

MEDIA RELEASE

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AAA calls for Budget focus on regional airport needs

The Australian Airports Association (AAA) has called on the Commonwealth Government to focus on the critical funding requirements of Australia's regional airports in this year's federal budget.

There are around 300 airports in regional Australia that are registered for regular passenger transport (RPT) services and while not all of them are used for RPT, their investment in airfield infrastructure and compliance with aviation safety and operating procedures makes them a vital infrastructure asset for their local community.

'Most of these airports are owned and operated by local government and they face a dire funding outlook over the medium to longer term,' said Caroline Wilkie, CEO of the AAA.

A study commissioned by the AAA and presented to the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development last year found that 61 per cent of regional airports had budget deficits in 2014-15, with costs exceeding revenues by an average of 45 per cent for airports without RPT services. Nearly 40 per cent of regional airports anticipate persistent budget deficits over the next decade, and the cost of operating a regional airport is forecast to rise by almost 40 per cent during that time.

'Our regional airports are expecting an annual budget deficit of at least \$17 million a year which is at least a \$170 million shortfall in essential infrastructure and maintenance funding at regional airports over the decade,' Ms Wilkie said.

'Our regional airports need funding support now if they are to continue to provide vital transport infrastructure for regional and remote communities, ranging from emergency service access, general aviation, freight and passenger services,' Ms Wilkie said.

The AAA acknowledges current funding support provided for regional airports, but has called on the Government to expand eligibility and increase funding for regional airports, including \$100 million over four years through a revised and more comprehensive Regional Aviation Access Program (RAAP) and Remote Airstrip Upgrade (RAU) scheme.

The AAA has also called for a review of requirements for federal funding to be matched from local or state government applicants with a view to the Commonwealth providing full funding on a demonstrated needs and case-by-case basis.

Funding should also be provided for critical maintenance works in addition to infrastructure projects. 'The Commonwealth Government has an opportunity to put funding arrangements in place that will stabilise the funding outlook for regional airports with a view to supporting their viability and growth over the longer term.

'Regional Australia is critically dependent on reliable, efficient and safe aviation infrastructure and this must be a priority in this year's Budget,' Ms Wilkie said.

The AAA's budget submission is [available via this link](#).

About the Australian Airports Association:

The Australian Airports Association has been representing airports across the country for the past 30 years. It represents 260 airport members, including all the capital city airports through to the small regional aerodromes of rural Australia. www.airports.asn.au

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