

Office of the Chief Executive



4 October 2021

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

via email rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee

Please find enclosed reply to questions taken on notice by Mr Robert Jennings, CEO, Alice Springs Town Council on Wednesday, 8 September 2021 during the committee hearing.

The following attachment is included for the reference of the Senate.

- Attachment 1: Regional Capitals Australia, Regional Airports Policy Paper.

If you require further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Jennings
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Alice Springs Town Council

ABN 45 863 481 471

93 Todd St, Alice Springs

Northern Territory 0870

P. (08) 8950 0526

F. (08) 8953 0558

PO Box 1071, Alice Springs, NT 0871

alicesprings.nt.gov.au

Questions Taken on Notice

Events in Alice Springs cancelled or adjusted as a result of COVID-19 Pandemic

The following is a list of some major events that were cancelled or adjusted in Alice Springs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please note, this is not an extensive list and does not include minor events that were cancelled or adjusted.

Alice Springs Town Council contacted event organisers to obtain data for the information of the Senate, however we did not receive a response from everyone that was contacted.

- **The Alice Springs Show** (cancelled 3-4 July 2020 and 2-3 July 2021)

"The Alice Springs Show is the largest community based event in Alice Springs reaching more than 20,000 patrons each year"

Quoted and data provided from website www.alice-springs.com.au

Attendance 5-6 July 2019	21,000
Stallholders 5-6 July 2019	196
Volunteers 5-6 July 2019	307

- **Alice Springs Masters Games** (postponed 10-17 October 2020 to 1-8 October 2022)

"The Alice Springs Masters Games are a biennial multi-sports competition much loved by the Alice Springs community and hugely popular with interstate athletes"

Quoted from website www.northernterritory.com

Competitor Registration 13-20 October 2018	3,010	
Volunteers 13-20 October 2018	816	
Competitor Registration 10-17 October 2020 (prior to event being postponed)		405

- **Parrtjima – A Festival in Light** (postponed 3-12 April 2020 to 11-20 September 2020)

"Parrtjima is the meeting place where old meets new. It is the only authentic Aboriginal light festival of it's kind, showcasing the oldest continuous culture on earth through the newest technology – all on the 300-million-year-old natural canvas of the MacDonnell Ranges in Central Australia"

Quoted from website www.parrtjimaaustralia.com.au

Attendance 5-14 April 2019	25,625
Attendance 11-20 September 2020	17,104
Attendance 9-18 April 2021	23,220

- **Run Larapinta Stage Race** (postponed 26-29 August 2020 to 21-24 April 2021) then (postponed 26-29 August 2021 to 22-25 April 2022)

"Run Larapinta is a 4 day, 4 stage trail running race along the most spectacular sections of the iconic Larapinta Trail in Australia's Northern Territory"

Quoted from website www.runlarapinta.rapidascent.com.au

Competitor Registration 16-19 August 2019 200

Volunteers 16-19 August 2019 10-12 approx.

Across both Run Larapinta Stage Race and The Redback in 2019, 90% of competitors were from interstate.

Competitor Registration 21-24 April 2021 140 approx.

- **The Redback** (cancelled 20-23 August 2020 and 20-23 August 2021)

"The Redback is a 4 day, 6 stage MTB race on the dusty trails surrounding Alice Springs in the very heart of Australia"

Quoted from website www.redback.rapidascent.com.au

Competitor Registration 22-25 August 2019 120

Volunteers 22-25 August 2019 10-12 approx.

Across both Run Larapinta Stage Race and The Redback in 2019, 90% of competitors were from interstate.

- **Round 12 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Season - Melbourne Demons v Brisbane Lions AFL Match** (cancelled 4 June 2021)

Round 18 2019 Toyota AFL Premiership Season Melbourne v West Coast Eagles hosted on 21 July 2019 2:50pm. Sell out game. Attendance numbers 7,895 (100% capacity).

Round 14 2020 Toyota AFL Premiership Season Melbourne v St Kilda hosted on 29 August 2020 7:10pm. Sell out game. Attendance numbers 1,984 (25% capacity).

- **Territory Day** (cancelled 1 July 2020) then (1 July 2021 postponed to 29 August 2021)

"Every year on 1 July, the Territory comes alive with fireworks, concerts and community events to recognise the day the NT declared independence from the Commonwealth Government in 1978"

Quoted from website www.territoryday.nt.gov.au

Attendance 1 July 2019 2,876

Stallholders 1 July 2019 20

Attendance 29 August 2021 3,188

Stallholders 29 August 2021 15

- **Tatts Finke Desert Race** (cancelled 5-8 June 2020)

"The Tatts Finke Desert Race is an off road, multi terrain two-day race for bikes, cars, buggies and quads through desert country from Alice Springs to the small Aputula (Finke) community"

Quoted from website www.finkedesertrace.com.au

- **Henley on Todd Regatta** (cancelled 15 August 2020)

"The Rotary Henley on Todd Regatta is the most iconic event in the Australian outback, mainly because of its totally unique nature. It's a boat race – without any sign of water!"
Quoted from website www.henleyontodd.com.au

- **Alice Springs Beanie Festival** (cancelled June 2020)

"The Alice Springs Beanie Festival is a community-based event that began in 1997 with a 'beanie party', organised by Adi Dunlop"
Quoted from website www.beaniefest.org

Asia Pacific Aircraft Storage: APAS

Website reference point www.apas.com.au

Mr Tom Vincent, Managing Director, Asia Pacific Aircraft Storage (APAS) was contacted by Alice Springs Town Council to provide insight into the aircraft storage facility in Alice Springs.

The following is an excerpt from the statement Mr Vincent provided to Alice Springs Town Council:

The APAS Group was founded in 2009 and accepted our first aircraft for storage in July 2014. From July 2014 to early 2020 and the onset of COVID-19, APAS had stored, maintained and returned to service approximately 70+ commercial aircraft.

APAS presently stores and maintains 140 commercial aircraft in Alice Springs. We have returned approximately 48 aircraft to service over the last 18 months. We have further aircraft scheduled to be returned to service, plus new deliveries for storage, all undertaken in support of our airline and lessor customers.

APAS holds Part 145 maintenance regulatory approvals under CASA (Civil Aviation Safety Authority, Australia), EASA (European Aviation Safety Authority), FAA (Federal Aviation Administration, United States of America), CAAF (Fiji), CAAP (Philippines), 2-REG (Guernsey), BCAA (Bermuda) etc. This level of maintenance authorisation is almost unparalleled in Australia. Our ability to accommodate and work on a multitude of modern aircraft incurs frequent audits through a combination of regulatory authorities, customers and their technical representatives to ensure our activities are fully compliant.

Aircraft in storage require significant ongoing maintenance to ensure they are returned to customers in the best possible condition. Maintenance activities include (i) induction to storage, (ii) periodic checks, and (iii) return to service. Induction to storage may take 5 – 10 working days depending on the aircraft type. This is an intensive programme involving the preservation of engines, APU, control surfaces, fuel system, avionics and many other systems. Periodic checks are typically undertaken e.g. 7, 14, 30, 60, 90, 180, 365 days (these depend on the OEM mandated programme). Periodic checks involve significant work, with the larger checks e.g. a 180 day check, including all lesser day checks (90, 60, 30, 14 and 7 days). Larger periodic checks may take 7 – 14 days to complete. The final return to service check can take 10 – 20 days to

complete depending on the work scope. Aircraft are not simply wrapped and left idle until they are required for service re-entry.

APAS experienced a major increase in demand for storage and maintenance services with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We moved quickly to expand our infrastructure to support customers such as Cebu Pacific Air, who themselves gave testimony on the benefit of the APAS Facility to their aircraft storage management programme. Aside from physical infrastructure expansion, we recruited maintenance personnel throughout Australia, a significant number of whom had been stood down or made redundant. This was extremely beneficial for all parties. It is a regulatory requirement for aircraft maintenance personnel to continue working on aircraft in order to maintain their 'recency' i.e. continual hands on work, to ensure skill sets are not diminished or lost, and exercising the privileges of their aircraft maintenance licence allow them to remain current.

Any business operating in Regional Australia experiences pressures in attracting and retaining employees. It has been no different for APAS in Alice Springs. The reality is that despite many significantly appealing aspects, life in Central Australia is not every Australian's preference. A number of maintenance personnel decided to return to their home cities such as Sydney and Melbourne when Australian airlines increased flying in mid-2021. We have however, seen further COVID-19 lockdowns and situations where these staff return to APAS given the guaranteed stable employment we offer. We enjoy an excellent relationship with our staff.

In order to support the critical maintenance activity undertaken on customer aircraft, APAS currently employs around 100+ staff, 90+ of whom are based in Alice Springs. We have a corporate office in Brisbane with around 12 staff. Staff remuneration packages far exceed the applicable aviation industry award. The current APAS workforce are nearly 88% Australian citizens or permanent residents. We currently employ approximately 13 persons on various Australian visas, not 50 people as has been put forward in the Senate hearing.

Mr Purvinas, Federal Secretary, ALAEA, gave detailed evidence on the number of licenced engineers who had been stood down during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a significant number who have now left the aviation maintenance industry. We completely support the proposition there must be a significant investment made into the training of maintenance engineering personnel in order to support the aviation industry in a post-Covid world. APAS has been working with training parties, including Aviation Australia, to develop and train young people commencing their aviation training pathway. APAS also places and funds talented developing mechanics on their first aircraft type courses, assisting them in becoming certifying engineers.

APAS is presently working on new apprenticeship programmes designed to provide a pathway for young aspiring aircraft engineers, typically having completed Cert IV training, to gain hands-on training on aircraft. This particularly extends to expanding Alice Springs and Northern Territory local employment opportunities. With APAS storing and maintaining nearly every commercial aircraft type in service, our operation presents an incredible training environment that will ensure the development of skilled personnel for our business and the wider aviation maintenance industry.

Alice Springs to Uluru Route

There is no formal resolution by Alice Springs Town Council regarding the loss of the popular route from Alice Springs to Uluru.

Mr Allan Woo, Aviation Development Manager, Airport Development Group was contacted by Alice Springs Town Council to provide insight into the Alice Springs to Uluru route.

The following is excerpts from the statement Mr Woo provided to Alice Springs Town Council:

Prior to the COVID19 Pandemic, Qantas Airways operated daily services between Uluru Airport and Alice Springs Airport. This service offered a key link for both international and domestic visitors travelling to Central Australia, providing air access to the two major tourism regions. In addition to serving visitors, the service provided key access for local passenger travel and high value time sensitive freight between the regions. In 2019, this route contributed 10-15% of total Alice Springs Airport passengers.

Qantas have indicated its intention to resume flights between Uluru Airport and Alice Springs Airport when demand returns. We anticipate this to follow the Commonwealth's easing of its national border restrictions. The resumption of these services is of significant economic benefit to Central Australia as a whole.

The airport at Uluru, without a doubt, improves air access for Central Australia. Without this key piece of infrastructure, capacity in/out of the region will likely fall by 40-45%. Additionally, Uluru airport serves the low cost carrier, Jetstar; a product offering not available to Alice Springs.

Uluru Airport, however, has an impact to the economic prosperity of Alice Springs. From a tourism perspective, the relatively low cost air offering to Uluru entices travellers to travel to Central Australia as a mono-destination, that is, to visit Uluru only, excluding a stop-over in Alice Springs. Also, due to the abundance of low cost fares, a portion of resident air travel from Alice Springs will leak via surface transport to Uluru Airport. Between 2015 and 2019, Uluru Airport passenger volumes have grown 55%, compared to Alice Springs Airport's growth of -7%. In addition to the leakage of economic value away from Alice Springs, the reduced economies of scale realised through high passenger volumes, means airport costs – such as Government Mandated Security Costs, are passed through to the passenger at a higher rate resulting in an increase in fare price.

Airfares and flight routes in regional Australia report

From my reading of the transcript, the questions appear to have been answered by Senator McDonald.