

29 July 2010

Committee Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2601

By Email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Inquiry into Airports Amendment Bill 2010

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comment on the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee inquiry into Airports Amendment Bill 2010.

Queensland Airports Limited (QAL) operates Gold Coast, Townsville and Mount Isa Airports. The comments we put forward are on behalf of these three airports.

QAL is a member of the Australian Airports Association (AAA) and support their written submission to the inquiry.

We would like to take this opportunity to reinforce our position relating to “incompatible developments” as outlined in the Airports Amendment Bill. Unfortunately there were retrospective changes to the definition of what constitutes an incompatible development after the release of the Aviation White Paper. There was no consultation with airport operators in relation to the reference changes made by the Government.

The Aviation White Paper released on 16 December 2009 refers to incompatible developments as being *“activities that are likely to be incompatible with the long-term operation of an airport as an airport. These include long-term residential development, residential aged or community care facilities, nursing homes, hospitals and schools.”*

Unfortunately, subsequent information received from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government after the release of the Aviation White Paper now defines “incompatible developments” as *“a primary, secondary, tertiary or other types of educational institution”*. Furthermore, information from the Department states *“a redevelopment of any of the above facilities, that increases the capacity of the facility”* is also deemed “incompatible”. There was no industry consultation on these changes.

When the *Airports Amendment Bill 2010* was introduced to the House of Representatives on 24 June 2010, the second reading speech given by the Hon. Anthony Albanese MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, stated: *“There are a range of activities that are likely to be incompatible with the long-term operation of an airport as an airport. These activities include long-term residential developments, residential aged or community care facilities, nursing homes, hospitals and schools. These incompatible developments will be prima facie prohibited unless the airport is able to demonstrate to the Minister that there are exceptional circumstances for taking the development to the next stage.”*

The inclusion of “tertiary education facility” into the list of developments termed incompatible causes significant concern to Gold Coast Airport in particular, where Southern Cross University (SCU) has already established its operation. The “Building A” was completed and officially opened in early 2010 by then Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard MP. Approval was received in October 2009 for the commencement of “Building B”. Both developments were approved following extensive community and industry consultation and the submission of MDPs to the Minister.

At the official opening of SCU’s Gold Coast Airport campus, then Deputy Prime Minister Gillard reinforced the Government’s commitment to this development during her speech: *“I’m very pleased that as a Federal Government we were able to support this development with \$7.7 million of investment”... “This building has already generated jobs for the local community”... “It will provide employment for local individuals”... “it will mean that academics are here generating new knowledge which can be used in the local community”... “The presence of a university campus is good for economic development”... “It’s good for social development in a community.”*

The Federal Government has clearly highlighted their financial contribution to the SCU development at Gold Coast Airport in addition to approving the MDPs presented.

The most recent MDP approved for “Building B” was part of the ongoing development plan of SCU. Gold Coast Airport received extensive community support, as well as support from all levels of government (local, state and federal) and the local business community. The Federal Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government also positively acknowledged Gold Coast Airport’s extensive community consultation in regard to this development. At the time of approval, Gold Coast Airport acknowledged the Minister’s desire that SCU submit future plans on a campus-wide basis and SCU is developing a site master plan, an approach to generate long term planning certainty.

It should be noted that the development area of SCU is also geographically located some distance from the aviation precinct, and in fact is much further away from the runway than other aviation education facilities on the airport. It is also located further away than many single and multi-unit residential developments adjacent to the airport complex.

The completed and approved MDPs for the SCU buildings examined in detail the issues of noise and safety relative to the airfield operations and concluded that the University location was acceptable land use based on current standards. Based on these approved MDPs, the term “incompatible” with airport operations, in the context of the Southern Cross University campus at Gold Coast Airport, is not accurate.

If you require any further information please don't hesitate to contact me on (07) 5589 1154 or via email – dchant@qldairports.com.au.

Yours sincerely



Dennis Chant
Managing Director