

7 August 2002

The Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Transport and Regional Services
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 3600

Dear Sir

The District Council of Renmark Paringa owns and operates a licensed airport at Renmark, South Australia.

Over the past decade Renmark has only been able to attract intermittent regular passenger services despite the fact that our airport is licensed by the Department of Transport and our facilities include a fully sealed 24 hour all-weather runway and first class terminal facilities.

Our experience has shown that commercial operators are unable to sustain viable services between Adelaide and Renmark, despite attempts to include our airport as a stopover for services from Mildura to Adelaide. This is despite a regional population base of approximately 35,000 people. The Renmark Airport being the only licensed airport in South Australia's Riverland.

It would appear that the dilemma faced by our community and shared by commercial operators, is the impact that the high cost of air travel has on passenger demand. In other words, local passengers are not able or prepared to meet the high cost of travel by air which in turn places greater pressure on operators to operate viably requiring them to raise costs to the point that no one chooses to fly.

The difficulty for this Council is that the non use of our airport by commercial passenger operators is reducing our airport income and placing greater financial strain on our capacity to maintain our airport to a high standard for use by private aircraft users and emergency flights. While Council accepted responsibility for airport ownership some years ago, our reduced patronage is creating a dilemma in terms of local viability.

The lack of a commercial regular passenger transport service at an affordable level also has social implications, particularly for those persons who may be suffering illness or injury, who find a three hour road journey to Adelaide difficult.

While we can offer no solutions to your Committee we feel sure that our inability to attract commercial passenger air services and the financial and social impacts that creates on the local community is shared by many other regional communities.

Yours faithfully

Barry C Hurst
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER