



01 November 2011

Deputy Director
Civil Military Aviation Coordination
Air Force Headquarters, R1-06-C110
Russell Offices
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir,

The Regional Aviation Association of Australia (RAAA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on RAAF Review of Civilian Aviation Access to Air Force Airfields.

The RAAA acknowledges the long history of military and civil aviation cooperation, most notably at Darwin, Townsville and Newcastle. The RAAA also understands the important strategic and tactical issues that the RAAF must consider in any military/civilian aviation cooperation on facilities.

It is however apparent that the authors of the review consider that the current levels of airport sharing is adequate, possibly even excessive, and that any expansion of the joint-user concept is detrimental to the RAAF's goals.

This is a view that the RAAA would question. If a model has worked well in the past why not consider possibilities in the future? If military security is not compromised, military operations are not affected substantially, there is capacity and costs are shared fairly it would seem short-sighted to rule out any chance of expansion of existing arrangements or the consideration of future ones.

Australia is experiencing a fundamental change in its economy where resource projects require access to much greater levels of labour, and that labour is likely to be far more mobile than in the past. In short, major population centres may in future supply the majority of the labour for resource projects in regional and remote locations. It is these projects that will expand the economy and grow wealth. Some of this increased wealth will flow to the government in taxes who will in turn seek to enhance Australia's military capacity.

In the short to medium term it is unlikely that new airports will be developed close to major population centres so existing infrastructure will have to grow to take advantage of the expanding need for skilled labour. This may mean more cooperation between military and civil aviation rather than less.

Serving regional aviation, and through it, the people and businesses of regional Australia

Unit 11, 26-28 Winchcombe Court, Mitchell ACT 2911

ABN: 23 008 568 054 Telephone: 02 6162 0305 Facsimile: 02 6162 0308 Email: office@raaa.com.au Website: www.raaa.com.au

The RAAF could argue that these economic issues are not its concern and that it is up to civil aviation to take care of its own needs. Narrowly this is true but RAAF bases, both single user and joint, are Commonwealth owned and it would be up to the federal government to arbitrate what is in the nation's best interests. For example, the rapid expansion of the WA economy is placing considerable pressure on Perth Airport. This has seen slow but ongoing expansion of Perth's facilities and some recent but more limited development of Jandakot airport. It is also understood the important military role that Pearce plays just to the north. Is there a possibility that the Pearce base could play a limited role in support of civil aviation, already heavily engaged in supplying labour to WA's many and growing resource projects?

The RAAA would never expect the RAAF to compromise on its duties or its operations. The other side of the coin is that funding a standing air force is not cheap. That money must come from somewhere and it is the resource sector that is driving our economy and filling the government coffers. Military and civil aviation is therefore already linked economically and in their aspirations. It is in both sectors' interests to ensure that current cooperation levels are supported and that neither is blind to any reasonable expansion of joint user facilities. The increasing cooperation of military and civil air traffic teams, and air route development is testimony to what can be achieved.

I thank the authors for this opportunity to comment and am happy to discuss further at any time.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Paul Tyrrell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Tyrrell
Chief Executive Officer