‘hub and spoke’ model was successfully employed at Cowra Airport for an extended period during the 1960s and 1970s when East-West Airlines operated services to Cowra that connected with taxi/mini bus transfers to Grenfell (55 kilometres distant) and Young (70 kilometres).

While ‘hub and spoke’ services may not be an ideal operating model it recognised that in some regional situations they may be the only viable option available. With this in mind investigation into the introduction of ‘hub and spoke’ models by current airline operators should be encouraged as a way of promoting services to centres such as Cowra where, at least in the initial stage, passenger numbers may not be sufficient to warrant provision of RPT services on a commercial basis to one location alone.

Ensuring regional airline arrival and departure access slots remain at Sydney's Kingsford Smith airport is essential for communities in central west NSW. Visiting medical specialists and locums, business, medical travel and the like all need access into and from the heart of Sydney. Any move to restrict access to Kingsford Smith Airport would be detrimental to existing operators and a disincentive to operators investigating potential new RPT routes.

The integrity of the regional airports network, its potential for expansion and the support it provides for the State's economy, industry and the community, is under threat from the move to larger Regular Passenger Transport and charter aircraft. The use of higher capacity aircraft is simply not a viable proposition given the relatively small size of the communities involved.

Regular air services have the potential to open regional Australia up to ongoing commercial development, employment growth and provide towns and communities with a time-efficient link to the major cities. The importance of these air routes in a country with Australia's demographic cannot be underestimated.


It is incumbent upon Government to remove unreasonable barriers to the maintenance and growth of these essential air services. If Government is serious about regional economic growth regional airline operations need to be promoted or other transport options investigated. In regard to

regional NSW these options must include improved road and rail service such as those that would be provided by the upgrading of the Bells Line of Road or the re-opening of the Blayney – Demondrille Rail Line.

Social equality dictates that all NSW residents should benefit from a transport system that links major centres of business, services and recreational facilities with the state as a whole, regardless of their location; and that these services should be encouraged at a Government level. These links are not limited to a one-way flow from regional areas to larger metropolitan centres but promote business, health, educational, trade and recreational travel opportunities both to and from regional areas of the state.

Cowra Shire Council commends the Parliament of NSW for instigating the Inquiry into Regional Aviation Services and looks forward to the publication of the resultant findings as the basis from which to further develop air services throughout the state.

Yours faithfully

  
Cr W West  
Mayor