

**Submission  
No 50**

## **INQUIRY INTO REGIONAL AVIATION SERVICES**

**Organisation:** Bathurst Regional Council

**Date received:** 12/03/2014

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6 March 2014

The Director  
Standing Committee on State Development  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY - NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

**New South Wales Parliamentary Inquiry into Regional Aviation Services**

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission regarding regional aviation within NSW.

Bathurst Regional Council (Council) operates Bathurst Regional Aerodrome, which currently enjoys a Regular Passenger Transport (RPT) route, serviced by Regional Express Holdings Limited (REX). This route is licensed by the Department of Transport for NSW.

Bathurst is a thriving regional city, with one of the largest growth rates in NSW. Bathurst is one of seven Evocities within NSW that has NSW Government support, in an effort to promote decentralisation of industry and encourage growth in regional NSW. In order to continue this growth, RPT access into Sydney is vital.

The RPT service to and from Sydney is an essential service which the business community relies upon. Bathurst has major offices of both national and international companies, such as Mars Pet Care, Devro-Teepak Pty Ltd and Omya Australia Pty Ltd, with these companies as an example requiring access into Sydney Airport.

Bathurst also has education as one of its largest industries. Staff from Charles Sturt University, and from a number of private schools, utilise the RPT service to Sydney. In addition, Mount Panorama being a major tourist attraction, and the location of the V8 Supercar, 12 Hour and other motor racing events, also provides demand for an RPT service.

The provision of health services in Bathurst also requires RPT access to attract relief medical personnel during weekends and at other times when the local health services are short staffed and rely upon visiting locums from Sydney. An RPT service assists in ensuring that Bathurst has appropriate healthcare services equivalent to larger metropolitan cities, as should be the case.

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Council supports the continued access to Kingsford Smith Airport by regional airlines, operating 34 seat aircraft. The current RPT service provider uses 34 seat aircraft. Larger capacity RPT aircraft would more than likely trigger the requirement of the Aviation Transport Security Act, to provide screening of passengers and luggage. The cost of complying with that requirement would be prohibitive for many small regional RPT ports, and would be likely to cause the cessation of RPT services to Bathurst.

As Council is the owner and operator of the Bathurst Regional Aerodrome, concerns are held as to the limited input it has with respect to the appointing of an airline to the licensed route. Whilst Council was requested by Transport for NSW to identify servicing needs, no information has been provided by the Department to Council which details the exact conditions of the licensing with respect to service level agreements.

Given that Council is not aware of service level agreements, it is unclear as to whether the current RPT operator is meeting the agreed standard.

It is acknowledged that in previous licensing periods, for instance 2008-2013, there has been only one applicant, making the appointment of an RPT operator quite simple. However, for the current licensing period, two applications were received, with no involvement from Council regarding evaluation of submissions.

In the current economic climate, with Qantas and Virgin Australia making a loss in the first half of the 2013/14 financial year, and with the liquidation of Brindabella Airlines causing disastrous consequences to those regional communities served, it is clear that the regional aviation industry is struggling.

In closing, Bathurst Regional Council is supportive of the continued, affordable regional Regular Passenger Transport service to Sydney.

Yours faithfully

Doug Patterson  
**DIRECTOR**  
**ENGINEERING SERVICES**