

REMOTE AIR SERVICES SUBSIDY (RASS) SCHEME

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA - LOCATIONS

To qualify for inclusion on the RASS Scheme, a location must meet two fundamental requirements:

1. there must be a demonstrated need for a weekly air service; and
2. the location must be sufficiently remote in terms of surface travel time to a population centre or neighbouring location receiving a weekly transport service.

1. NEED

In demonstrating need, a remote location may qualify for a RASS service if:

- it does not currently receive a weekly or more frequent air transport service capable of carrying passengers and essential supplies; and
- it has a permanent population base.

Subject to evidence of the above needs, a location might qualify for a RASS service if it has arranged a regular air service at its own expense. The location must demonstrate that the cost of this service is significantly higher than an equivalent level of service would be under a RASS subsidy. Evidence of costs to the location must be provided.

2. REMOTENESS

A location will be considered remote if:

- the location is located in an area regarded as remote or very remote using the Australian Standard Geographical Classification as used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics; or
- it is beyond two hours (one way) safe surface travel to a service centre providing essential goods and services; or
- it is beyond one hour's (one way) safe surface travel to a location receiving a weekly RASS or equivalent transport service.

Surface travel times are based on safe travel within speed limits, recognising that surface conditions may have an impact on travel time. Consideration may also be given to geographic isolation.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF A PREFERRED LOCATION

A location receiving an air service under the RASS Scheme is required to:

- maintain and operate its aerodrome in accordance with the civil aviation safety regulations, especially where they relate to aerodromes receiving passenger transport;
- in accordance with civil aviation safety requirements establish a "positive" aerodrome reporting system with the RASS air operator so that the pilot can be notified of any changes to the aerodrome serviceability status [note: in relation to the "positive" reporting system, it is envisaged that failure of the location to positively report on the safety of their aerodrome is to result in the air operator refusing to land if the aerodrome does not meet the required safety standard];

and

- advise the Department of any changes in circumstances that might affect its ongoing eligibility for a RASS service.

Preference will be given to a location that meets all the above criteria and which has one or more of the following characteristics:

- will use the service regularly for either passenger travel or carriage of goods;
- has a permanent population base;
- is isolated for significantly prolonged periods due to adverse weather conditions and associated consequences, such as rising rivers or flooded landmass;
- can demonstrate an ongoing need for the delivery of essential supplies, such as fresh food and medical supplies;
- has resident primary or secondary school students relying on regular delivery of educational materials;
- does not have employers with the ability to provide such a service.

4. QUALITY OF AIRSTRIP/AERODROME INFRASTRUCTURE

To receive a RASS service, a location must have an aerodrome suitable for receipt of the RASS service: that is, it is compliant with relevant Commonwealth civil aviation safety regulations as they apply to the carriage by air of passengers and cargo.

5. AERODROME INSPECTION REPORT / AERODROME SAFETY STANDARDS

It is the aerodrome owner's responsibility to provide the air operator and the Department with a report from a recent aerodrome technical inspection undertaken by an aerodrome inspector currently licensed by CASA that supports the condition of the aerodrome as being in compliance with CASR 82.3 and/or other aviation safety regulations as advised.

For new applicants, this report may be provided:

- at the time of lodging the application; or
- as requested by the Department once the location has been admitted to the Scheme, which is often subject to the certification of the airstrip.

For existing RASS location, a report may be requested by the Department where there are concerns regarding the compliance of the airstrip with applicable aviation safety regulations.

The aerodrome owner is responsible for any costs incurred in the inspection process and in the certification of the airstrip by CASA.

The Delegate may consider requests for funding assistance for these one-off costs, for example for services related to Indigenous communities. However, in principle the cost of these requirements is the responsibility of the aerodrome owner.

6. CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES

A location receiving a RASS service is obliged to advise the Department of any changes in circumstances that might affect its ongoing eligibility for a RASS service.

7. MINISTERIAL DISCRETION

The portfolio Minister has discretion to include a location in the RASS Scheme provided it can demonstrate a legitimate need not specifically addressed by these criteria. A location seeking admission must present a case addressing both the need for a regular weekly air service and its remoteness. In preparing a case, the location must demonstrate why the present criteria do not address its particular requirements.