



Secretary: *J. Luff*

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORT AND  
REGIONAL SERVICES

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28 August 2002

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

Dear Mr Dundas

Warwick Shire Council has the pleasure of submitting a report to the Federal Government House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services. Please find attached a copy of Council's submission in relation to the Terms of Reference.

If you have any questions in relation to this submission, I can be contacted on (07) 4661 0390 or alternatively by email at: [nkropp@warwick.qld.gov.au](mailto:nkropp@warwick.qld.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Noel F Kropp", written in a cursive style.

Noel F Kropp  
Chief Executive Officer

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ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO  
THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

P.O. BOX 26, WARWICK, QLD 4370

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## Introduction

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This submission has been prepared by Warwick Shire Council in relation to the Terms of Reference of 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.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

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### The Adequacy of Commercial Air Services in regional and rural Australia

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Warwick Shire is considered to be a regional/rural local government area. Warwick Shire Council administers one aerodrome in the region, being the Warwick and District War Memorial Aerodrome. Currently, commercial air services are inadequate in this area as there are no commercial air services offered from Warwick or the Southern Downs Region.

Council believes that the provision of commercial air services and facilities to cater for commercial air services is crucial for assisting economic development, at least in this Shire.

The aerodrome serves as the landing pad for aircraft in the Warwick Shire and surrounding areas. In its current state, **it is inadequate to service the needs of the community**. The facility consists of a single unsealed runway with associated taxiway, a small terminal building, and limited visual aids.

Specifically, the unsealed runway is a deterrent for aircraft, with both propeller and jet engine planes frequently experiencing damage from loose stones on the runway. Furthermore, adverse weather conditions regularly result in the closure of the airstrip; approximately 15 days being lost each year.

The Warwick Shire Council has already spent \$20,000 on developing a master plan for the aerodrome. The plan details a necessary upgrade of the facility including the bitumen sealing of the runway and minor alterations to line markings, lighting and drainage.

The Council has budgeted \$1.1million towards the upgrade this financial year and has **sought a grant from State Government of \$500,000** for the project. Council recently learnt that the application for the \$500,000 State Government grant was unsuccessful, with the primary reason being that Council's application would take a significant proportion of funds available for airport development for the whole state.

The upgrade would assist in the development of tourism infrastructure and medical services:

- **Tourism:** The facility would complement the recently completed State Equestrian Centre, and Rodeo Heritage Centre due for completion in late 2003. Both facilities are world class and are collectively expected to attract 1000's of visitors each year.

The upgrade will also assist the burgeoning tourism industry of the Southern Downs in particular the popular wine and fruit areas around Stanthorpe and Warwick and as a gateway to outback Queensland.

- **Medical Services:** emergency services would have landing access all year round without the current imposition of weather conditions.

The upgraded airport would be a drawcard for attracting business to the region and provide crucial **support for a number of major economic development** projects in the Shire:

- The Big W Distribution Centre
- Warwick International College
- DanPork piggery and abattoir
- Continued expansion of Miandetta Piggery and Asparagus Farm and Warwick Bacon Factory

Additionally, the project will result in direct employment opportunities:

- Two companies have expressed interest in establishing aircraft maintenance facilities at the aerodrome were the airstrip to be sealed.
- Currently one aerial spraying company based at the aerodrome with the potential for more businesses.
- The aerodrome would attract increased usage for defence training purposes. The facility is currently used due to its strategic positioning.

The Council views the project as one of its key goals for improving regional infrastructure and facilitating social and economic development in the Shire.

Warwick Shire Council is considered to be a regional hub for economic activity across the Southern Downs. The provision of improved air facilities will have direct benefit for air services and the establishment of air services. Indirect flow on effects from an increase of air services or the establishment of air services can be diverse and assist other businesses.

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**Policies and Measures required to assist in the development of regional air services including regional hub services and small scale owner operator services.**

Provision of funding assistance to local governments responsible for airports to improve the standard of facilities, is important to assist the development of regional hub services and also small scale owner operator services. Warwick Shire Council considers that external funding for upgrading the Warwick and District War Memorial Aerodrome is essential to assist the development of regional air services. Regional Air services require a reasonable standard of airport facilities to cater for clients needs at the same time as providing a safe take off and landing area.

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**The role of all three levels of Government in supporting and assisting the development of regional air services and island transport systems.**

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Warwick Shire Council believes the role of all three levels of Government in supporting and assisting the development of regional air services is as follows:

**Local Government**

Local government should be responsible for facilitating and assisting the establishment or expansion of regional air services by ensuring that the regional air services have adequate facilities to undertake their business/s.

**State Government**

State Government should be responsible for encouraging the expansion of regional air services. State Government also should be responsible for assisting Local Governments, by way of grant or subsidy, capital assistance to ensure that facilities such as sealed runways are of a standard to cater for regional air and transport services.

**Federal Government**

Federal Government also has an opportunity to assist the state government deliver funding to assist in developing and improving the standard of air facilities suitable for the establishment of commercial regional aviating services.

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**The role of major air transport carriers in providing regional services**

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Warwick Shire is currently not serviced by any major air transport carriers, which can be attributed to the fact that facilities at the Warwick and District War Memorial Aerodrome are inadequate to cater for the establishment of such services.

Council believes that major air transport carriers will have a role in providing regional services, especially to residents and visitors of the Southern Downs region. The Southern Downs Region Tourist economy is expanding and the need for commercial air transport services is becoming increasingly obvious.

Possible regional services that major air transport carriers can provide include:

- Mail and people transport;
- Tourism transport and catering;
- Health services; and
- Regional business.

Warwick Shire Council believes that it is important to upgrade facilities for commercial air transport carriers and that commercial air transport carriers will increase job opportunities, expand industry and contribute to local economies.

The Warwick War Memorial Aerodrome will also link with a number of tourism opportunities including:

- As a gateway to the outback;
- Local tourism operators who cater for international tourists;

- Link to Brisbane and Gold Coast airports with potential international visitor into regional areas;
- Complement international events (eg. 2003 Polocrosse World Cup); and
- Developing other air sports including joy flights, sky diving and gliding.

The Warwick and District War Memorial Aerodrome also has advantages for major air transport carriers to provide regional services compared to the Toowoomba and Stanthorpe airfields. The Toowoomba and Stanthorpe airfields are comparable in size and service area to the Warwick and District War Memorial Aerodrome. For instance, the Warwick and District War Memorial Aerodrome experiences more stable weather (meaning fewer closed days). Compared to the Toowoomba Airport, the Warwick and District War Memorial Aerodrome can favour the development and increase the role of major air transport carriers across the Southern Downs District because:

- it has the opportunity to expand,
- it is not constrained by development, and
- the risk of accidents and the impact of accidents are reduced by virtually no development around the aerodrome.

Recently, a major car accident in Warwick Shire required a plane to avoid the Warwick and District War Memorial Aerodrome because of adverse landing conditions. Subsequently the plane had to land at Toowoomba, at least one hours drive away.

The Warwick and District War Memorial Aerodrome also is strategically located for servicing both Northern New South Wales and Southern Queensland and is a logical position for establishing major air transport carrier industries to provide regional services.