



Australian Government
Civil Aviation Safety Authority

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER and
DIRECTOR OF AVIATION SAFETY**

CASA Ref: EC26-000335

Rural & Regional Affairs & Transport Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House ACT 2600

Inquiry into the Aviation Consumer Protection Bill and related amendments

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee

Thank you for the opportunity for the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) to make a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Aviation Consumer Protection Bill and related amendments (the Bill).

CASA is Australia's independent aviation safety regulator. Our primary function is the regulation of aviation safety, including the safety of civil air operations within Australia and the operation of Australian aircraft overseas, through the development, administration and enforcement of aviation safety standards.

CASA supports the objectives of the Bill to strengthen aviation consumer protections, improve outcomes for air passengers, and provide greater clarity about avenues for redress. In CASA's experience, the Bill responds to a longstanding gap between community expectations regarding passenger rights and the limits of the current aviation regulatory framework.

CASA's Role

CASA's statutory mandate is focused on aviation safety. It does not extend to consumer protection, service quality, or passenger dispute resolution. CASA does not have the power to require airlines to provide compensation, refunds or other remedies; to enforce service standards such as timeliness or customer communications; or to investigate complaints that are primarily commercial or consumer in nature.

Despite this, CASA receives more than 300 complaints a year from consumers relating to the conduct of airlines. The matters raised include flight delays and cancellations, refunds and credits, disclosure of passenger rights, and airline customer service. These complaints are typically made in good faith and often reflect genuine passenger detriment, but they fall outside CASA's regulatory remit.

CASA is frequently required to explain to complainants that it cannot take action, even where the passenger experience has clearly not met expectations. This misalignment places pressure on CASA's complaints handling processes and can undermine public confidence in the aviation regulatory system more broadly.

CASA has an established Industry Complaints Commissioner (ICC) that provides impartial oversight of complaints about CASA itself. The ICC's role is focused on regulatory decision making, timeliness of approvals, and administrative fairness and transparency. It does not extend to investigating airlines or airports, assessing commercial conduct, resolving passenger disputes, or providing consumer remedies. While the ICC strengthens accountability within CASA, it does not address the broader gap in aviation consumer protection.

Where safety is not directly engaged, when it comes to complaints relates to airline commercial practices or concerns arising from contractual arrangements between airlines and passengers, CASA's options are limited to providing general information, referring complainants to other agencies such as the ACCC (who also has a limited remit), or taking no further action. This can be frustrating for consumers, particularly where aviation-specific knowledge or oversight could assist and contributes to uncertainty about where assistance should be sought.

The Bill

CASA understands that the Bill seeks to establish a dedicated aviation consumer protection framework, strengthen passenger rights, introduce clearer obligations on airlines in relation to cancellations, delays, refunds and communications, and improve complaint handling pathways and transparency.

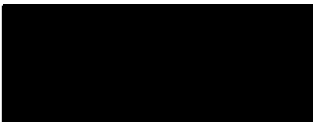
CASA considers that these reforms address the systemic issues outlined above and would fill an important gap in the current regulatory landscape. The Bill would clarify regulatory responsibilities between aviation safety and consumer protection bodies, reduce the number of complaints directed to CASA that sit outside its remit, and improve public understanding of where aviation consumer issues should be addressed.

A dedicated aviation consumer protection regime would allow CASA to maintain its focus on safety outcomes, support effective inter-agency cooperation, and refer consumer matters to an appropriately empowered body. CASA also notes that clearer consumer protections may indirectly support a positive safety culture by improving trust between passengers, airlines and regulators, reducing pressure on frontline staff, and encouraging transparency and accountability across the aviation system.

In conclusion CASA considers the Bill and related amendments address a clear gap in the aviation regulatory framework by creating a mechanism to manage aviation-specific consumer complaints that do not engage safety regulation.

CASA welcomes the Bill for its potential to improve passenger outcomes, align regulatory responsibilities with community expectations, and allow CASA to continue focusing on its core safety role while supporting a more effective aviation consumer protection system.

Yours sincerely



Ms Pip Spence PSM
29 April 2026