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Mr Ian Dundas  
Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Transport & Regional Services  
Parliament House  
**CANBERRA ACT 2600**

Dear Sir

**Re: House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport & Regional Services Inquiry into Commercial Regional Aviation Services.**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport & Regional Services Inquiry into Commercial Regional Aviation Services.

The Northern Areas Council is located in the Mid North of South Australia about 200km north of Adelaide and east of Port Pirie. The Council's district comprises the larger centres of Jamestown, Gladstone and Laura and a number of smaller communities. The regional centre of Jamestown is located on the Port Pirie to Broken Hill corridor and is close to the Barrier Highway linking Adelaide with Broken Hill.

The Jamestown airstrip (which has an "all weather" classification) is the only airstrip east of the Flinders Ranges (up to Broken Hill) between Gawler and Hawker suitable for RFDS access and night landing. The RFDS can make up to 50 emergency landings at Jamestown in a year for evacuations covering a 'catchment' area of about 100kms.

Council's principal concern is in relation to the issue of regional airstrip (and/or regional airport) upgrades and the onus continuously being put back onto local government to fund such programs.

In raising this matter with your Inquiry we are mindful that until many regional airstrips (including Jamestown) can be upgraded, key regional centres are effectively 'locked out' of negotiating for improved air services and other economic development opportunities in the aviation industry.

We note with some irony that the Federal Government (in addition to this Inquiry) is concurrently running Inquiries into building stronger regional business environments and cost shifting in local government. Perhaps there is an opportunity to bring the findings of all three Inquiries together to determine how regional centres can participate in economic development without the bulk of fiscal onus being put back onto local government.

We were hopeful that the issue of regional airport development in South Australia was going to be addressed by the previous (Liberal) Government which initiated their own review of (SA) regional airports.

This Council participated in a workshop process during 2000 which was managed by consultants (Hudson Howells) appointed by the South Australian Department of Transport.

Hudson Howells' brief was to review all South Australian regional airports and take submissions from local government and other stakeholders leading to the compilation of a report which would form the basis of an upgrade program. Hudson Howells made it clear at the time that the State Government had no immediate funding available for a regional airports upgrade program but the report would be used to prioritise certain works over a given time span.

We understood that the consultants presented their report to the State Government by about October 2000 and there was an expectation that an announcement of initial funding would be contained in the following May budget. We were disappointed to subsequently learn that there was no allocation for regional airport upgrades.

In our presentation to the consultants this Council stressed the need for an urgent upgrade of the Jamestown airstrip through the sealing of the runway. The Jamestown airport has important economic, health and tourism implications for the town and region which can be enhanced through sealing. Those implications are expanded in the following tables:

- Economic Development Needs & Opportunities:
  - This season has seen an increase in Ag-plane usage including aerial spraying of locusts. We see this trend continuing,
  - An upgraded airstrip would result in Jamestown being the preferred pick-up point for Ross Air's Epic Energy crew. This could lead to employment opportunities for locals,
  - An upgraded runway, better facilities and more airstrip utilisation has the potential to attract specialist LAME (Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineer),
  - There is potential for pilot training (with flight costs of \$90/hour compared with Parafield at \$135/hour) to be undertaken at Jamestown. Already Jamestown is utilised by trainees from Parafield practising approach movements. Up to 20 people would be likely to undertake pilot training per year,
  - Increased use associated with adjoining (monthly) sale yards,
  
- Tourism Development Needs & Opportunities:
  - More concentrated marketing of the Clare Valley & Mid North region and the Flinders & Outback region is expected to heighten visitor interest in the area resulting in greater demand for 'point-of-interest' landing strips,
  - Expansion of the 5<sup>th</sup> (and subsequent) Jamestown Air Show(s). Negotiations are being held for a fly-in of *Spitfire*, *Mustang*, *Avenger*, *Yak3* & *Sea Fury* fighter aircraft and the *Southern Cross* replica. The major stumbling block is that owners of vintage aircraft want surety of facilities (for example a *Mustang* propeller costs \$50,000 to replace),
  - The next air show will also feature home built aircraft,
  - Upgrading of airstrip will allow Jamestown Flying Club to bid for the National Aerobatics Titles which will attract up to 40 competitors for a week's events. That could result in an input of \$10Ks to the local economy,
  - Development of tourism linked in with the restoration of Sir Hubert Wilkins home at Mt Bryan,
  
- Social/Community Development Needs & Opportunities:
  - Combined with Jamestown's medical resources the airstrip would become the focal medi-vac point for the region,

- Jamestown's present surgeon is a member of Federal Government Committees and is a frequent visitor to Canberra,
- We want to facilitate a secure landing point for Federal and State Members of Parliament visiting the region,
- Private Sector Needs & Opportunities:
  - (Associated) industry development (eg building of home-kit planes),
  - Potential to generate income through cost effective hanger rentals. Jamestown does not have landing fees,
  - Projected usage is estimated at 150 movements/week in three years,
  - Increase “stop-over” point for cross-country fliers (eg recent Mobil Air Race which saw 30 planes touch down at Jamestown),

The issue we want to stress to your Inquiry is that until many regional airstrips are upgraded, a host of key regional centres will continue to be effectively ‘locked out’ of negotiating for improved air services.

It would be the wish of this Council to be able to seek more frequent charter flights into Jamestown, leading to a commercial air service for the region. We are concerned that the region has no effective air link with the major centres and this can be a contributing factor in stifling regional development.

Whilst not explicitly designated as a separate Term of Reference to your Inquiry we believe that the upgrading of regional airports must be fundamental to improving regional air services.

We trust that the points made in our submission will be considered by your Inquiry and we look forward to the findings that come out of it.

Yours faithfully

Keith Hope  
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Development Manager**  
File: 90/6/2 & 210/2/4  
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