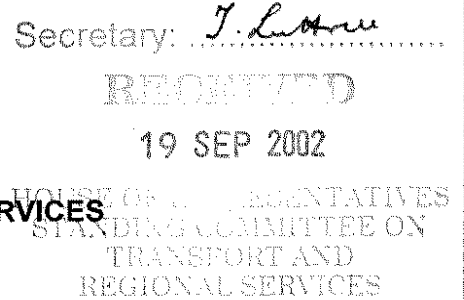


**SUBMISSION  
TO THE  
PARLIAMETARY INQUIRY  
INTO  
COMMERCIAL REGIONAL AVIATION SERVICES**

by

**WELLINGTON SHIRE COUNCIL**



**Terms of Reference**

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Services is to inquire into:

- The adequacy of commercial air services in regional and rural Australia.
- Policies and measures required to assist in the development of regional air services including:
  - regional hub services
  - small scale owner-operator services; and
  - the deployment of the most suitable aircraft types.
- The adequacy of commercial air services to major populated islands and the adequacy of alternative sea services.
- Interconnectivity between regional air transport systems, major national air services and international services (including on-carriage, through ticketing, freight handling, timetabling and airport slotting).
- The role of all three levels of Government in supporting and assisting the development of regional air services and island transport systems.
- The role of major air transport carriers in providing regional services.

**About Wellington Shire Council**

The Wellington Shire Council is located in south - eastern Gippsland.

**Population**

39,288 (2001 ABS Census Night Count – 1<sup>st</sup> release data)  
40,766 (Estimate ABS 2000)

**Area**

10,923.7 sq. km (Victoria's third largest)

## Employment

The industries of the employed population are Agriculture, Mining, Electricity, Gas and Water Utilities, Construction, Wholesale and Retail, Transport and Storage, Communications, Finance and Property, Public Administration, Defence Forces, Recreation and Community Services.

## Industry

The Shire is home to a diverse industry base which, apart from the dominance of owner-operator enterprises in agriculture, retailing, professional and service industries, has many companies represented such as Murray Goulburn Co-operative Ltd, Neville Smith Timber, Esso, Nylex, NFMcDonnell & Sons and Howe Leather. Australasian Correctional Management, Southern Rural Water and the RAAF Base East Sale are also significant employers.

## Transport

The Shire is linked to Melbourne by the Princes Highway/Freeway network and the South Gippsland Highway, and is served by the West Sale and Yarram Aerodromes, complemented by RAAF Base East Sale. Both the West Sale and Yarram aerodromes are owned and operated by the Wellington Shire Council.

These well developed and maintained aviation facilities provide extensive and diverse facilities for defence, general, commercial and recreational aviation industries and activities, with extensive capacity for expansion.

V/Line operates three rail passenger services to and from Melbourne per day Monday to Saturday and two on Sunday to Sale. Rail freight services are available on all passenger services together with an extensive road transport network. However, towns like Dargo and Yarram have no V/Line Service, but are served by sealed highways and/or arterial roads. The above networks are further complemented by an extensive local roads network comprising approximately 3300 kilometres of sealed and unsealed roads

As noted above, the Wellington Shire is also home to the East Sale RAAF base. It is proposed that this facility will be expanded in the near future with attendant benefits in both social and economic activities accruing to the Wellington Shire and to the Gippsland region.

It is considered that this extensive transport infrastructure, in particular the well developed aviation facilities available at West Sale, together with Wellington's geographical location provide an important strategic advantage in terms of future development of both the Shire and the Gippsland Region.

## **CONTEXT OF THIS SUBMISSION**

This submission has deliberately been focussed on the micro issues of the Wellington Shire and has not had regard for the broader issues of regional air services within Australia. In this regard it is to be noted that the separate submission made by the Australian Airports Association and dated August 2002, has Council's support and is commended to the Inquiry.

Similarly, it is to be noted that the submission by the South East Australian Transport Strategy Inc., has Council support, and is also commended to the Inquiry. Council officers have been involved in the regional air services working group established by SEATS and have assisted in the development of the submission.

## **SUBMISSION**

Firstly it is submitted that the Gippsland Region generally and the Wellington Shire in particular, are ideally situated to cater to regular passenger transport services connecting Tasmania, including the Bass Strait islands, and the Gippsland Region with the South Coast Region of New South Wales, and North Eastern Victoria (including Mount Hotham and Albury) and Canberra. It is also considered that there is potential for connectivity of such services to Melbourne, either by air or by road or rail transport.

It is further submitted that the West Sale Aerodrome is well suited to an important role in such service provision. In this regard, the West Sale Aerodrome currently provides a sealed runway 1527 mts x 30 mts and is capable of accepting aircraft up to and including SAAB 340 types. This runway is also equipped with PALC, pilot activated light control, runway lighting and is served by a modern terminal building, together with an established high quality aviation support industry. It is also important to note that the West Sale Aerodrome is unencumbered by urban growth. Accordingly, there is ample opportunity to further develop the aerodrome and associated infrastructure.

Finally, it is submitted that provision of a reliable and timely regional air service to Gippsland is absolutely critical to the continued economic and social sustainability and development of the region. The proximity of the Gippsland region to Tasmania and, in particular, the Furneaux Group of Bass Strait islands, further amplifies the importance of regional air services to this area.

## **SUMMARY**

It is recognised that the proposed return of RPT services to the Gippsland Region by Australiawide REX via Latrobe Regional Airport is a valuable service.

It is nevertheless considered that there may be opportunity for further development of services to occur over time via the networks connecting the various areas referred to above. In particular, it is recommended that opportunities be explored for the development of regional services connecting the Bass Strait islands, South Coast of New South Wales and Albury/Canberra via West Sale.