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ASSOCIATION

STATEMENT

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Media coverage on regional airport fees

On Friday 24 August, The Australian published an article referencing a submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Economic Regulation of Australian Airports that claimed some regional airports were charging aircraft operators a ‘training fee’ simply for flying over the aerodrome. The AAA has investigated these claims and they appear to be simply untrue.

A particular example is provided in the article by an aircraft operator claiming an aerodrome would charge a fee for “over flying West Wyalong at 5500 feet and making a safety broadcast of position and intentions”.

Avdata is the organisation that provides data reporting and billing services to many regional airports across Australia and is mentioned in the article. The AAA has confirmed with Avdata that they do not and will not charge on behalf of an airport for an aircraft to transit through the CTAF area without making use of the airport facility. An invoice is issued only when the available data leads to the conclusion that a billable use of the airport has occurred. In the very rare instance this may occur due simply to human error, the aircraft operator would be entitled to have the invoice adjusted accordingly. However, no evidence has been presented to indicate this has occurred.

The article also quotes the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) as describing the “absurd situation” of regional airports charging aircraft operators for making training approaches on the runway. It appears that AOPA are not aware that just because an aircraft does not physically ‘touch’ an aerodrome’s physical infrastructure, in making a training approach they are still utilising the facility and preventing another operator from doing so. However, more importantly the ability for aerodrome operators to recover fees from an aircraft operator for training approaches is specifically enshrined in state and local government legislation in several jurisdictions.

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