

MEDIA RELEASE



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Rex puts profits before communities in attack on regional airport funding

The Australian Airports Association (AAA) has expressed its disappointment in calls by Regional Express (Rex) for governments to “be discerning” before funding regional airports.

AAA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said Rex’s remarks risked cutting off regional airports’ financial lifeline, leaving ratepayers footing more of the bill for our national aviation infrastructure.

She said Rex’s announcement on the eve of the Federal budget undermined the work of the industry to campaign for much-needed funding for struggling regional airports.

“Rex is putting its own profits before the interests of regional Australia when it calls for such a punitive approach to regional airport funding,” Ms Wilkie said.

“Communities will simply get left behind if local councils are forced to mine an already limited ratepayer base to keep their local airport safely operating.

“With 60 per cent of regional airports already running at a loss, it’s galling that Rex would call into question the limited access regional airports have to government funding.

“Having a regional airport with adequate seating, floorspace and toilets for their passengers is not excessive, it’s essential.”

Ms Wilkie said without government funding, Rex would risk seeing airports it serves closing down as ratepayers struggled to keep pace with required maintenance and upgrades.

“It’s time Rex showed its commitment to the regions that have served their business so well by getting behind vital government funding for regional airport infrastructure,” she said.

Ms Wilkie said the announcement on the eve of the budget was especially disappointing given the work of the AAA and the Australian Local Government Association, Royal Flying Doctor Services, Australian Logistics Council and Regional Aviation Association of Australia to secure additional funding as part of its Protect Regional Airports campaign.

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About the Protect Regional Airports campaign

More than 15 million passengers fly in and out of regional Australia each year. To continue being a successful and prosperous nation, the back bone of Australia, the regions, need equitable access to markets, health care, exports and produce - all of which are facilitated by regional airports.

The AAA, with support from the Australian Logistics Council (ALC), Regional Aviation Association of Australia (RAAA), Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS), are asking the Government to provide all regional airports access to funding to undertake essential infrastructure investment to improve safety and keep our regions connected.

The Protect Regional Airport campaign is designed to raise awareness of the contribution regional airports make to Australia and to encourage the Australian Government to commit to a two-pronged funding proposal.

The proposal is to:

1. Extend and expand the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Programme (RAUP) over four years, allowing remote communities such as Milyakburra in the NT or Mimili in SA to also benefit.; and
2. Develop a new program similar to the RAUP that would allow regional centres like Moruya, Biloela, Manjimup or Cummins to apply for funding.