

Question on notice no. 354

Portfolio question number: SQ25-002682

2025-26 Supplementary Budget estimates

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts
Portfolio**

Senator Bridget McKenzie: asked the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts on 12 December 2025—

- (1. What specific policy mechanisms does the Department use to protect the long-term viability of General Aviation airports?
2. How does the Department ensure that commercial property development at GA airports does not displace aviation activity?

Answer —

Please see PDF attachment.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2025-2026

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Committee Question Number: 354

Departmental Question Number: SQ25-002682

Division/Agency Name: DIV - Domestic Aviation and Reform

Hansard Reference: Written (12 December 2025)

Topic: Protection of long-term viability of General Aviation airports

Senator Bridget McKenzie asked:

1. What specific policy mechanisms does the Department use to protect the long-term viability of General Aviation airports?
2. How does the Department ensure that commercial property development at GA airports does not displace aviation activity?

Answer:

1. The *Airports Act 1996* (the Act) establishes a system for the regulation of leased federal airports that has due regard to the interests of airport users and the community, and to promote the efficient and economic development and operation of these airports. All leased federal airports (except for Tennant Creek and Mount Isa) are subject to a land-use planning and development framework outlined in Part 5 of the Act.

As outlined in the Aviation White Paper (AWP), the Australian Government's vision is for a thriving aviation ecosystem, strengthened by the growth and diversification of General Aviation (GA).

Under Initiative 30 (Regenerating General Aviation), the government has written to airport operators to make it clear that, when making decisions to approve future master plans or major development plans (MDP), the government will have regard to the appropriateness of the airport's community consultation processes and whether appropriate access to the airport site has been provided for GA (consistent with Part 5 of the Act).

Subsection 81(3) and subsection 94(3) of the Act require that, in deciding whether or not to approve a draft master plan or draft MDP, the minister must have regard to:

- the extent to which carrying out the plan would meet present and future requirements of civil aviation users of the airport, and other users of the airport, for services and facilities relating to the airport; and
- the consultations undertaken in preparing the plan (and the outcome of those consultations).

Additionally, as outlined in the Aviation White Paper, on 17 December 2025, the Statement of Expectations for how the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts will fulfil its function as a regulator was made publicly available at <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure-transport-vehicles/transport-strategy-policy/regulation-department>.

There are several other initiatives in the AWP which will also support a stronger GA sector more broadly. For example:

- Initiative 18 – streamlining training and accreditation pathways for licensed aviation maintenance engineers;
- Initiatives 27 and 28 – \$90 million provided to support infrastructure upgrades at regional and remote airports through the Regional Airports Program and the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program;
- Initiative 42 – setting out the Australian Government’s policy approach to national airspace management; and
- Initiative 43 – extending and expanding existing subsidies for the purchase of Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) equipment.

The department also provides secretariat support to the General Aviation Advisory Network (GAAN). The GAAN:

- provides advice to the Minister on matters impacting on GA; and
- operates as a forum where industry representatives can identify opportunities to work collaboratively to respond to pressures facing the GA sector.

2. Refer to Q1 response.