

Rural And Regional Affairs And Transport

Inquiry into the current state of Australia's general aviation industry,
with particular reference to aviation in rural, regional and remote Australia

ANSWER TO WRITTEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

IQ21-000159

Division/Agency: DIV - International Aviation Technology and Services

Topic: CASA – Consultation process documentation

Proof Hansard Page: Written (15 December 2021)

Senator Susan McDonald asked:

Ms Spence: As I said, we're actually, for the first [inaudible] documenting what [inaudible] in order to support GA through a general aviation work plan where we're trialling across the organisation to make sure that all things that industry have been raising with us [inaudible]. I take your point about having taken some time, but I'd also make the point that [inaudible] working through what has been an incredibly significant reform of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations, which has just come in on 2 December. We've [inaudible] breathing space to actually focus on what it is we need to do to support GA, because I totally agree with you [inaudible] an effective GA community then that's got flow-on effects to the rest of the aviation ecosystem. So all I can say is: I've received no resistance from my team in terms of how we take this forward. In fact, people have been very focused on the ideas and supporting doing some of the things that have been in the background but have not been able to be progressed [inaudible] getting the new flight ops regulations in place.

That's all I can say. I'm committed to it. My chair is committed to it. Among my executive team, there is also a commitment to address these issues that just take [inaudible] that have been of concern for [inaudible] for a long time. We're committed to actually doing something about it. We've got active steps in place to take these forward. You'll see [inaudible] with consultation processes in the areas that I have just mentioned early in the new year.

CHAIR: Would I be able to get you to table some of that for the committee to inform its recommendations from the evidence that we've heard over the course of this committee? We'll see if we can match some of the reform agenda that you're putting in place so that we can hopefully acknowledge it or provide some additional recommendations about that.

I want to turn to Angel Flight specifically. One of the things that I get feedback about across regional Australia is the approach that CASA has had to small operators: 'Once you get into their gun sights they are coming for you; they don't care what cost it is. There is never a middle ground. I've spoken to you before about a case that's coming up shortly. That gentleman has now accrued in excess of \$300,000 worth of legal fees and has been driven out of the profession, and you're about to start another round of legal action. I think Angel Flight is another case in point. You've gone through a Supreme Court action in which, I note, CASA's instrument was upheld, but costs were awarded to Angel Flight on that. Is that a good outcome for an organisation that raises money to bring sick people into town?

Ms Spence: To start off with: it was Angel Flight taking us to court, not us taking Angel Flight to court. As a Commonwealth agency, we do have to be a model litigant. We cannot not follow up charges, as I understand it. We certainly want to work with Angel Flight. With respect to a lot of the issues that were raised today, we're keen to get back to you on notice with some of the other side of the story. We do feel that some of the evidence that's been provided doesn't accurately reflect all of the [inaudible] that we've had with Angel Flight historically, including most recently.

CHAIR: It would be good if you could take that on notice and respond to the committee.

Unfortunately, though, we keep treading over this ground. We had an inquiry specifically into the instrument two years ago. We've come back through different estimates processes, but CASA has failed, after two years, to provide to this Senate committee the safety case for having to introduce this instrument. I just wonder—if you're treating Angel Flight in the same way that you treat the Senate

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committee, I'm not surprised that they feel that they have no choice but to take you to court in order to progress their case.

Answer:

With respect to the request to table the list of initiatives for general aviation, on 9 December 2021 CASA provided the Committee Secretariat with the opening statement to the hearing of the Director of Aviation Safety and Chief Executive Officer, Ms Pip Spence PSM which included the list of initiatives.

Further information about CASA's initiatives for general aviation is also included in CASA's second supplementary submission to the Inquiry submitted on 6 January 2022.

With respect to the request to come back to the Committee with the other side of the story on the relationship between CASA and Angel Flight Australia, the second supplementary submission referenced above provides that detail.