

13 November 2020

Director
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Via email: aviationconsultation@infrastructure.gov.au

RE: FUTURE OF AVIATION REFERENCE PANEL

The Australian aviation industry was among the first and hardest hit by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and unlike other industries, many of its employees remain stood down indefinitely, despite a relaxation of restrictions and a re-opening of many parts of the economy. It is imperative these workers are supported throughout the crisis.

The effectiveness of government support for the broader economy may be undermined without accompanying support for the aviation industry and its highly skilled workforce. Aviation plays an integral role in servicing the domestic and international tourism market, the hospitality sector's critical infrastructure and the wider economy. The nation's airlines, airports, pilots, flight and ground crews will play an integral role in Australia's economic recovery.

Ongoing government support is required for the survival of Australia's aviation industry. We must ensure the industry maintains its capacity to assist in Australia's economic recovery and support associated sectors including tourism, amid the longer-term prohibitions on international travel.

The Future of Aviation Reference Panel therefore should remain focused in the first instance on the near-term issues that are affecting aviation. Beyond this period, there will be a need to focus on training the next generation of Australian pilots, as well as a need to set the appropriate framework for consultation with industry stakeholders in the years ahead.

Yours sincerely,


Mark Sedgwick
AIPA President



Pilot Availability During COVID

- Australia's geographic isolation means it is heavily reliant on commercial aviation to enable economic activity. Preserving Australia's supply of pilot labour is in the national interest.
- Australian pilots are significant contributors to this reputation and CASA has acknowledged that an exodus of experienced Australian pilots would have a detrimental effect on safety outcomes.
- There is a continuing need to provide a targeted support package for the Australian aviation industry beyond measures already announced. Without a package that directly assists Pilots beyond the cessation of Job Keeper in March 2021, there is a risk of an exodus of experienced professional pilots away from Australian operators, particularly from the International segment.

Reopening of Australian borders in a COVID Safe Manner

- The ongoing international travel restrictions and domestic border closures have disproportionately impacted aviation compared to other industries, many of which have reopened and resumed trading.
- While acknowledging the important public health benefit, the reduction in international flight capacity is caused by government intervention in the form of ongoing international border restrictions.
- The government should support Australian based airline operators by preferencing their use in the International Freight Assistance Mechanism (IFAM), or similar and subsequent schemes, ahead of foreign based carriers.
- Likewise, the preferential use of Australian based airlines for the repatriation of Australian citizens from abroad, as well as their use to support the return of international students would have a significant multiplier effect on the domestic economy.

Pilot Supply Post-COVID

- Before the onset of COVID-19 there was a global expectation was for a significant under-supply of pilots.
- As Pilot labour supply will inevitably tighten in a post-COVID19 scenario, government support will be needed to reduce the cost of pilot training. Cost is a very real barrier for many aspiring pilots especially if there is continuing downwards pressure on pilot remuneration.

Government and Regulatory involvement.

- Where big and even small decisions are needed, all major stakeholders must be involved in the process.
- While economic considerations are important, if focus is primarily on economics then community and national well-being will be lost. Safety should always remain the number one priority.
- An ongoing process is required to ensure relevant stakeholders voices are heard in formal settings and not just via parliamentary or regulatory submissions.