Director, Aviation White Paper Project Office

Aviation White Paper

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

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To the Director

Re: Aviation Green Paper Comments – Bland Shire Council

Council wishes to thankyou for the opportunity to provide a submission on the Aviation Green.

Bland Shire Council is a NSW Local Government Authority that operates a small regional aerodrome with 2 strips, one being a sealed strip being 1700m in length and an unsealed strip being 900m in length.

While the West Wyalong Aerodrome is a small operation relative to other Regional Aerodromes it is still a critical component to the local and regional landscape.

While there are opportunities for Capital Improvements to be funded through grant opportunities the ongoing maintenance of the aerodrome is a major burden on Local Government is not considered, especially when it comes to the provision of this essential service to the wider community. These services include:

- The critical need for the regional airports in dealing with medical and emergency services.
    - NSW Rural Fire service operates out of local airstrips more frequently to assist in Bushfire operations.
    - Use by airports by State Emergency Services during disasters.
    - Air Ambulance and Royal Flying Doctor Service
    - Angel Flight
    - Fly in Fly out medical specialists
- Support for the regional economy,
    - Tyranny of distance, ie it is approximately 2 hours drive to the nearest airport to access Sydney. While the green paper discusses access to the Sydney Basin, there is an emphasis on the Western Sydney Airport, which will require further travel time to reach the Central Business Districts.
    - local agribusinesses such as crop spraying
    - Fly in Fly out operations ie Cowal Gold Mine

While there is recognition of the local benefit, the regional benefit and the usage of these facilities by other levels of Government including Emergency Services is not factored into any reporting and is borne by Local Government. Without access to regional aerodromes these emergency service activities would be greatly hampered. The financial burden on Council's to operate these facilities especially in maintaining compliance with the Civil Aviation Safety regulations is essential to have an operational aerodrome to support these essential operations. This involves maintenance, regular inspections, lighting, mowing of an extensive land area etc. This all comes at a cost to the Local Council at a cost to other limited services.

Bland Shire Council is requesting that further consideration in the final report be given to how this maintenance burden can be better shared amongst state agencies that utilise regional aerodromes to undertake essential services with recognition of the funding limitations on small regional Councils.

Yours Sincerely

Ray Graham

Director Technical Services