



AUSTRALIAN
AIRPORTS
ASSOCIATION

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Committee Secretariat
Select Committee on Productivity in Australia
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Canberra ACT 2600
Sent via email to: productivity.sen@aph.gov.au

Australian Airports Association (AAA) Responses to Senate Select Committee on Productivity in Australia

Questions on Notice and Requests for Further Information

The following responses are provided in relation to questions on notice and requests for further information arising from the AAA's appearance before the Senate Select Committee on Productivity on 24 April 2026.

Question from Senator Bridget McKenzie (received 1 May 2026 – Question on Notice)

Have you undertaken any modelling on what is the productivity impact of reduced aviation connectivity due to cancellations and delays?

The AAA has not undertaken formal quantitative modelling on the productivity impacts of reduced aviation connectivity resulting from cancellations and delays. However, the impacts are widely recognised across the sector and are already evident in practice. Reduced connectivity affects not only passenger movement, but also freight efficiency, workforce mobility, tourism flows and access to essential services, particularly in regional and remote communities. Given the interdependent nature of Australia's aviation network, disruptions in one part of the system can have cascading effects across the broader economy. The AAA would be supportive of further work in this area, including potential collaboration with government and industry to develop a more robust evidence base to quantify these impacts.

Question from Senator Bridget McKenzie (hearing, 24 April 2026 – taken on notice)

Should changes to an approved airport master plan require fresh Ministerial approval, or can airports make those changes themselves (with local consultation only)?

Under the *Airports Act 1996*, changes to an approved Airport Master Plan, including minor variations, require Ministerial approval following consultation with State and local governments and an opportunity for public comment. Airports cannot unilaterally amend an approved Master Plan.

While this ensures appropriate oversight, industry feedback indicates that the current framework is overly prescriptive for low impact or administrative changes. Even minor variations can trigger a full

approval process, creating unnecessary delay and regulatory burden.

There is an opportunity to streamline the process for genuinely minor or administrative amendments, while retaining Ministerial approval for substantive changes that have material impacts on infrastructure, operations or surrounding communities. This would improve efficiency without compromising appropriate oversight.

**Question from Senator Bridget McKenzie (hearing, 24 April 2026 – request for further information)
Provide examples of regional airport business models that do not rely on passenger services, as case studies of alternative productivity uses of regional airports.**

Regional airport productivity extends well beyond passenger services and is often driven by activities independent of Regular Public Transport (RPT). Across Australia, airports support aeromedical services, agricultural aviation, resource sector logistics, maintenance, flight training, freight and emergency response. In many cases, these functions represent the airport’s primary economic and social value to the region, particularly where RPT is limited or absent. Some airports operate with minimal or no RPT services and instead function as critical general aviation and industry hubs. Others maintain RPT alongside a diverse mix of non-passenger activities that underpin economic and social outcomes. Examples include:

Dubbo Airport – Dubbo Airport operates as a secondary transport hub with a strong general aviation presence alongside RPT services. It supports multiple charter operators, including Air Link, RediJet and Air Bush, as well as flight training organisations such as Dubbo Flight School and the Australian Helicopter Pilot School. Activities include freight, medical transport, aerial work and aircraft maintenance. The airport also supports a local flying club, contributing to workforce development and community engagement.

Rockhampton Airport – Rockhampton Airport combines RPT services with significant maintenance and charter operations. Alliance Airlines operates a maintenance facility at the airport, while charter services support regional and resource sector activity, including fly in fly out operations to mining sites. The airport also hosts pilot training providers and serves as a base for the Royal Flying Doctor Service and RACQ LifeFlight, with airport fees waived for these essential services.

Moree Airport – Moree Airport demonstrates the importance of agricultural aviation. While it maintains a limited RPT connection to Sydney, the airport’s primary activity is driven by aerial agricultural operations, freight and aircraft maintenance. Operators such as Aircair Aviation and Statewide Aviation play a central role in supporting regional agricultural productivity.

The following table provides indicative passenger and financial data for the case study airports referenced above and demonstrates the diversity of operational and financial models across regional airports.

Airport	RPT Passenger reported by BITRE in FY2025	Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortisation (EBIDTA) in FY2025	Operating Profit (Loss) Before Taxes in FY2025	Net Profit (Loss) Before Taxes in FY2025
Dubbo	188,725	\$1,550,000	(\$941,000)	(\$210,000)
Rockhampton	644,598	-	(\$19,643)	\$65,024
Moree*	34,316	-	\$233,104	\$233,104

* Moree Airport does not have a standalone financial statement. The financial figures cited are drawn from Moree Plains Shire Council's Budget 2024/25 for the Aerodrome functional area.

These examples illustrate that airport productivity is multi-dimensional and not solely linked to passenger throughput. Airports enable essential services, supply chains, workforce development and industry activity that generate economic and social value regardless of RPT scale.

This has important policy implications. Frameworks that assess airport value primarily through passenger metrics risk underestimating the contribution of regional and general aviation airports. There still exists no overarching national framework or strategy to secure a sustainable future for the sector and the regional communities it services.

Question from Senator Michelle Ananda-Rajah (hearing, 24 April 2026 – taken on notice)

Provide the Committee with the underlying data supporting the finding that around 60 per cent of surveyed regional airports operate at a loss.

Please refer to the AAA [Regional Airports Financial Sustainability Survey – Summary Report](#), which includes the relevant findings.

Question from Senator Andrew Bragg (hearing, 24 April 2026 – request for further information)

Provide the AAA/ICF report on sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) accounting and emissions tracking.

Please refer to the [AAA policy position](#) prepared with ICF on sustainable aviation fuel accounting and emissions tracking for the Committee's reference.

For further information, please contact Sybilla Grady, Senior Manager Policy and Research, at

[Redacted]

Kind regards

[Redacted Signature]

Simon Westaway
Chief Executive Officer

