

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates 2022 - 2023

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Committee Question Number: 194

Departmental Question Number: SQ22-000774

Division/Agency Name: Agency - Airservices Australia

Hansard Reference: Spoken, Page No. 37 (25 November 2022)

Topic: AIRSERVICES - data on impact of cloud cover for regional airports

Senator Matthew Canavan asked:

Senator CANAVAN: I don't know if you just heard, but I was asking questions about landing at regional airports and impacts of cloud cover. Twice at Mount Isa landing has been limited because of 1,900 foot cloud cover, so quite high. Do you collect data on how often this happens across regional airports?

Mr Harfield: The data we would collect is where we are providing a control tower service at some of our regional ports. We would definitely have that data. At regional ports where there isn't an air traffic control service, there would only be a pilot report that they hadn't been able to arrive.

Senator CANAVAN: Could you take on notice if you have any reporting data on that?

Mr Harfield: Yes

Answer:

Airservices Australia collects data capturing the level of cloud cover at regional airports but does not collect data on whether flights are unable to land. Weather data is issued at 30 minute intervals via the Bureau of Meteorology's routine report of meteorological conditions at an aerodrome (METAR).

Table 1 indicates the METAR reported cloud base as below 1900ft at Mount Isa between 2 per cent and 5.9 per cent of the time over the period 1 January 2018 to 14 November 2022. This is below the national level when compared with all regional aerodromes as shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Number of METARs with cloud below 1900ft at Mount Isa, period 1 January 2018 - 14 November 2022

| Year | Reports of cloud below 1900ft (Mount Isa) | Total reports (all regional airports) | Percentage of reports with cloud below 1900ft |
|-------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| 2018 | 467 | 18,118 | 2.6% |
| 2019 | 915 | 16,179 | 5.7% |
| 2020 | 512 | 17,461 | 2.9% |
| 2021 | 356 | 18,194 | 2.0% |
| 2022* | 924 | 15,723 | 5.9% |

*to 14 November 2022

Table 2: Number of METARs with cloud below 1900ft across all regional airports (excluding capital city airports) for the period 1 January 2018- 14 November 2022 (201 airports)

| Year | Reports of cloud below 1900ft(Mount Isa) | Total reports (all regional airports excluding capital city airports) | Percentage of reports with cloud below 1900ft |
|-------|--|---|---|
| 2018 | 356,643 | 4,943,405 | 7.2% |
| 2019 | 318,696 | 4,397,680 | 7.2% |
| 2020 | 440,302 | 4,830,438 | 9.1% |
| 2021 | 498,804 | 5,160,297 | 9.7% |
| 2022* | 499,038 | 4,445,103 | 11.2% |

*to 14 November 2022

Airservices deployed Approaches with vertical guidance (APV) using barometric vertical navigation systems (Baro-VNAV) at Mount Isa from 25 March 2021. This has improved the operating minima at Mount Isa for capable aircraft. The Baro-VNAV APV decision altitudes are 1,590 ft above mean sea level on approach to runway 34, and 1,740 ft above mean sea level on the APV approach to runway 16.