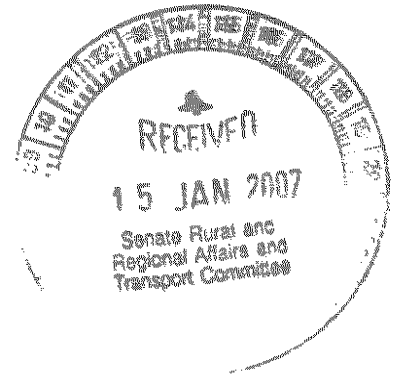




Mayor's Office

11 January 2007

Committee Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs  
and Transport Committee  
P O Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Senate Inquiry – Submission to the Airports Bill 2006**

I refer to the Senate's inquiry by the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee into the Airports Amendment Bill 2006 and make the following submission on behalf of the Alice Springs Town Council.

The Council makes submissions in response to the key areas of the Bill as follows.

1. *Permitting non-aeronautical development at leased airports, provided such development is consistent with the airport lease and approved master plan, to make clear the Australian Government's intention at the time of privatisation of the airports;*

Airports were initially developed by the Commonwealth to provide basic aviation services. A business culture has been promoted with airports where the main airports now cater for a wide range of private sector services related to air travellers and aviation support services. In addition, there has been significant sales of airports to commercial interests, and airports are now no longer the exclusive domain of Government services. Airports have become important service centres generating employment in related service industries and facilitating significant passenger movements.

These important service centres create demand for municipal services and should now be rateable by local governments. It is submitted that;

- Private sector services for the movement of passengers and freight should be rateable as other enterprises would be if they were not situated on airport land owned by the Commonwealth. This would require rateable areas to be assigned to an airport, and rating zones could be applied to different uses: e.g. retail, commercial, light industrial, runways and taxiways, and open buffer zones. The Amendment Act should prescribe how rating is applied.
- The increasing trend to encourage private development for non-aviation related purposes will detrimentally affect the orderly development of a municipality if non-rateability of airport land

Submission by Alice Springs Town Council

continues. Airport land becomes highly sought after and demand for other land which should be used for these purposes in accordance with the municipal planning scheme diminishes. These effects distort land demand and supply, and the focus on commercialised airport development can be inconsistent with strategic directions of the planning scheme.

- Notwithstanding that airport land is owned by the Commonwealth, the various local government acts provide for rates to be paid by the occupier.
- Airports were non-rateable when they were established and operated by the Commonwealth. However, airports are now owned and operated extensively by private interests, with increasing privatisation occurring. Protection from rating because of land tenure status is no longer considered appropriate. In fact, the non-rateability of airports represents a barrier to competition and distorts markets relative to those suppliers not located on airport land that must pay rates.

Council supports the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory that municipal rating should apply to airports.

2. *Refining the planning and development approval regime attaching to airport master plans and major development plans, including through streamlining public comment and assessment periods, providing purpose clauses, ensuring easier public access to a master plan and major development plans, and allowing the Minister to request further information during the assessment process via 'stop the clock' provisions;*

Airports by necessity are situated on large areas of land and can represent a significant land use within an urban municipality. It is important that the structure plans for municipal planning schemes address the future strategic requirements of airports, and that the future use of airports is consistent with the planning scheme principles and standards. This means that planning for airports should not be a "stand-alone" exercise within the confines of Commonwealth land, but should integrate with municipal planning schemes. Airports do create off-site impacts and these should be managed in the interest of the wider community.

Council supports the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory, that that the statutory period for consultation be a minimum of 60 days for airport development plans.

Yours faithfully



Fran Kilgariff  
MAYOR