

Greg Hood – Chief Commissioner ATSB

Opening Statement at the JPCAA Inquiry 15 November 2019

Good afternoon Members of Parliament. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Auditor General's audit of the ATSB, covering the efficiency of investigation of transport accidents and safety occurrences.

At the outset, I'd like to recognise the professional manner in which the ANAO undertook the audit of the ATSB – we welcomed the opportunity and cooperated fully with their audit team, recognising the benefit of an independent review of our operational efficiency.

From time to time, we have been challenged and criticised, rarely on the quality of our investigations, but on the time taken to complete our work. In 2017, we set about re-shaping the ATSB – we adopted a multi-modal teams-based approach, we reviewed our recruitment profiles, we commenced a program entitled “back-on-track” to clear a backlog of ageing investigations, entered into a partnership arrangement with RMIT University to train our investigators, and adopted a program-managed approach to our investigations. The ANAO recognised the ATSB has established key elements of an overall framework to promote efficient investigation processes.

The ANAO also acknowledged the on-boarding of 17 new investigators in 2018 - this large cohort will be a key enabler in further enhancing our efficiencies as their competencies continue to develop and mature. This recruitment exercise has been a significant milestone for our agency that will go some way to stabilising our investigation resources noting we have endured around a 25% reduction in our workforce over the previous eight years.

The ANAO did find that our efficiency has declined in relation to the length of time taken to complete investigations, and the amount of investigation resources required. We are working hard to balance the need to ensure the quality of our investigations against timeliness performance indicators - we recognise there is more we can do without compromising that quality.

We have accepted all the ANAO's recommendations and we are working to address them.

I am positive about the agency and the role we play in improving transport safety. The ATSB has been through significant organisational change over the last three years, all directed towards enhancing our productivity and establishing a shared vision.

Internationally, we are considered to be a world leader in transport safety and an authority for finding systemic safety issues. In the future we will establish a centre of excellence for transport safety investigation in the Asia Pacific Region which we are progressing through our partnership with RMIT University. We are also giving greater attention to our key deliverables and key performance indicators. The outcomes of the ANAO's investigation provide guideposts for this work.

Members, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the ATSB's staff who are dedicated, hard-working experts in their field.

Their contribution to safety is highly valued. We are driven to seek improvements to ensure they are empowered and enabled to make this contribution well into the future.