

SUBMISSION TO:

**The Secretary,
Standing Committee on Transport and Regional
Services,
Parliament House,
Canberra, ACT, 2600**

THE ADEQUACY OF COMMERCIAL AIR SERVICES IN REGIONAL AND RURAL AUSTRALIA

**This submission is in respect of a commercial air service between
Gippsland, Victoria, and Sydney, NSW, via Albury, NSW.**

There are two major factors underlying the need for an air transport link between Gippsland and Sydney, via Albury:

- 1. The concentration of industry in the LaTrobe Valley**
- 2. The relative isolation of people in East Gippsland, from Sale to the NSW border, with accompanying lack of access to air services.**

LATROBE VALLEY

The major concentration of electricity generation facilities in LaTrobe Valley which produces in excess of 80% of Victoria's electricity is well known. There is now an electricity grid arrangement between Victoria and NSW.

As a result of electricity generation in the LaTrobe Valley, there has developed a related network of secondary industry in towns such as Traralgon and Morwell. The combined population of these two Valley towns is approximately 40,000.

For industry representatives, and the community in general, to gain access to air travel it is currently necessary to travel to Tullamarine airport on the other side of Melbourne, involving travel time of approximately 2½ hours.

If there were a commercial air link between LaTrobe Valley and Sydney, it would be possible to fly to Sydney in less time than it takes to drive to Tullamarine airport.

A stop at Albury to set down and pick up passengers would add to the viability of such a service. There are historically strong business and family links between

Gippsland, Albury and North-East Victoria. Past experience has shown that to include Albury as a stopping point between LaTrobe Valley and Sydney is popular with many people.

EAST GIPPSLAND

From Sale eastwards, there are very few public or commercial transport facilities available. There is no air link available for people who wish to travel north, and the travel time to Tullamarine airport from, say, Bairnsdale, is 4 hours, and longer for people further east.

To provide a commercial air service from East Gippsland to Sydney via Albury would obviously not be commercially viable if considered alone. However, if East Gippsland people could travel to Traralgon (1¼ hours from Bairnsdale), the attraction and convenience of using a plane service to travel north would be greatly enhanced.

CONCLUSION

It is quite understood that an air link between LaTrobe Valley and Sydney via Albury would have to be commercially viable. In the past there has been such a service available on most days of the week. If economic considerations indicated that a service which operated on, say, three days each week could be viable and profitable, such a service would be of immeasurable value for people traveling between LaTrobe Valley and Sydney and vice-versa.

It is suggested that the Committee give consideration to the desirability of introducing a commercial air link between LaTrobe Valley and Sydney, via Albury, on three days each week, to enable industry, business and the community to have access to a much more direct air link northwards. The existing availability of commercial flights from Tullamarine only is of great inconvenience to those who need to travel to Albury and Sydney, as it is for those travelling to Gippsland from Sydney, Albury and other places.

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