



15 March 2021

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

The Australian Aviation Ground Handling Industry Alliance (AAGHIA) thanks The Committee for the opportunity to give evidence at the public hearing on 3 March 2021 regarding *The future of Australia's aviation sector, in the context of COVID-19 and conditions post pandemic*.

We **enclose** a copy of our opening statement which outlines our concerns and the support required to ensure ground services providers can adequately support and enhance the broader economic recovery. In short, aviation ground handlers have largely been left out of the government's aviation packages, and our sector's constrained resources will be a major bottleneck that will slow the Australian economic recovery. We are losing skills with snap border closures and expect to lose far more when JobKeeper ends. It will take a substantial amount of time and extraordinary resources to rebuild that lost capacity to adequately support economic recovery. We urge you to consider our three-point recovery plan.

The AAGHIA represents around 90 per cent of the national ground services sector – and in the international airline sector that figure is closer to 100 per cent – and employs approximately 20 per cent of all aviation workers in the country.

The AAGHIA wishes to express its disappointment that the hearing proceedings on the day paid only minor attention to the issues affecting the future of Australia's aviation sector.

It is a concern that rather than requesting further information about our proposal to help guide the government's response to COVID-19 recovery, a single Senate Committee Member used more than half of the allocated time to question one alliance member on historic matters that in our view were not relevant to proceedings or the purpose of the inquiry. In addition, the member concerned could demonstrate that the issues had been either appropriately investigated or disproved.

Nevertheless, we provide the following **responses to the questions taken on notice**:

When were you first made aware that Qantas was looking to outsource its ground handling?

- The Qantas Group was using specialist ground handlers at 55 airports across Australia. Some handlers have worked with the airline for decades.
- Potential outsourcing partners were notified of Qantas' proposal to outsource ground handling at the ten Australian airports where the work was done in-house on 25 August 2020, the same day that Qantas released a media statement titled '*Statement on Qantas and Jetstar Ground Handling Services*'. A Request for Proposal dated 3 September 2020 was issued via email following this announcement.
- Outsourced ground handlers are required to abide by Qantas Group policies and procedures, with Qantas data showing that external ground handlers are no less safe and in some cases



their safety performance is better. Take aircraft loading, which is a core part of what ground handlers do. An average of 0.4 aircraft damage events per 1000 flights for outsourced operations compared with 0.8 for Qantas staffed airports¹.

Are you aware of any Qantas workers that have been rejected from being employed by Swissport? Would you take on notice the number of people and which ports they've been rejected from?

- To the best of our knowledge, no Qantas workers have been rejected from being employed at Swissport operations in SYD, MEL and CBR since Swissport was advised of its preferred supplier status to provide outsourced ground services in those operations.
- During the Transport Worker's Union's evidence, a former QGS employee claimed to have received an email from Swissport advising of an unsuccessful employment application. Following a review, Swissport can find no record of the application or email. It appears the individual recently responded to a Swissport job advertisement for a management position. This recruitment process is still underway and applications are currently being assessed.

We thank you for the opportunity and look forward to providing any further input as required.

Yours sincerely,

Glenn Rutherford
Executive Vice President – Head of Asia Pacific
Swissport

Alistair Reid
Executive Vice President, Oceania & South East Asia
Menzies Aviation

Brett Fuller
Managing Director/CEO
dnata Australia

Bruce Stokes
Managing Director
Oceania Aviation

Ann Maree Jackson
Director- General Manager
NTL Aviation Services & Precision
Aviation Services

Stuart Richardson
CEO & Sole Director
Aus Flight Handling

¹ Qantas media statement (25 August 2020): [Statement on Qantas and Jetstar Ground Handling Services](#)