



Submission no. 81

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01 June, 2007

Mr. Damian Drum MLC
Chairman
Rural and Regional Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC. 3002

Dear Mr. Drum,

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO RURAL AND REGIONAL TOURISM

I write in response to your letter, dated 19 April 2007, inviting the Australian Airports Association (AAA) to make a submission to the above subject Inquiry. As might be expected, in terms of rural and regional tourism activity throughout Australia, AAA member airports are very much involved through the roles they play in support of their local communities.

In a more general sense, the issues confronting rural and regional airport operations in support of tourism and the economic benefit it brings to their communities, are not as significant in Victoria as in the other States and Territories. The main issue for airports around Australia is the retention of suitably qualified and experienced staff to actually assume the statutory responsibilities associated with the safe and efficient operation of an airfield. The mining boom elsewhere across the country is creating significant staffing issues for member airports.

The situation in Victoria is somewhat different, not only do we not have the heavy mining involvement, but we live in a State that is not all that reliant on Airservices to support rural and regional tourism. The relatively short distances one needs to travel in Victoria to become immersed in unique and interesting tourist icons and supporting infrastructure is an advantage we have over the other States. That particular comment is made in the context of the reliance on RPT air services to service and sustain tourism activity.

With due regard to the foregoing, it is important to acknowledge that people living in metropolitan Melbourne do not realise or appreciate that Mildura is as equi-distant from Melbourne as Canberra. Interestingly enough, the Melbourne to Mildura (and vice versa) city pair is reliant on regular air services. Likewise, although Albury is located in NSW, it still services a lot of air traffic originating in Melbourne. Portland is also a busy intra-state route.

Simply put, in terms of airports/aviation, local communities and tourism, Victoria is not at all reliant on air services to the same extent when compared to other States. Sometimes, being a relatively small State in the geographic sense, can be an advantage. The non-reliance on aviation for tourism growth to rural and regional areas of the State could also be seen as an advantage.

We wish the Committee every success with its deliberations and thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Keech', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

*Ken Keech
Chief Executive*