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Bathurst City Council

Mr I Dundas
Committee Secretary
House Of Representatives
Standing Committee on Transport
and Regional Services
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

27 August 2002

Secretary: *J. L. Russell*

RECEIVED

30 AUG 2002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORT AND
REGIONAL SERVICES

Dear Mr Dundas

Reference is made to your letter dated 8 July 2002, regarding the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services' inquiry into commercial regional aviation services in Australia and alternative transport links to major populated islands. Please be advised as follows.

Introduction

Bathurst City Council owns and operates a licensed airport with sealed runway/taxiways and passenger terminal. Servicing 18,500 passengers and 8,300 aircraft movements, the airport could be described as medium/small and operating as marginally viable. Prior to the collapse of the Ansett Group, Bathurst had experienced annual growth of 1% in both passengers and aircraft landings.

Bathurst, like any major regional centre, considers an airport as vitally important and fundamental to transport infrastructure, maintenance of industry and the City's economic future.

Regional Passenger Services

The most important and often forgotten part of aviation infrastructure is the airport. In regional New South Wales, the responsibility of owning and maintaining an airport falls to the local community and their Council.

The cost and community will for supporting such infrastructure, \$5.5million (Bathurst), requires a justifiable return and level of service to the community. A major part of this are passenger services, which provides the necessary income and community profile, an importance recently recognised by Bathurst City Council with its \$0.5 million passenger terminal upgrade.

Bathurst – All You Ever Wanted

Reference: WRS:CB: 20.00041 02/10292

Enquiries: Mr Wayne Sartori 02 6333 6226

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With this nexus, airport and passenger services provide a viable basis from which Councils are able to maintain their airports and from which numerous other benefits flow.

These include:

- Attracting and sustaining decentralised business development, for example access to head office, national and international markets.
- Access to specialist services e.g. medical, legal.
- A variety of emergency service use including air ambulance, flying doctor and combat agencies such as Rural Fire Service and Police. The airport and associated navigational aid offers landing of last resort for aircraft unable to negotiate weather and mountain conditions.
- Industry use pilot training, aircraft maintenance engineering, charter and courier services.
- Military use.

Regional Air-routes and Aircraft Types

Aircraft type would appear to be an important issue which drives the viability, or otherwise, of regional passenger services. The use of 15 seat turbo-prop aircraft supported a network of airports of 10,000 to 15,000 passengers. Age and operational costs has seen a shift to turbo prop, 35 seat aircraft and the subsequent shift network towards 50,000 passengers.

If this trend continues, regional New South Wales will be serviced by only four airports west of the divide.

Bathurst City Council believes that triangulation of ports using 15 and 35 seat aircraft provides the best coverage and longer-term viability of aviation passenger services. While drive/fly hubs have some merit, there are significant limitations as overall travel times quickly reduce the benefits, or reason, for flying.

Fly/fly hubs would appear to have no merit, as Sydney is already the natural hub other ports would effectively be secondary hubs. Transfer times and ticket costs could only be justified over very long distances, as is the case for Broken Hill.

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General

Bathurst City Council believes unless Government takes a leadership role, the current 'hands-off' marketplace policy will lead to the selective aviation coverage of regional areas, resulting in loss of services, industrial development, growth and further emphasising overall reliance on road transport.

Yours faithfully



A I Macintosh
MAYOR OF BATHURST

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