



Thank you Chair and Senators.

Having recently been confirmed in the Chief Executive Officer role for Airservices Australia, it is an appropriate time to provide the committee with a brief opening statement outlining progress, current challenges and key success factors.

An immediate priority was to improve our service performance and the staffing levels of our air traffic controllers and aviation rescue fire fighters.

I am pleased to report that we have made significant progress, returning staff to pre-2019 numbers. Notwithstanding, there remain some locations with staff numbers below mature levels. We expect to have our air traffic control numbers back to surplus capacity by 30 June 2025.

We plan on endorsing a further 85 controllers this year to ensure we remain over our minimum numbers to provide workforce resilience.

We are also seeing improvements in the provision of our aviation rescue and firefighting services with availability running at 99.8% or better for most of 2024, following increased recruitment and the finalisation of a new enterprise agreement with the United Firefighters Union.

I am pleased to advise that our service performance has been steadily improving in response to staffing improvements and enhancements we have made across the business and our network.

Combined with a disciplined approach to roster management, pleasingly, there were no disruptions over the Christmas holiday peak period attributable to Airservices, despite the strongest growth in international flights in the past five years with delays attributed to Airservices at just 0.1% of total delays across the entire network.

We have seen improvements in industry on-time performance throughout the second half of 2024 when compared with the same period in 2023 and December recorded the lowest level of Ground Delay Program (GDP) applications since reporting began.

Following a period of such strong performance we were disappointed at the disruption to operations at Sydney Airport on 14 February, when poor weather around Sydney led to arrival rates being reduced from 40 per hour to 24 per hour. We reduced arrival rates

further by 4 movements per hour for just over two and half hours during the afternoon, after a staff member called in sick and we were not able to replace them immediately.

During this period, whilst largely weather related, a number of flight cancellations occurred, which was widely reported in the media. Our efforts to build resilience into our rosters have seen significant improvement in our service reliability however this demonstrates we still have more work to do.

During 2024, Airservices' Aviation Rescue Fire Fighting crews were involved in emergency responses operations that saved 41 lives, among the 4460 callouts they received over the course of the year.

The significantly improved service levels have been a collaborative effort with our industry partners and I would like to acknowledge the hard work from across the sector that contributed to this strong service performance result.

While we remain focused on continuing to strengthen our service delivery, we are also building resilience through modernising our business through critical transformation investments like OneSKY and our Aviation Rescue Fire Fighting NexGen program which will deliver a once in a generation change supporting industry growth, efficiencies and enhanced safety outcomes.

The OneSKY Program remains the cornerstone of our commitment to delivering safe, world-class air traffic management services and we are working closely with the Department of Defence to deliver a harmonised Civil Military Air Traffic Management System for the first time in Australia.

When OneSKY commences in 2027, it will be the most advanced air traffic management system (ATM) in the world and the first new ATM system in Australia since the 1990s. This program is well advanced with practical completion of new state-of-the-art, high security buildings in Melbourne and Brisbane. The core underlying CMATS technology successfully completed integration testing with live air traffic and surveillance data over the Christmas period. Ongoing software and assurance testing continues. Training planning and operational deployment planning has commenced.

OneSKY is expected to deliver \$2.7 billion of economic benefits over 20 years, including flexibility in managing joint civil/military airspace, increased capacity, fuel savings, reduced carbon emissions and optimised operations.

Our ARFF NexGen program is a \$1.6 billion investment over 10 years which will deliver a generational change in facilities and capabilities including new fire stations, a fleet of new high capability fire vehicles, training hubs including specialist training grounds, maintenance hubs and facilities, and supporting technology. A comprehensive strategy has been developed and stage 1, focused on the next three years has commenced with consultation occurring with our workforce and union representatives.

The benefits of this investment will include faster response times, enhanced capability to meet the growing demands of our industry, increased resilience, improved productivity, higher workforce engagement and fewer injuries.

We are also developing a Flight Information Management System, or FIMS, which will support the safe and efficient integration of emerging airspace users, including drone operators, into Australia's increasingly busy airspace.

This is on track to be operational by the end of this year and will be the backbone of a digital air traffic management system. It will enable Airservices to seamlessly authorise uncrewed flights and share flight information, facilitating easier access to Australia's airspace, and deliver new capabilities that help unlock the market potential of emerging airspace users.

We take seriously our obligation to balance industry growth with increasing community expectations on the social impact of aircraft operations, and this is a shared responsibility between Airservices, airports and aircraft operators. Our Community Engagement Standard provides a consistent framework to engage with communities as well as industry stakeholders to ensure a holistic approach. We successfully deployed Simultaneous Opposite Direction Parallel Runway Operations (SODPROPS) in November 2024 in Brisbane delivering community benefits.

We clearly have a very full agenda and will be working diligently to deliver for our customers, the Government and the travelling public every day.

On Friday 21 February 2025 and over the weekend, the Airservices team played a key role in response to Chinese warship live weapons drills between Australia and New Zealand. Airservices engaged with airlines, Defence, the Civil Aviation Authority and neighbouring air navigation service providers including holding multiple teleconferences with industry to ensure the safety of aircraft operations over international waters between Australia and New Zealand and implementing operating protocols for the industry. Airservices' air traffic controllers are issuing alerts to flights in the area where needed. I would like to acknowledge the professionalism and team work that has been displayed.

It is a tremendous honour to lead this organisation that plays such a vital part in Australia's aviation ecosystem, and I am deeply committed to ensuring Airservices not only continues to deliver a world-class service for its customers but also fulfils the expectations of government and the community.

Thank you for your time and we are happy to take your questions.