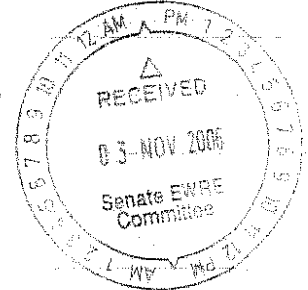


Mailing Address.

GRAHAM BAILEY.

The Secretary,  
Senate Standing Committee  
on Employment, Workplace Relations & Education,  
P.O. Box 6100,  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE,  
CANBERRA, A.C.T. 2600.

1<sup>st</sup> November, 2006.



Dear Sir,

I wish to make a brief submission to the Senate inquiry into employment issues in the transport industries.

My concerns are essentially directed at the Aviation industry, but the issues probably apply to the other modes, particularly road and rail.

My background.

I am a Graduate Civil Engineer and a product of the Commonwealth Department of Works (C.D.W.) and the Department of Civil Aviation. (D.C.A.)

In 1961, I was awarded a Cadetship with C.D.W. Under this scheme; Cadets were paid a salary whilst attending University. The trade-off was a requirement for the individual to work for the Commonwealth for a number of years; known as the Bond period. In my case, I fulfilled this obligation firstly in Darwin N.T., and then with the Roads and Aerodromes Branch in Central Office, Melbourne.

In 1971, I joined D.C.A., starting a long career in Airport Engineering and Aviation; including a four year posting as Counsellor Transport, WASHINGTON D.C., from 1977.

I was indeed privileged to have had the opportunity of working with C.D.W. and D.C.A.

C.D.W. was the Design and Construction Authority for the Commonwealth, and inter-alia provided skilled

engineering and technical resources to the Private Sector. DCA was recognised worldwide as a highly competent, pace setting, professional Organisation. The Australian voice was highly respected within I.C.A.O; where we were at the forefront of significant developments like the Microwave Landing System. (M.L.S.).

The DCA / CDW 'team' were partners in a rather hectic period which created much of Australia's Aviation infrastructure.

Quite apart from the Development, operational and Maintenance role; these organisations enabled the Federal Government to be fully informed in these matters.

The collective talents of people in these organisations was little short of awesome; unlike the situation today, Senior Management occupied these positions on the basis of genuine knowledge and experience; rather than generalist management rhetoric.

The Federal Government divested itself of these skills as part of the reform processes of the 1980's.

The demise of CDW was quick and destructive; whereas the DCA skill base and culture was destroyed slowly, until the infamous CAR Review of Resources and Rhetoric associated with affordable Safety.

The Federal Government is now virtually uninformed in engineering and transport operations. We are almost bankrupt of these skills within Government.

The track record of uninformed Government purchases is frightening in terms of both public safety and cost-effectiveness.

Looking at Airports, for example.

The core business of our Civil Aviation Safety Authority, (CASA), is to regulate the Safety of Civil Aviation. Key functions include rulemaking, standards setting, entry control and Safety Surveillance / Compliance.

As I write this submission, CASA has ONE remaining Airport Engineer; another is presently on leave, awaiting retirement. The Authority has no permanent expertise in Airport Lighting, and survives by using the "non-ongoing" services of one former Senior Lighting specialist.

There appears to be no training or development scheme in place, for future generations.

In terms of safety surveillance, CASA employs around 12 Airport Inspectors to service the entire continent. (These people are not professional engineers.)

One poor soul has responsibility for both Victoria and Tasmania. All these officers are senior in age and there are no training or development schemes in place.

As if to make sure we are in trouble, the Airport Engineer and the 12 Inspectors are in different organisational areas of the Authority.

The Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTRS) has no Airports Specialist knowledge in the Aviation and Airports Group. There are no plans to correct this either; as recent employment notices read like the following. "While much of the work will be in relation to the policy and regulatory framework for the Australian aviation and airports industries, experience in a regulatory or aviation environment is not essential."

Notwithstanding this, the AIRPORTS Act 1996 has the Minister approving Master Plans, Development Plans and Environment Protection Plans for Australian federally leased (privatised) Airports.

The functions of AIRPORT Building officer and (until recently) Environment officer, are contracted out, with the Department/Minister acting as "uninformed" purchaser.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (PWC) no longer has jurisdiction over the privatised Airports; and the Minister looks after the PUBLIC INTEREST without the need for in-house specialist "Airports" people.

The PWC is no longer involved because public expenditure isn't applied. Notwithstanding this, following Senate estimates in May 2006, we learnt \$28.5 million taxpayer funding was used for runway strengthening at Canberra Airport. This is on top of some \$8.8 million spent in 2003.

With my in depth knowledge and experience in aircraft pavement design, construction and maintenance, I can't begin to understand a technical argument in support of this level of public expenditure, on a privatised airport.

#### RECENT CONCERNS.

Hangar collapse at Canberra.

Runway lights 'out', at Sydney.

Building induced turbulence at Canberra.

Boeing 737-300 bogged at Melbourne.

'Mystery' gas leak emergency at Melbourne

"Leaking sand" under the third runway at Sydney.

Bird-hazard water feature, at Canberra.

Catering vehicle runway incursion at Sydney.

6 months delay in Terminal opening, at Adelaide.

Runway lights 'out' at Canberra, October 2006

Total power black-out at Sydney, March 2006.

White powder contamination, at Adelaide, June 2006.

'open-day' at Canberra Airport; public in harm-way

under approach or RESA of active runway.

publicly reported Security incidents.

These incidents are the ones we know about.

These incidents, and others before them, are genuine 'RED LIGHTS' for someone of my background.

I now turn to two matters of particular significance to your inquiry.

Firstly, the Hazard posed to aircraft, by BIRDS.

Prior to 1991, the (then) CAA had its own Bird Hazard Investigation Unit. This small three person team played a key role in educating Aerodrome operators and other sections of the Industry, in minimising the risk of birdstrike. The Unit was actively involved in specific preventive Projects.

Deskilling saw the entire Unit declared Surplus to requirements and disbanded. When this occurred, in 1991, the number of reported bird strike occurrences was around 350 annually. Alarming, total annual reported Birdstrikes have increased steadily since!

The figures I obtained from the ATSB, on 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2006, were as follows.

—	year 04/05	1163 occurrences.
—	year 05/06	1275 occurrences.

Bird Control measures are the responsibility of the individual airport operators. As a case in point, I have strong reservations about the magnificent Water Feature, built at Canberra Airport. I always look at the "what-if" scenario. What if a passenger jet encounters turbulence and suffers a critical birdstrike, on approach?

There is clearly a case for the Commonwealth to re-visit the need for a specialist Bird Hazard control Unit within Government.

The second topic of relevance to the inquiry, is the Aerodrome Local Ownership Plan (ALOP); which the Federal Government walked away from, progressively from around 1986.

In essence, the ALOP had served Australia well for decades, and inter-alia provided BOTH FINANCIAL and TECHNICAL assistance to Regional and Local aerodromes.

The need for this assistance has not gone away, and is becoming more and more acute with a reduction in the pool of those with Airports skills.

The cries for help are getting louder!

In this regard, reference is made to a 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. The November 2003 inquiry Report, titled "MAKING ENDS MEET", highlights the above observation.

The inquiry Committee became aware that many Councils are struggling to operate and maintain their airport facilities, and some sort of assistance may be required.

The Committee also noted "... local ownership has significantly reduced the pool of affordable expertise in airport operations and maintenance."

"It is critical for the sustainability of air services to communities that airports are maintained and operated effectively and safely." (page 86)

Recommendation 5 calls for a new airport ownership subsidy scheme covering capital works and essential maintenance.

Recommendation 28 calls on CASA to place greater focus on activities to assist industry players in complying voluntarily with the regulations.

The inquiry Report does not appear to specifically address the issue of skills shortage within the area of AIRPORTS.

As far as I am aware, the Government is yet to respond to the inquiry Report recommendations.

The final issue I would like to bring to attention is the other end of the 'scale'; being smaller aeroplanes operating under CASR 121 B (and below).

Unless an aerodrome is certified or registered (the top end); CASA does not regulate the aerodrome operator.

In the case of small aeroplanes conducting air transport operations under CASR 121 B, the responsibility for ensuring that an aerodrome is in compliance with CASR 139 (the relevant aerodrome standards) rests with the holder of the aircraft AOC. (aircraft operating certificate)

Flights that do not involve fare paying passengers are self regulated. The latter category includes private flying into resort airstrips.

I have growing concerns about the safety of these operations; under the present 'hand-off' approach to regulation.

As my wife and I travel Australia including the remote areas, I invariably note aerodrome safety issues, including the following;

- runway surface condition, eg roughness or corrugations.
- bearing capacity.
- obstacles, such as trees penetrating the O.L.S.
- scour or open drains within the flight strip
- deficient markings, markers and signs.
- bird hazard
- debris hazard
- Lack of strategic fencing; animals/people on movement area.

My concerns are perhaps best illustrated by the crash of a Cessna 421C Golden Eagle aircraft taking off from runway 32 at El Questro aircraft landing area, which occurred on 30 August, 2004.

The pilot and his wife were both killed in the accident. The W.A. State Coroner report indicates a possible explanation for the tragedy was "damage from pebbles and other potentially damaging debris on the runway surface." There was also a suggestion the initial tree hit by the aircraft was located about 66 metres to the left of the runway centreline and at an estimated height of 8.2 metres, while the relevant Civil Aviation Advisory Publication on Guidelines for Aeroplane Landing Areas, specifies a maximum obstacle height of about 7.2 metres at 66 metres from centreline.

The Coroner's report includes the following:

"In the context of the nature of the aerodrome, providing ready transport to the El Questro resort, it would not be unreasonable for pilots, particularly coming from overseas, to assume that the airstrip would be maintained at a high level and would be subject to some regulation."

The Coroner went on to recommend that CASA review the current situation in relation to aircraft landing areas which are regularly used in a commercial context, and give consideration to taking steps to alter the regulatory provisions so that such aircraft landing areas are subject to CASA approval and inspections.

The Coroner's report was dated 24 August 2004, and he is still awaiting a response from CASA.

The same Coroner in a report dated December 2005 (fatal aircraft accident Tandakot Airport) recommended "That the Minister issue a charter letter providing direction to CASA to the effect that greater priority be allocated



to safety issues relating to general aviation, with a view to significantly reducing the number of general aviation fatalities.

I was particularly concerned about the evidence given by CASA representatives at the inquest into the Jandakot accident. This was later confirmed in a letter dated 27 June 2005, when Mr Gemmell of CASA confirmed that CASA's regulatory oversight under Part 139 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations, did not extend to making qualitative assessments of aerodrome emergency plans.

If true; this would be a ludicrous situation!

### In Conclusion.

In the above pages, I have raised issues of concern, across the Board; in civil aviation, — — — which I believe essentially follow from a deskilling at the Federal Government level, compounded by a wave of instant experts, particularly in the case of our privatised airports.

I likewise believe we face the same general situation in road and rail Transport.

At a strategic level; we badly need a National Plan to rationalise the roles of road and rail; addressing major issues like the ever escalating traffic congestion in our major cities and the developing concern about climate change.

Closer to home, we have a federally funded road upgrade project which commenced in 2004 and is currently undergoing partial reconstruction for the third time!

Finally with regard to our hip pocket, motorists are paying thousands of dollars every week, to repair windows shattered or cracked by flying stones from road revealing.

In the 1960's CDW and Main Roads NSW specifications precluded loose stones from the completed road surfacing.

Suggestions for the Committee.


I suggest the Committee address the need to reskill the Federal Government at Senior Levels in the Transport Agencies.

- if considered appropriate, such a specialist "Infrastructure Group" could be located within a single Department.

The Committee may wish to inquire into the following:

- the reintroduction of Cadet Schemes, including career development within Government agencies.
- public interest issues arising from nil PWC jurisdiction over the Privatized Airports.
- the need for Technical Support to Regional, Local and Remote aerodrome operators. (possibly a role for the Infrastructure Group.)  
Note there is also a specialist role should the Government decide to reintroduce financial support to these aerodromes.
- the merits of re-establishing a National Bird Hazard Reduction Unit. (possibly a role for the Infrastructure Group.)
- the recommendations made by the W. A. Coroner, in relation to general aviation fatalities. (pages 8 and 9, above.)

I thank the Committee for the opportunity given to me, to raise these concerns.

Sincerely  
  
(GRANHAM BAILEY.)