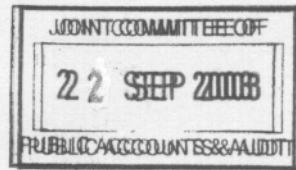




The Hon Michael Wright BEd MP

- MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT
- MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
- MINISTER FOR RECREATION, SPORT & RACING

REFERENCE:
DTRN14243/2002CS



Roma Mitchell House
136 North Terrace
ADELAIDE SA 5000

DX: 56507 North Terrace

PO Box 8245
Station Arcade Post Shop
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Telephone: (08) 8303 0940
International: +61 8 8303 0940
Facsimile: (08) 8303 0949

minister.wright@saugov.sa.gov.au

Mr James Catchpole
The Secretary
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear *Mr. Catchpole*,

SUBMISSION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA ON THE REVIEW OF AVIATION SECURITY IN AUSTRALIA

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment to your Committee's review of Aviation Security in Australia.

This letter represents the views of the South Australian (SA) Government on matters relating to Aviation Security in Australia. The letter does not comment on all the matters covered by the terms of reference but rather focuses on issues of concern to the SA Government.

These comments apply in the context of South Australia and South Australian airports.

While the Government supports the improvement of security measures at regional airports that are cost effective and can be achieved within the resources of the aerodrome operator, it is very concerned that, in the current climate of active terrorism, improved security arrangements to counter that threat are likely to be beyond the scope of a number of regional airport owners/operators. The Government is concerned that the Commonwealth may decide to regulate a regional airport in SA and require expensive security measures to be implemented that are beyond the ability of the aerodrome operator and the community to fund.

The key points the SA Government wishes to make are that:

- The regulation of aviation security in Australia is now and should remain a Commonwealth responsibility;
- Security regulation and the associated specification of security requirements at **all** regional airports are part of this responsibility;

- Security requirements should be based on an ongoing assessment of the threat and the risk. This also should remain a Commonwealth responsibility; and
- If the level of threat and risk requires implementation of security measures under Commonwealth regulation at additional regional airports, the Commonwealth should fund the measures where they would have a detrimental impact on the continuation of air services to a region or community.

Like aviation safety, aviation security must have a clear, single point of accountability to ensure consistent and effective security outcomes. Fragmenting that accountability will lead to inefficient, unworkable security measures and a lessening of the overall protection afforded by such measures. Accountability for aviation security must remain a Commonwealth responsibility, under a framework of Commonwealth legislation and regulation. The existing *Air Navigation Act 1920* (and legislation currently proposed to replace the act - *Aviation Transport Security Bill*) should continue to provide the legislative framework for aviation security. That legislation should cover the security requirements throughout the aviation sector in Australia including security at all airports. The Commonwealth must remain responsible for risk and threat assessment at all levels of airports including regional airports, and the mandating of security requirements as necessary according to identified risk.

The State's role should remain as a contributor to national security policy through forums such as the National Counter Terrorism Committee (NCTC) and the National Transport Security Committee (NTSC). The responsibility for responding to a security threat at a regional airport is an operational matter that should be dealt with through normal liaison between the State and Commonwealth authorities.

ASIO as the national security intelligence body is the authority for assessing threat to security. States and Territories assist ASIO in that regard by securing intelligence laterally with other police agencies and relevant Commonwealth agencies. The responsibility for risk and threat assessment of all airports should remain with the Commonwealth together with the mandating of necessary security measures.

In the event that the level of threat requires the implementation of security measures at additional regional airports, the measures should be federally funded. I understand that DoTaRS has stated that its assessment presently is that categorisation of additional regional airports is not necessary.

The regional airline industry is in a fragile state due to increasing costs and declining traffic, due in part to the collapse of Ansett and Kendell as well as the recent terrorist events. The SA submission to the *House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services, Inquiry into Commercial Regional Aviation Services in Australia and Transport Links to Major Populated Islands* documents the significant reduction in regional airline services over recent years in SA and the failure of many regional airline operators. In 1983 there were 12 regional airlines servicing 28 communities. Currently there are 4 airlines serving 8 regional communities in SA. All these airlines are facing significant cost pressures and declining revenue streams due to declining patronage. Evidence provided at public hearings to this inquiry by Whyalla and Mount Gambier airports attests to the fact that many regional airports receiving scheduled air services are unable to fully fund the operation and maintenance of their airport from the available revenue streams. To impose the cost of additional expensive security requirements at airports such as these is likely to have serious and unacceptable impacts. Many of these communities depend on their air services for access to health and other services not to

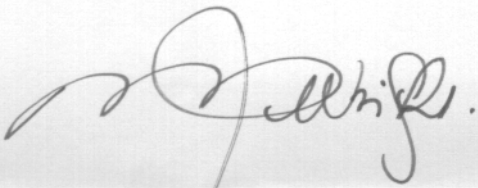
mention access for business and tourism. Increasing the airfare is not an option as evidence to the Commercial regional air services inquiry suggests that even small increases in price can reduce the demand and turn a viable air route into a loss and cause closure of the route. The loss of existing air routes has significant social equity implications and, therefore, would seem to be in conflict with the federal government's commitment to regional Australia.

Of the 8 intrastate regional air routes in SA, Coober Pedy (which depends on tourism traffic) is considered the most fragile. The State is working, in partnership with the airline and the local council to try to stabilise the Adelaide to Coober Pedy route. Contributions by the SA Government, local council and the airline are aimed at reducing the airfare and promoting the route to ensure the long term sustainability of the air service.

No regional airports in SA are required to implement security measures under Commonwealth regulations at this time. There has been no reason to implement security measures other than normal security measures designed to deter criminal activity, such as locking buildings and aircraft. If it becomes necessary to declare a regional airport in SA as subject to Commonwealth security regulations, then it is likely this would be done in response to a terrorist threat. Such a threat poses risks not only to the passengers and the aircraft, but also to the public as demonstrated by September 11 when the aircraft were used as weapons to inflict death, injury and damage on the wider public population. Hence any measures designed to prevent that occurring, protect the general public as well as the aircraft passengers. As the national government in a federal system, and as the regulator in this area, it is important that the Commonwealth government make resources available to assist the maintenance of appropriate standards in regional Australia where these are beyond the resources of regional air services or local government.

I trust the Committee will consider and take account of the above arguments when making recommendations of the matter of aviation security in Australia.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Wright MP
MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT

22/9/2003