



6 March 2017

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Re. Airports Amendment Bill 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the *Airports Amendment Bill 2016* introduced to the House of Representatives in December 2016. We support the proposal to:

- Increase the major development plan trigger to \$35 million with ongoing indexation;
- Increase the timeframe for a new master plan to every eight years for some airports including Canberra Airport; and
- Introduce the requirement for a new Australian Noise Exposure Forecast in a new master plan, subject to exceptional circumstances.

Our support for these legislative amendments is founded on the widely accepted understanding that the 19 years of airport privatisation in Australia has been a success. During this time billions of dollars of non-taxpayer dollars has been invested in privately managed national airports. Passenger numbers have increased rapidly to over 150 million passengers using Australian airports in 2015/16. The BITRE recognises Australian airports as:

“...amongst the most important job growth hubs in Australian cities. Employment at airports has been growing as passenger numbers increase and as airports expand their scale of operations and create retail and office-based developments on-site.”¹

The Australian airport privatisation model is fundamental to the planning, development and management framework within which Badgerys Creek airport will be formed. Announcing its plans to move forward with Badgerys Creek, the Australian Government claimed it will generate around 35,000 jobs by 2035 and directly contribute almost \$24 billion in GDP by 2060.

¹ BITRE [2013] *Employment Generation and Airports*

The challenge is to inch the legislative framework forward by cutting regulatory red tape and burden and in so doing keep pace with the push for national productivity gains. The planning and development framework for leased federal airports provides for extensive consultative and assessment processes, far exceeding those of off-airport jurisdictions.

In July 2014 the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development released the paper, *Efficiency Proposals: Master Plan and Major Development Plan*, and then again in May 2015 released *Better Regulation Proposals, Airports Act 1996 Regulatory Streamline Package*. Both papers posed amendment to the *Airports Act 1996* in line with the Government's push to reduce regulatory red tape, the result of which is the Bill currently before Parliament.

We support the Bill because it is the result of rigorous public comment, as well as Government and industry working to resolve a planning and development regime that weighs legislative costs with benefits. We are encouraged by the Government's approach to adjust the planning framework taking account of differences in large and medium sized airports.

I commend the Bill to the Committee, and wish you well in your consideration of these important amendments to the *Airports Act 1996*.

Yours sincerely

Noel McCann
Director, Planning & Government Relations