



Submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee Inquiry:

The state of Australia's aviation sector and its ability to deliver reliable and affordable services to rural, regional and remote communities

Submission from: **Grahame Murray**, Tamworth NSW – Regional business owner / frequent traveller.

Date: 27 November 2025

Dear Committee Members,

Scheduled regional airline services are now so unreliable, infrequent and expensive that Business Aviation (private and charter jets/turboprops) have become the only practical and often cheaper way for regional Australians to reach capital cities.

This lifeline however, is being deliberately strangled by airport charging policies that treat a 5-tonne Citation jet the same as a 70-tonne Boeing 737 – pricing out the very communities that drive a massive share of Australia's economic engine.

Regional Australia's economic powerhouse status

Regional, rural and remote Australia – home to about **28% of the population** (7.7 million people) – punches well above its weight, contributing **over 50% of national GDP** (approximately **\$850 billion** in 2024-25 terms).

This includes:

- **Mining** (9.9% of GDP, almost entirely regional): Iron ore, coal, gold – \$170B+ annually, powering 57.5% of exports.
- **Agriculture & rural exports** (2.8% direct GDP, but 11.7% of exports): \$60B+ in grains, livestock, wool – with the 2024-25 harvest alone adding \$15B.
- **Construction & manufacturing** in regions (7.6% + 5.7% GDP shares, much regional): Supporting housing, infrastructure and value-add processing.

States like Western Australia (17.1% of GDP) and Queensland (19.1%), are regional-heavy export giants, while even "urban" NSW derives 40%+ of its economy from regional resources. Without reliable air connectivity, this \$850B+ engine grinds to a halt: farmers miss markets, miners delay contracts, and executives waste days on unreliable flights. Concrete November 2025 examples (per-seat cost for five passengers travelling together):

A couple managing an agricultural company near Bourke NSW and needing to visit a specialist in Sydney will be away for at least 3 days. Its an 8 hour drive to Dubbo to catch a flight to Sydney (\$490-\$750 each way) - 1 day, an hour at the specialist - 2 days and a day to get home. 3 days and 2 nights (\$600 for a hotel) are lost.

A Business Jet can perform the whole trip in half a day and is far less fatiguing for almost the same cost.

The regional airlines are in business to make a profit for their share holders not to provide public transport to regional Australia. The airline schedules are contracting - Moree council recently upgraded their airport to accept the larger Dash 8 - 400. Once the works were completed, the larger aircraft introduced reduced the service to once per day. Annual passenger numbers divided by the larger aircrafts seating capacity dictated only 1



return flight per day. No longer could a person make a day trip to Sydney and medical specialist left as they were also unable to make a day trip.

Airfares are significantly impacting regional Australian costs (see attached). One way airfares for a one hour flight in excess of \$700! Almost the same as a one way ticket Sydney to Los Angeles. The airlines are pillaging regional Australia and the only viable alternative is being restricted by expensive airport fee's that impact Business Aviation more than the airlines. The landing fee at Sydney for a 5 passenger Business Jet is \$68 per passenger. On a Qantas Dash 8 its less than \$7.

The airlines with their high prices and contracting services should be subsidising Business Aviation rather than the other way round.

Business Aviation is therefore not a luxury. It is a rational, cost-competitive and time-critical necessity for regional doctors, agronomists, bankers, farmers and executives who underpin this economic heartland.

Business Aviation pays for infrastructure it barely uses. A Cessna Citation or King Air imposes <7 % of the pavement loading and <5 % of the runway occupancy of a Qantas 737-800. It requires no jet bridges, no checked-baggage systems, no large terminal space and far less air-traffic-control workload.

Yet at Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne it is hit with a minimum landing charge of \$340 or \$68/passenger and punitive parking charges fees (up to \$1,500 per day after only 3 hours) — fees explicitly designed to recover the capital and operating costs of facilities built for 180–200 seat airline aircraft.

Business Aviation is forced to subsidise airline infrastructure it does not need and rarely uses, while the regional communities it serves, which generate over half of Australia's wealth, receive no benefit.

Recommendations:

- Abolish all minimum landing charges. Just a rate per tonne that is the same for all aircraft regardless of size.
- Parking charges for Business Aviation aircraft, that do not use the terminal precinct but pay for Private facilities (FBO), pay the landing fee per day, not including the day of arrival. Limit 7 days.
- Scale the rate per tonne commensurate with the airport facilities required. Business Aviation does not need 4Km of runway or the runway lighting system installed - thats needed for large aircraft.
- Fund any revenue shortfall through a modest passenger ticket levy of \$1–\$2 on the Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane truck routes to provide some equity towards to bridging the country-city divide.
- The government needs to either arbitrate, regulate or set the fee's associated with access to national infrastructure. Macquarie bank should not be permitted to arbitrarily increase its charges 2,300% with no recourse!

Without these changes, regional Australia, the source of over 50% of our GDP, will remain hostage to a shrinking and over-priced scheduled airline network.



Business Aviation stands ready to deliver reliable, affordable and time-efficient services — but only if the countries airport operators stop making it pay exorbitant fees for facilities it does not need.

I am available to appear before the Committee and can supply current charter quotes, aircraft weight certificates and detailed Sydney Airport fee comparisons on request.

Yours sincerely,

Grahame Murray

CEO

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