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19 January 2017

AAA Submission to the Commonwealth Budget 2017-18

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you in relation the upcoming Commonwealth Budget for 2017-18 and would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide a pre-Budget submission.

By way of background, the Australian Airports Association (AAA) is the national industry voice for airports in Australia. The AAA represents the interests of more than 260 airports and aerodromes Australia wide – from local country community landing strips to major international gateway airports. The AAA's members include Adelaide, Brisbane, Cairns, Canberra, Darwin, Gold Coast, Hobart, Perth, Melbourne and Sydney airports. There are a further 140 corporate members who provide goods and services to airports. The Charter of the AAA is to facilitate co-operation among all member airports and their many and varied partners in Australian aviation, whilst maintaining an air transport system that is safe, secure, environmentally responsible and efficient for the benefit of all Australians.

The AAA would like to bring the critical issue of regional airport infrastructure funding to your attention in preparation for the release of the Commonwealth Budget for 2016-17. In September 2016, the AAA released a new research report which, for the first time, sought to quantify the extent of the financial challenges faced by regional airports across Australia in maintaining infrastructure to facilitate safe aviation operations. The AAA has consulted on the report with a number of Federal Members of Parliament, with many acknowledging the challenging environment that regional airports operate within and the need for appropriate Government support.

The AAA is acutely aware of the difficult fiscal environment that the Government is operating within, however the benefits to regional Australia of a viable and sustainable regional airport network far exceed the modest financial assistance that the industry is seeking from the Federal Government.

I trust that you will give the following submission due consideration and would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of these matters with you further. Please do not hesitate to contact my office should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Wilkie
Chief Executive Officer



AUSTRALIAN
AIRPORTS
ASSOCIATION

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1. BACKGROUND

Australia’s airports are fundamentally community assets, with over 2000 landing sites for aircraft across the country. While the majority of these are very small and private sites not generally available for public use, there are 322 Australian airports that are certified (190) or registered (132) by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA). Certification or registration is essential for the operation of regular public transport (RPT) services at an airport, however many small regional airports that do not attract these services still choose to incur the effort and cost of becoming registered. This allows them to have published instrument approach procedures and facilitate essential services for their local community such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

The airport industry in Australia can be generally broken into four broad categories:

- capital city and major privatised airports;
- regional airports;
- Department of Defence airports; and
- completely privately owned airports and airstrips.

There are 21 federally leased airports across Australia, which include the capital city and major airports. A table of these airports is outlined below.

ACT	NSW	QLD	NT
Canberra	Sydney	Brisbane	Darwin
	Bankstown	Gold Coast	Alice Springs
	Camden	Townsville	Tennant Creek
		Archerfield	
		Mt. Isa	
VIC	TAS	SA	WA
Melbourne	Hobart	Adelaide	Perth
Essendon	Launceston	Parafield	Jandakot
Moorabbin			

These airports were sold to the private sector by the Commonwealth Government from 1996 under long-term lease arrangements. While these airports are operated, maintained and upgraded by the private sector, they remain ultimately owned by the Commonwealth Government.

A very large number of Australia’s regional airports were also originally owned and operated by the Commonwealth Government, generally for military use. When no longer required for those military purposes, these airports were gradually transferred to the ownership of the relevant local government authorities under Aerodrome Local Ownership Plans (ALOP) or sold to private interests. This is far more than a matter of historical interest, because the ALOP agreements under which these transfers took place impose obligations on the recipient local government to maintain and operate the airport as an airport. More detail on these obligations is provided in Section 3.

Aside from the 21 federally leased airports listed above, the 19 Department of Defence airports and privately owned airstrips, the vast majority of the remaining 322 certified and registered aerodromes are owned and operated by the local government authority / council for the community they serve.

For the purposes of this submission, we generally classify this subset of aerodromes as our regional airports. Within the broad classification of regional airports, there are a number that have been fortunate enough to benefit from substantial Regular Public Transport (RPT) traffic due to passenger demand based on tourism and business related travel. These larger regional airports tend to be able to generate enough revenue to cover their operating and capital expenditure costs. While they, like all infrastructure providers, welcome the opportunity to apply for Government grant funding programs, their viability is not necessarily dependent on financial support.

That being said, the regional airports that are the focus of this submission are those that are unable to generate sufficient revenue from their operations to cover their basic operating and capital expenditure cost. These regional airports generally have relatively limited RPT services, if any at all, yet they facilitate critical and essential services for the communities they serve. The AAA believes it is essential that the Federal Government recognise the importance of our regional aviation transport network and ensure that appropriate funding assistance is provided where it is needed most. This will ensure that communities in regional Australia are able to have a safe and operational regional airport in order to not be unnecessarily isolated or disadvantaged.

2. IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL AIRPORTS

For most Australians, their contact with an Australian airport is associated with work or leisure travel on a scheduled Regular Public Transport (RPT) flight between one of the major capital city airports and either an overseas destination, another capital city airport or, perhaps, a major Australian tourist destination.

But while such travel is statistically predominant, there are numerous other forms of aviation activity, particularly at Australia's regional airports that are of vital importance to the community and economy.

It is common for aviation observers to categorise aviation activity along such lines as "RPT", "charter", "GA (General Aviation)" and "sport/recreation". While these terms are commonly used, they are not always helpful. The term "GA", in particular, fails to convey the great breadth of activity and community service that Australia's aviation industry delivers.

The following indicates how diverse aviation activities at regional airports can be:

- RPT, charter and private flights from Australia's regional, rural and remote airports allow those who work and live outside the major cities to access the specialist health, education, commercial and recreational facilities that are not economically available where they normally reside, allow travel by health professionals to the regional community, and enable regional residents to maintain and enjoy the pleasure of their relationships with distant families and friends.
- Particularly in regional Australia, airports play an essential role in saving lives by facilitating medical evacuations, collection and delivery of organ donations and search and rescue.
 - For example the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) is a non-for-profit organisation which offers health care to those people who are unable to access a hospital or basic general practices due to their extreme geographic isolation. Currently, the RFDS has 68 national aircraft, covering the length and breadth of the country. The RFDS predicated its operations on the availability of airport or airstrip networks in outback locations throughout Australia. In 2014/2015, the RFDS provided 4,336 emergency evacuations. This essential emergency service provides assurance to people living, working and travelling in rural and remote Australia, where there are often few other health services available.
- Australia's regional airports also play a vital role in protecting Australia's physical assets – enabling aerial firefighting in areas where road transport is impossible or would be too late.
- Regional air services support the attraction of staff to, and their retention in, regional and remote communities by minimising the isolation that can be involved in working away from family and friends.
- Air services keep Australians in touch with one another and the world, because they are frequently used to deliver the mail and our daily newspapers.
- Law enforcement bodies, such as the Western Australia Police Air Support, and border protection agencies operate out of Australia's regional airports, particularly in Northern and Western Australia.

- Australia’s vegetable and animal produce is significantly enhanced by aerial agriculture services like crop dusting and mustering operated from regional airports.
- Freight services to and from regional airports allow many businesses to operate “just-in-time” inventories and access markets for often high-value or time-sensitive products.
- Australia’s regional airports offer facilities for pilot training both for those who wish to fly privately and for those who wish to earn their living flying commercially in Australia or overseas. A number of regional airports provide flexible training facilities that do not conflict with the flight paths of capital city airports, while minimising the noise impacts in densely populated areas.
- Aerial survey and aerial photography activity often requires access to regional airports.
- Australian airports generally, and not just those owned or operated by aero clubs, allow many thousands of Australians to enjoy the pleasures of sport and recreational flying.

The exact mix of these diverse aviation activities at each Australian airport varies to meet the needs of the particular community which the airport exists to serve.

3. THE INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGE

3.1 Regulatory Environment

Australian airports, like many industries, are subject to government regulation across a diverse range of fields and by a diverse range of regulators.

Some of these are common to all Australian commercial businesses, such as:

- The Corporations Law, administered by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission;
- Trade practices and consumer protection laws, administered by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and State and Territory Offices of Fair Trading;
- Occupational Health and Safety laws, administered by various Commonwealth, State and Territory regulators;
- Workplace relations laws, administered by various Commonwealth, State and Territory regulators; and
- Disability discrimination laws.

There are, however, other regulatory regimes that are particular to airports – the most obvious of course is air safety. The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) has the primary function of conducting the safety regulation of civil air operations in Australia. The regulations and standards set by CASA are necessary to ensure airport aeronautical infrastructure meets the needs of aircraft to operate in a safe and effective manner. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the infrastructure and maintenance required to facilitate safe aviation operations, the cost of meeting these necessary safety standards can be very high.

Civil Aviation Safety Authority

CASA is the Commonwealth regulator with primary responsibility for aviation safety, including for the operation of airports. It categorises airports by reference to the passenger carrying capacity of aircraft that use them.

1. A certified airport is one which a) has a runway that is suitable for use by aircraft having:
 - a) maximum passenger seating capacity of more than 30 seats; or
 - b) a maximum carrying capacity of more than 3400 kilograms; and is available for use in regular public transport operations or charter operations by such aircraft.
2. An airport that does not meet those requirements may apply to be registered by CASA if it has been inspected by a person approved by CASA and found to meet certain prescribed requirements, which include a number of the requirements that must be met by certified airports.
3. Other requirements apply to an airport that is not a certified or registered airport but is used at least once a week by an aircraft that is engaged in regular public transport operations or charter operations and has a maximum passenger seating capacity of more than 9 seats but not more than 30 seats.

4. And finally other requirements apply to an airport when used at least once a week by an aircraft that is engaged in regular public transport operations or charter operations with a maximum take-off weight (MTOW) not exceeding 8618 kg, and fitted with a passenger seat configuration of not more than 9.

Depending upon which category an airport falls into, it will be subject to differing regulatory requirements. These requirements are generally detailed in a Manual of Standards (MOS) and associated publications produced by CASA and set out very detailed standards that airports must comply with in relation to the operation of their airports. CASA periodically audits the compliance by airports with the MOS and other regularity requirements, and can initiate legal action where required.

As will be apparent from the above description, whenever an airline proposes to change the nature of the air services it provides to and from a particular airport, this has the potential to change the CASA categorisation of the airport and move it into a more tightly regulated category. There may be considerable expense and effort required for an airport to meet the increased regulatory requirements so that it can agree to meet the airline's proposal, and yet the airline will generally not be prepared to undertake to maintain the new air services that necessitate that expense and effort on an ongoing basis.

The AAA is currently working closely with CASA on a significant review of the MOS Part 139 – Aerodromes and associated regulations. While we are hopeful that this review will result in practical and streamlined improvements to the regulations and standards for the industry, the cost of compliance in providing safe airport facilities will always be high. This is simply due to the nature of the significant infrastructure and maintenance costs required to operate a safe aeronautical facility.

3.2 Infrastructure Costs

In 2016 the AAA commissioned ACIL Allen Consulting (ACIL Allen) to undertake a study (provided as an *Attachment* to this submission) on the economic and social contribution of regional airports across Australia and to analyse the financial challenges they face in operating and maintaining these airports. The findings of the report confirmed what the industry has known for many years – that despite being critical infrastructure assets for regional communities, on average many regional airports across Australia do not have adequate funding to maintain or improve their existing airport infrastructure, with the problem only growing worse as time goes on.

Key Findings of the ACIL Allen Report

The study involved a comprehensive consultation and survey of AAA regional airport members to get actual data and information relating to their annual revenues and expenditures, as well as projected costs and any known aeronautical infrastructure projects over the coming years.

The report confirmed that regional airports are of critical importance to regional economies and communities, enabling access to specialist health, education, commercial and recreational facilities, and facilitating social connections. Unfortunately, even though regional airports facilitate essential air

transport services for the surrounding region, in many cases there is simply no ability to generate enough revenue to cover the costs of operations.

As previously noted, the vast majority of regional airports across the country are owned and operated by local government councils. These councils often find it difficult to supplement the funding shortfall that exists at many regional airports, due to limited budgets and the variety of other infrastructure and community services that compete for local government funding.

The report found that:

- On average 61% of regional airports had budget deficits in 2014-15, with non-regular public transport (RPT) airports' costs exceeding revenues by an average 45.6%.
- Nearly 40% of Australia's regional airports expect persistent budget deficits over the next 10 years.
- The cost of operating a regional airport is expected to rise by 38% over the next decade, adding to the already difficult financial environment.
- Australia's regional airports expect an annual budget deficit of at least \$17 million per year, equating to a \$170 million shortfall in essential infrastructure and maintenance funding at regional airports over the next decade. However, we believe the figure to be even larger due to ageing infrastructure.

Needless to say these figures are quite disturbing and provide an insight into the significant financial challenges facing regional airports now and into the future.

Due to the typically high cost/low revenue nature of regional airports, simply maintaining the airport to a satisfactory and safe condition often creates significant financial stress. This is further compounded by upgrades to meet future aviation needs. The actual extent of the financial challenge facing the sector is likely to be even greater than is indicated in the ACIL Allen report, which assumes assets will simply be maintained at the status quo. Where in reality, infrastructure upgrades will be required as aircraft fleets evolve and regulatory standards change, combined with runways, aircraft parking aprons, taxiways and lighting systems reaching end-of-life.

Future Regional Aviation Infrastructure Needs

The last decade has seen the introduction of higher capacity aircraft on some regional routes. These larger aircraft have allowed airlines to benefit from improved efficiencies and reduced operating costs. The introduction of heavier aircraft has not been without consequences for regional airports. Increased wear and tear on runways, taxiways and aprons has necessitated major remediation works for a number of airports. Depending on the extent of the works required costs can exceed \$10 million for complete runway replacements.

Many aerodromes are currently looking to upgrade lighting systems to the latest LED technology, both for reasons of Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) compliance and long term cost benefits. LED lights are more energy efficient and will provide savings in the longer term, however immediate replacements costs are substantial and require specialist installation. To upgrade lighting systems a full replacement of legacy systems is required (some of which date back to World War 2). This is a costly infrastructure project for any airport. Remote airports also face a 'tyranny of distance'

challenge, the specialist equipment and staff needed to facilitate airport infrastructure are typically not locally available. Costs to relocate equipment and specialist staff for the duration of airport works must also be factored into projects.

Limitations of current Government assistance programs

Currently limited funding assistance is available through the Regional Aviation Access Programme (RAAP) administered by the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development (DIRD). In particular the Remote Airstrip Upgrade (RAU), a subset of the RAAP, provides much needed assistance for non-commercially viable, but essential remote airports. In the 2015-16 Budget, the Federal Government committed \$33.7 million over four years to improve safety and access to remote airstrips. However, given the limitations of this programme, both in quantum and eligibility, this is far from adequate to support regional aviation. State Government assistance has been made available in some states, however funding is often ad-hoc or insufficient for major remediation works required to ensure Australian aerodromes continue to operate in a safe and secure manner.

The AAA acknowledges that some regional airports have been successful in securing funding through other general infrastructure funding schemes such as the Building Better Regions Fund (and the former National Stronger Regions Fund). Both of these schemes require applicants to demonstrate both economic and social benefits that would result from funding being awarded. Unfortunately there are many regional airports that simply cannot adequately compete with other infrastructure funding proposals in relation to the economic benefit that may be derived from the grant funding. While regional airports do generate some significant economic benefits given their small size and operations (see ACIL Allen report for figures), their primary benefits are related to the interconnectivity and facilitation of essential services for the community. These benefits are much more difficult to quantify and limit the ability of many regional airports to compete for funding in schemes such as the Building Better Regions Fund.

The AAA believes that the RAAP and RAU are critical funding schemes, as they recognise the need for airports to have a specific pool of funding assistance due to their unique circumstances and high capital and operating costs. Expanding the scope and eligibility criteria of these schemes, as well as increasing the amount of funding available, would provide significant financial relief to many regional airports that are not currently able to compete for any other form of funding.

3.3 Financial Viability

Regional airports are faced with extremely difficult maintenance and investment decisions. As aviation demand is strongly influenced by general economic conditions and unforeseen events such as the discovery of nearby mineral resources, predicting future services at regional airports is inherently difficult and uncertain. Major projects need to be planned well in advance with often lengthy completion dates. Compounding the risk for regional airports is that demand from airlines is not underpinned by long-term contractual commitments.

While aeronautical related revenue such as landing fees or passenger head taxes can be used to fund necessary works, we must recognise cost recovery through passenger charges may make routes unviable leading to a reduction or cessation of services.

As stated by one member, 'it is an impossible task to charge enough to cover certain infrastructure projects, if you raise the costs – the community will end up losing the services.'

Airlines are reluctant to commit to particular activity levels and may withdraw from a route due to lower than anticipated demand well before the cost of any upgrade has been recovered. A number of regional airports across Australia committed to expansions in response to demand driven by the mining boom, only to find services reduced or withdrawn altogether with the cooling of the resource sector. For example, large aircraft services requiring aviation security screening have been withdrawn from Albany, Esperance and Port Lincoln despite considerable investment by the airports to comply with regulatory requirements.

These external forces, which are beyond the control of regional airports, compound what is already an inherently difficult financial challenge. Without appropriate Government funding assistance, many small regional airports may no longer be able to provide safe and sustainable airport infrastructure.

4. CASE STUDIES

The AAA has consulted with its members and outlined below are several examples of where essential infrastructure projects have been identified at regional airports to ensure continued safe aviation operations.

Example 1

ASGC Description	Inner Regional – Queensland
Services facilitated	RPT Certified (100,000 – 249,999 passengers per annum), Fly-in and Fly out charter services, Royal Fling Doctors Service (RFDS) Operations, Careflight.
Project identified	Widen taxiway to CASA 'Code C' wingtip clearance standards, as well as upgrade the RPT aircraft parking apron lighting with LED lights to meet CASA standards.
Safety implications	Currently not compliant with CASA safety standards.
Projected cost	Total of both projects – \$350,000

Example 2

ASGC Description	Outer Regional – South Australia
Services facilitated	RPT Certified (5,000 – 19,999 passengers per annum), Fly-in and Fly out charter services, Royal Fling Doctors Service (RFDS) Operations.
Project identified	Installation animal proof boundary fence, upgrade the RFDS aircraft parking apron, lighting (PAPI) installation and standby power upgrade.
Safety implications	Reduce animal incursions to runway/taxiway. Provide an essential precision approach facility for aircraft, backup power in case of outage. Improved RFDS access.
Projected cost	Total of all projects - \$600,000

Example 3

ASGC Description	Remote – Queensland
Services facilitated	RPT Certified (5,000 – 19,999 pax per annum), RFDS operations,
Project identified	Aircraft parking apron upgrade, runway extension and reseal, upgrade runway lighting, precision approach facility.
Safety implications	Runway, apron seal and lighting system are approaching end-of-life and need to be upgraded to maintain safe aviation services.
Projected cost	Total of all projects - \$5,000,000

Example 4

ASGC Description	Outer Regional – Victoria
Services facilitated	Non-certified aerodrome (0 – 14,999 movements), Fire-fighting operations, medical evacuation.
Project identified	Runway extension
Safety implications	Accommodate fire-fighting tanker use to assist in fighting bushfires in regional Victoria.
Projected cost	\$350,000

Example 5

ASGC Description	Inner Regional – Victoria
Services facilitated	Non-certified aerodrome (>20,000 movements) medical evacuation, flight training, aerial agriculture services.
Project identified	Upgrade Taxiway to CASA Code C wingtip clearance standards, strengthen and extend runway, upgrade runway lighting to LED (60 metre spacing).
Safety implications	Currently not compliant with CASA standards.
Projected cost	\$6,000,000

Example 6

ASGC Description	Very Remote – Northern Territory
Services facilitated	Certified aerodrome (>50,000 - <99,999) RPT, medical evacuation, FIFO, GA.
Project identified	Reseal of runway, Taxiway, RPT aircraft parking apron. Installation of fuel resistant membrane for jet parking positions and GA refuelling facility.
Safety implications	Runway, apron seal at end of life required to maintain services. Improved environmental outcome in case of fuel spills.
Projected cost	\$2,000,000

Example 7

ASGC Description	Remote – Western Australia
Services facilitated	Certified aerodrome (>50,000 - <99,999) RPT, medical evacuation, GA.
Project identified	Runway overlay, correction of existing runway to address level, shape and rut filling. Adjustment of runway lighting, new security fence.
Safety implications	Runway, apron seal at end of life required to maintain services. Security fence as per regulations.
Projected cost	\$3,000,000

As is demonstrated from the above case study examples, the costs associated with delivering safe aeronautical infrastructure are very substantial, particularly in the context of a local government budget. These case studies are indicative of the sort of critical aeronautical infrastructure projects that regional airports across the country are seeking Government financial assistance to address. As is evidence in these examples, each of the projects are targeted at addressing a specific safety issue that has been identified as a problem that needs appropriate treatment.

The AAA's position is that any Government financial assistance provided to regional airports under the RAAP and RAU scheme should be directed to airports with limited financial capacity and a demonstrated need to rectify an aeronautical infrastructure safety issue.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

While the AAA very much values and appreciates the current Commonwealth funding provided through the RAAP and RAU, our analysis has shown that the extent of the financial challenges facing regional airports far exceed the current direct funding assistance available.

The AAA strongly recommends that the Commonwealth Government provide dedicated funding in the 2017-2018 Budget to regional airports for critical aeronautical infrastructure maintenance projects. This could be achieved through a funding increase for the RAAP, in particular the RAU Programme and the expansion of eligibility for the RAAP providing funding opportunities for those regional aerodromes that are not currently captured in the scheme. The AAA advocates reframing the RAAP in order to enable support for more regional airports. This will ensure the future viability of these valued community infrastructure assets and improve the ongoing economic and social development in the regions.

The AAA is proposing four key recommendations for the Government to consider in preparing the 2017-18 Commonwealth Budget.

1. Amend the existing Regional Aviation Access Programme to facilitate critical aeronautical infrastructure and maintenance funding to more regional airports.

- This program (specifically the Remote Airstrip Upgrade programme) currently limits eligibility to 'remote' or 'very remote' aerodromes as per the ASGC classifications, which results in a large number of aerodromes being unable to apply for any specific Commonwealth funding support for critical aeronautical infrastructure projects.
- The AAA's position is that the existing RAU programme could be significantly improved by amending the eligibility requirements to allow both 'outer regional' and 'inner regional' airports to also apply for funding where there is a demonstrated need for assistance.
- The AAA recognises that not all of the airports falling within these additional categories would need financial assistance. This should not mean that those airports that do need financial assistance should be excluded on the basis of their location.
- Eligibility for funding should be based on evidence provided by the airport that financial assistance is required to address an identified aeronautical infrastructure or maintenance issue that is impacting the safe operation for the airport.
- Generally airports with limited RPT services will be in the greatest need of financial assistance, however eligibility should be assessed on a demonstrated financial needs basis and not automatically excluded based on the type or level of RPT services.

2. Increase the level of funding available to airports under the RAAP/RAU to \$100 million over four years.

- If the RAAP/RAU eligibility criteria were to be amended to allow a broader range of regional airports to apply for assistance for critical aeronautical infrastructure and maintenance projects, the amount of funding available must also increase to adequately address the issue.
- Our analysis indicated that at a minimum there will be a \$170 million shortfall in essential infrastructure and maintenance upkeep at airports over the next decade. It is important to note that this does not take into account all of the significant capital infrastructure upgrade projects that will be required over the coming years to replace deteriorating assets. The AAA

believes \$100 million over four years would provide significant assistance to many regional airports to undertake critical maintenance and infrastructure works that are essential to the future of regional aviation.

3. Review the requirement for Federal funding being contingent on equal funding contributions from the applicant.

- The AAA appreciates that in most instances, the Government requires either the local or state government to provide matching contributions to Commonwealth funding for infrastructure projects. The AAA agrees with this approach as it demonstrates a commitment from both parties to the future of regional aviation in that community.
- However, in some instances the local government may simply not be able to make equal contributions nor secure state government assistance. In instances where matching contributions are simply not feasible, the AAA believes the RAAP should include provisions to consider fully funding projects via a demonstrated need and case by case analysis.

4. Funding be provided for critical maintenance works, as well as essential aeronautical infrastructure projects.

- The AAA believes that funding assistance provided by the Commonwealth Government under the RAAP should be extended to be available for critical maintenance works, in addition to aeronautical infrastructure projects. There are instances where airports simply require relatively minor financial assistance, to purchase equipment or seek professional assistance with ongoing maintenance work at the airport. This could range from funding for a new vehicle and equipment to conduct runway serviceability inspections and remove foreign object debris, through to securing the services of a professional technical inspection to determine what future infrastructure issues may need to be addressed at the airport. These activities are critical to ensuring the ongoing safe operation of regional aviation.

The AAA believes that Commonwealth Government funding assistance is essential for the ongoing viability of regional airports and aviation in Australia. This sector facilitates critical aviation services that often provide the only lifeline for regional communities to the rest of the country. Providing a greater level and scope of financial assistance to regional airports will ensure that the industry is able to continue supporting regional Australia with safe and efficient aviation services.