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Director, Aviation White Paper Project Office
Aviation White Paper
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional
Development, Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601

By email: aviationgreenpaper@infrastructure.gov.au

Dear Director

Response to the Aviation Green Paper Towards 2050

Essendon Fields Airport welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Commonwealth Government's *Aviation Green Paper: Towards 2050* (Green Paper), and to make a submission in relation to the various sectors outlined in the paper.

Essendon Fields Airport provides facilities and services for regional passenger transport, emergency services, business aircraft, aircraft charter operations including medevac, flight training, aircraft maintenance and fixed base operations resulting in more than 50,000 annual aircraft movements per annum. The wider precinct supports over 6,000 daily workers and contributes over \$1 billion in direct and flow-on supply chain benefits for the economy, equivalent to 0.2% of Victorian Gross State Product (**GSP**).

We agree that a safe, efficient, sustainable, productive and competitive aviation sector is critical to the economy and to the standard of living for all Australians. We also recognise the need to adapt and manage change as airports manage climate change and the emergence of new technologies.

Through the Green Paper, it is paramount that there is strong policy support and advocacy for the protection and continued growth of the General Aviation sector as we navigate the complexities arising from emerging technologies and sustainable airport operations.

We have detailed our recommendations in the annexure below.

We welcome the opportunity to continue to work with the Commonwealth in progressing the recommendations of the Green Paper to 2050 and beyond.

Yours sincerely
Essendon Airport Pty Ltd

Brendan Pihan
Chief Executive Officer

Annexure A – Response by Sector

Aviation Green Paper Section	Essendon Airport Pty Ltd (EAPL) Response on behalf of Essendon Fields Airport
<p>03 Airlines, airports and passengers-competition, consumer protection and disability access settings</p>	<p>Government funding for regional and intra-state connections should include airports located in city settings that facilitate regional and intra-state travel. Government funding is provided to regional airports that support the same customer base as secondary (metro) airports, but secondary airports are not afforded the same funding support simply because of their metropolitan location. This is an anomaly. Supporting secondary airports to carry more intra-city travel could increase competition in that sector of the market, increasing the volume of travel, supporting regional centre tourism growth and increasing capacity at major airports.</p> <p>Likewise, incentivising regional airlines to operate between regional centres and incorporate secondary city connections could also stimulate increased connectivity.</p> <p>Regional airlines that operate at Essendon Fields Airport have raised concerns regarding the supply chain of aircraft components. There is a need for strategic planning across the supply chain to ensure availability of aircraft parts and replacement options for smaller aircraft with less than 40 seats.</p>
<p>04 Regional and remote aviation services</p>	<p>We support policy that grows regional and remote aviation services, providing the opportunity for more aviation services to and from secondary airports.</p> <p>We believe emerging technologies may be best served at secondary airports rather than regional and remote locations because established support businesses – for instance, those providing maintenance, avionics and training services – are established in those locations. The successful implementation of emerging technology will be supported if it is led by aviation operators with a demonstrated history of mature and safe operating systems, with access to skilled workers and support services.</p> <p>Policy that ensures safe and responsible integration of emerging technology with existing General Aviation is essential.</p>
<p>05 Maximising aviation's contribution to net zero</p>	<p>Achieving net zero in Australia's aviation sector will require collaboration between all sectors of the aviation industry with a clear role for government in setting the policy direction and implementing measures that incentivise private sector investment and activity. Many of the more significant propositions to reduce carbon emissions such as Sustainable Aviation Fuel and electrical aircraft rely on further technology advancement as well as reductions in cost of alternate energy sources. Government will play a key role to build the momentum towards net zero.</p> <p>Given many General Aviation users rely on smaller aircraft, it is likely they will be the first adopters of new technology, particularly electric aircraft. Government funding and policy that supports airports to make the necessary electrical infrastructure upgrades will be required to facilitate charging infrastructure and if it is not provided it will create a barrier to electrical aircraft entering the market.</p> <p>To assist airports to transition to net zero we advocate for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commonwealth to provide funding support to secondary airports to facilitate, develop and support emerging aviation technologies and net zero

	<p>operations; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exemptions from Major Development Plan (MDP) processes and requirements or streamlining for projects that support emerging aviation technologies that have minimal impacts on the environment or community.
<p>06 Airport development planning processes and consultation mechanisms</p>	<p>We think the Green Paper is right to observe inconsistent application and knowledge of the National Airport Safeguarding Framework (NASF) by local planning authorities across the country. These are very concerning circumstances that require strong and swift action by government at all levels, and only governments and their agencies working together can solve this problem.</p> <p>EAPL supports the introduction of mandated national policy which is consistently applied across all levels of government to apply the NASF guidelines to all airport land use planning applications to ensure that all stakeholders including government, referral agencies and the development sector are able to make well informed decisions that protect airports and their operations and expedite planning decisions by providing clear, accurate information about airspace.</p> <p>Greater co-ordination of land-use, transport and infrastructure planning between all levels of government is required to resolve planning conflicts involving airports.</p> <p>Furthermore, the planning and approval process must be coordinated with all levels of government to work efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>6.1 Noise</p> <p>Properties located proximate to airports need to have planning controls which identify impacts of aircraft noise. Not all local government agencies have taken up implementation of Airport Environment Overlays (AEO) which are a mechanism to flag noise impacts to future purchasers and landowners.</p> <p>EAPL is currently faced with offsite noise impacts from the proposed Melbourne Airport third runway which will result in changes to Essendon Fields Airport’s noise contours. In this scenario, community consultation to the community in relation to noise impacts should be managed by the proponent of change (in this case, Melbourne Airport) to best inform and take ownership of changes proposed. Furthermore, comprehensive airspace planning should take place prior to Major Development Plans being determined so as to provide clarity to the the aviation and surrounding communities about the impacts of the proposed project.</p> <p>6.3 Land Use Planning on site at Airports</p> <p>Protection of Aviation Use</p> <p>Master Plans, via the Land Use Plan, provide a logical place to manage land use and ensure aviation land use and non-aviation land uses can safely and viably co-exist.</p> <p>The Department has powers via the Master Plan process to ensure Land Use Plans adequately zone land to ensure appropriate land is made available to meet the needs for forecast aviation uses.</p> <p>Off-site development impacts to airports need to be carefully managed via</p>

appropriate planning controls which are lacking within the State Planning Policy Framework. The Department must play a role in advising state and local governments to implement planning controls which provide a higher degree of protection to airport operations.

The current system fails to adequately protect against off-site impacts. Without consistent airspace protection mechanisms in place, developments will inevitably impact airports that can otherwise be avoided. The Department should ensure that the application of appropriate planning controls is mandatory.

Sensitive Uses

The Commonwealth should consider removing Airports Act prohibitions or restrictions on a range of sensitive uses that are aligned with Federal Government policy and where specific risks (such as acoustic amelioration) can be appropriately managed.

Uses such as affordable, key worker, social and disability housing (all for rent, not sale), and residential aged care are good examples of areas in which the government has set specific goals that could be well met by airport lessee companies in locations that are well serviced by infrastructure and amenity.

Greater recognition of Obstacle Limitation Surface in planning

Improved alignment between all levels of government is urgently required to manage the Obstacle Limitation Surface (**OLS**) and PANS-Ops penetrations, providing clear accountability and consequences for developers who breach those essential safety surfaces.

The OLS provides surfaces which airport operators are required to protect by monitoring and managing intrusions into airspace from the likes of vegetation growth, off-airport development and cranes. However, the OLS is largely unknown as a constraint to developers and the surrounding community and needs to be clearly available for those groups to better inform off-airport planning and decision making. OLS and PANS-Ops surfaces should be applied within state and local government planning frameworks so that property developers can consider the information as they conduct their own due diligence for their development.

To do this the OLS must be publicly accessible and easily interpreted to ensure airports' current and future operations are appropriately safeguarded. State based property websites such as Vic Plan could provide the appropriate platform to share this information.

Building on the Policy Framework, specific overlays with permit triggers and referral rights for airport operators must be implemented to accurately manage off airport land use / development impacts which will erode airport operations if not addressed now.

The lack of current controls fails to protect airport operators and aviators from inappropriate development. It is clear that both our powers as an airport operator and those of the regulatory agencies are limited to enforce controlled activity

	<p>application conditions or deal with a proponent who has not submitted a controlled activity application at all. Regulators must be provided with greater powers to issue infringements. We think that interfacing with state-based safe work agencies may be an effective way of leveraging bodies that are not only focused on workplace safety issues, but are well resourced and have the power and jurisdiction to impose sanctions on state-owned land for work practices that pose a risk to human life.</p> <p>Airport operators must be provided with the ability to charge proponents a fair fee for controlled activity assessments, not only to ensure airport operators are well resourced to deploy their responsibilities, but also to sharpen the focus of proponents to this important development constraint.</p> <p>MDP Threshold</p> <p>The monetary threshold is only one of several triggers for an MDP under the <i>Airports Act 1996</i> (Cth), including whether the development would be likely to have significant environmental or ecological impacts or a significant impact on the local or regional community.</p> <p>The monetary threshold that currently applies to MDP applications is outdated. The most appropriate trigger for an MDP is the Land Use Plan Framework which should clearly articulate a range of permit triggers.</p> <p>We consider that a monetary figure promotes under investment and under development in relation to airport development and fails to consider that each airport operates in varied economic environments which impact construction costs. However, if a monetary threshold is determined to be essential as a proxy for significant development, we submit that the threshold should be trebled; the current threshold of \$25m is a relatively small amount of money that constrains efficient economic development of airport sites.</p>
07 General Aviation	<p>Policy and funding support for navigation aids and other infrastructure upgrades at secondary and regional airports is crucial to ensuring continued safe and efficient aviation operations.</p>
08 Fit for purpose agencies and regulations	<p>The Australian Government has an important role to play in relation to supporting airport operators to safeguard airport operations and also to play an advisory role in terms of providing expert advice for environment, airspace management, safety and building approvals.</p> <p>For unscheduled international arrivals and departures, EAPL is classified as a non-designated airport for passenger processing, guided by National Passenger Processing Committee (NPPC) regulations. Current NPPC regulations for international flights via Essendon Fields Airport with 10 or more travellers, require the operator to submit an NPPC application a minimum of 10 business days (Monday to Friday) before the arrival or departure of the intended flight.</p> <p>Essendon Fields Airport can accommodate aircraft up to 50 tonnes which includes the Bombardier Global 7500 that may be configured to carry up to 19 passengers and 4 crew. Operators of this and similar aircraft types have expressed the application timeframes are prohibitive and result in flights that would otherwise use Essendon Fields being directed to Melbourne Airport. Essendon Fields Airport is one of Australia's largest private jet bases, and has made significant recent investment into new hangar facilities to enable larger jet aircraft to utilise the</p>

airport for repair, maintenance and overhaul activities.

The current NPPC approval timeframe and framework limits the ability of both the operator and the airport to be competitive in processing arrivals for these aircraft movements of 10 or more passengers. Changes to the airport designation or NPPC framework would increase the ability for operators to facilitate international aircraft movements and increase competition in the growing business aviation sector in Melbourne. Not making a change like this provides Melbourne Airport with a structural competitive advantage which will be detrimental to long term market growth of this important sector.

8.1 Role of Government and Agencies

The Australian Government has an important role to play in relation to supporting airport operators to safeguard airport operators and also to play an advisory role in terms of providing expert advice in relation to the environment, airspace management, safety and building approvals.

EAPL are supportive of Government establishing a clear structure which outline the roles and responsibilities of each agency together with clear contacts.

8.3 Airspace regulation and management

EAPL operates within complex airspace with a varied traffic mix in an urbanised setting. Technology including the mandated use of Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast (**ADS-B**) should be prioritized to provide safer aviation operations should be a priority.

EAPL supports safe airspace management through integration of new technology which can provide efficiencies and environmental benefits.

Modernising airspace management through acceleration of technology implementations, such as digital air traffic control promotes an increase in safety, efficiency and environmental sustainability and will create additional economic development opportunities at airport sites, including delivery of new hangars and aviation facilities bordering the airfield.

Future airspace policy must ensure that equitable access to airspace is maintained for users of secondary airports proximate to major airports.

Airport Building Controller

Significant and urgent changes are required to the Airport Building Controller function to improve the efficiency of on-airport development. We note that the Department has acknowledged there are ongoing constraints to the provision of Airport Building Control (**ABC**) services at federally leased airports across Australia which are resulting in significant project delays and substantial additional costs.

Our ability to deliver this infrastructure is being impacted by delays in the ABC's ability to process building applications, and this has been a recurring theme for the last two years. Such delays, materially impact project delivery timeframes at a time when material costs have significantly increased, and labour shortages persist.

	<p>Whilst we note the ABC understands these issues and has been professional in regularly engaging with us on the pipeline of work, the current status quo is not sustainable.</p> <p>EAPL strongly advocates for an alternative service model where airport operators may appoint an independent building surveyor, manage approvals independently and report to the Department. This system would be akin to the way in which the AEO functions, where independent consultants perform work that is reviewed by the AEO. It would also reflect the independent certification model that works successfully at a local government level. There would be no risk to government in adopting such a change.</p> <p>EAPL has made separate submissions to the Department in relation to the Airport Building Controller, the Airport Environment Officer and the proposed cost recovery models for each.</p> <p>Airport operators experience a significant workload as part of on and off airport building processes, which includes daily administration, preparation and submission of written correspondence to the ABC including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Activity Consent letters; • Permits to Commence Works; and • Building Activity Completion correspondence. <p>These services are currently provided by the airport operator at no charge. We advocate for a cost recovery charging model for ALCs to be introduced to assist in the prompt delivery of high quality services.</p>
<p>09 Emerging aviation technologies</p>	<p>The Green Paper notes that airspace is expected to become increasingly congested because of the significant uptake of emerging aviation technologies and Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) aircraft, such as electric Vertical Take-Off and Landing (eVTOL) aircraft and drones.</p> <p>EAPL supports the continued investigation of emerging aviation technology both in terms of new forms of eVTOL aircraft and new and emerging digital technology which can assist Airservices to deliver enhanced and safe traffic management.</p> <p>A significant body of work is required to work through airspace design to ensure that existing aviation uses can safely continue operations with eVTOLs particularly within the urban setting of metropolitan cities where there will be existing conflicts with airport operations.</p> <p>The need to set comprehensive policies and approaches for traditional aircraft, alongside drones and eVTOL aircraft, is pressing. A national airspace review should consider all aspects that impact airspace use, including noise, safety, boundaries between in-air aircraft and interactions between piloted and remotely piloted aircraft.</p> <p>Planning and adapting to changes required both on airports and in terms of the regulatory framework to facilitate new forms of aviation are critical to the success and emergence of this new sector.</p>

It is likely that Essendon Fields Airport's strategic location will be an attractor for eVTOLs, vertiports and drones however these uses must be able to operate safely and in harmony with established general aviation activities and more broadly the established urban environment.

We therefore support the position outlined in the Green Paper's comment that all levels of government will need to invest in laws and regulations to ensure that any new technology balances these concerns with any potential productivity gains achieved by their adoption.