



2 November 2010

Ms Jeanette Radcliffe  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Radcliffe

### **Airports Amendment Bill 2010**

The interaction between airports and the communities around them is complex and varied. Airports contribute significantly to the economic wellbeing of their local communities and, in the case of large airports, are vital to the nation's broader economic interests. Airports also create issues for communities such as aircraft noise and traffic congestion that must be carefully managed. The National Aviation Policy White Paper *Flight Path to the Future* (the Aviation White Paper) identified the need for closer alignment between local, State and Federal planning to ensure that the balance between local community concerns and aviation activities can be appropriately maintained.

Major airports are valuable pieces of aviation infrastructure that are not easy or economically viable to replicate. For this reason Qantas welcomes the proposed changes in the *Airports Amendment Bill 2010* (the Draft Bill) that strengthen the need for close coordination of on-airport and off-airport planning. As the principal planning document for Federal Leased Airports is the Master Plan, Qantas sees great benefit in the amendments included in the Draft Bill that would require airports to provide greater detail about the immediate five-year planning horizons.

Specifically, Qantas welcomes the introduction of a ground transport plan into the Master Plan, as well as the consolidation of the Environmental Plan into the Master Plan. Coordinated transport on-airport and off-airport and environmental concerns are of great importance. The Master Plan process will benefit from these inclusions.

Qantas is also encouraged by the focus in the Draft Bill on preventing development that is incompatible with aviation needs or community requirements. These important changes will serve as a strong reminder that airports are principally aviation facilities and that non-aeronautical developments should be consistent with broader aviation and community planning requirements.



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The Draft Bill adds to the triggers for developments that require Major Development Plans. Section 89(1)(na) of the Draft Bill proposes to create a new Major Development Plan trigger for developments on airport that are 'likely to have a significant impact on the local or regional community'. Qantas believes that greater benefit would be derived from amending this subsection to clarify what is meant by the term 'significant impact' as currently that term is broad and open to interpretation and, potentially, abuse. Major Development Plans are very costly and time consuming processes and it is imperative that there is clarity around whether or not such a Plan is required. This provision, as currently drafted, will create some doubt as to which projects, which do not meet the other Major Development Plan triggers, may be captured by section 89(1)(na).

While it is noted that administrative guidelines will be provided to assist in addressing this issue, Qantas requests that industry stakeholders be consulted in the development of these guidelines. In Qantas' view, greater clarity on the identification of projects that may have a 'significant impact' on the community is required to ensure that core aeronautical developments that do not affect traffic flows or flight paths, or that create additional noise in surrounding communities, such as the installation of aerobridges in a terminal, would not come within the terms of this section.

One area that Qantas is remains concerned about is the need to ensure that off-airport developments are similarly sensitive to the needs of airports and aviation requirements. The Aviation White Paper identified the need for closer coordination of planning processes both on and off airports. It is clear that the Federal Government is endeavouring in the Draft Bill to support this more coordinated approach. Local Councils and State Governments also play a critical role in this process. In light of this move towards greater coordination, Qantas was very disappointed to see the recent approval by the NSW Government of a residential housing development at Kurnell that will be noise affected by existing flight paths to and from Sydney Airport.

All levels of government must foster this collaborative planning approach if better community and aviation outcomes are to be achieved going forward.

Yours sincerely

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