The Australian Airports Association (AAA), with support from the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), the Regional Aviation Association of Australia (RAAA), and the Australian Logistics Council (ALC), are seeking direct Federal Government funding support for essential infrastructure at regional airports.

**WHY ARE REGIONAL AIRPORTS IMPORTANT?**

- **45% of Australia’s tourism**
  
  It is estimated that regional Australia accounts for 45 per cent of Australia’s tourism industry, with regional airports being a critical enabling gateway.

- **360,000+ flights**
  
  In 2016-17, domestic RPT aircraft movements were in excess of 1.2 million. Of this, over 360,000, or nearly 25%, were to or from an airport in regional Australia.

- **15m passengers**
  
  Domestic passengers account for around 117 million trips per year. Regional passengers are estimated to make up 12 per cent of this total, or 15 million passengers per year.

- **500 aircraft**
  
  Across Australia, airports house more than 500 aircraft available to be deployed for firefighting duties.

- **4450 jobs**
  
  Regional airports directly employ over 1700 full-time workers and support an additional 2750 jobs.

- **over 6000 emergency evacuations**
  
  Over 6000 emergency evacuations are facilitated by regional airports a year.

**WHAT HAPPENS TO REGIONAL AIRPORTS WITHOUT FUNDING?**

- **Sub optimal safety**
  
  Many regional airports are operating runways and infrastructure that is 70+ years old, with substantial upgrades needed to meet modern aviation safety standards.

- **Regional isolation**
  
  Regional communities risk being cut off from health care, education, economic and travel opportunities.

- **Infrastructure deficit**
  
  There is an estimated $170 million shortfall in infrastructure funding over the next 10 years, with costs to increase by 40 per cent over the same period.
CASE STUDIES

SAFE AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Towards the end of 2017 CASA undertook a surveillance inspection at Moree Airport and issued a number of safety findings about the condition of all pavements at the airport, relating to:

1. Pavement irregularities and settlement deformation
2. Loss of frictional characteristics of the pavement
3. Poor ride quality

Because Moree sits on highly reactive black soil, the pavement surface quickly develops minor depressions and deformations. Steps to correct identified minor pavement deficiencies in the past have only resulted in relocating the problem from one area to another. Reconstructing the entire pavement areas (97,000m² of sealed pavement) is well outside of the owner/operator Moree Plains Shire Council’s budget, and adhoc efforts have not provided the expected level of endurance. A reconstruction would still not guarantee the absence of some minor ‘bird baths’ in the finished pavement. Previously any pavement improvements were staggered to take into consideration the availability of funding, as well as the ability to realistically complete all works in one year. The repairs expected by CASA would impact on current and future maintenance programs to a devastating level, as they would need to be completed all at once.

The importance of maintaining Moree Airport to service the regional area as well as itinerant air travellers from around Australia is pivotal to the economy of the Moree Shire, as well as assisting with airport maintenance costs.

In an endeavor to satisfy the requirements CASA’s requirements, Council released a request for quotations to provide recommendations on how to proceed with remedial pavement works.

The ability to have access to ongoing government funding to complete pavement works for Moree Plains Shire Council mean that a safer and more reliable infrastructure would be available at Moree Airport for all users.

DRIVING REGIONAL TOURISM

The Fraser Coast Council owned and operated Hervey Bay airport is a prime example of how local government can be encouraged to invest in its airport to support rapid aviation growth, and is then required to continue to upgrade and maintain the asset after a downturn in passenger throughput.

The mid 2000s saw an influx of low-cost airline services, with the likes of Virgin Blue, and Jetstar beginning to deploy aircraft to regional airports from city centres, to target leisure, cost conscious traveller. One of the beneficiaries of this expansion was Hervey Bay. In 2004 the small Queensland tourism centre saw 34,000 passengers pass through its airport. However, the attraction of jet aircraft services from Virgin and Jetstar, led Council to take the bold step to extend the runway to facilitate larger aircraft. In 2005, an investment of $15 million saw the airport jet aircraft ready and within three years passenger numbers had lifted to 217,000. However, in 2009 the bubble burst with Jetstar withdrawing its services amid the global financial downturn and subsequent downturn in tourism. Passenger numbers fell below 150,000 in 2011 and have slowly recovered in recent years but not to the levels of 2008. However, the cost of maintaining and upgrading the runway and its associated apron and taxiways remains.

While the runway was extended in 2005 by over 500m, it was identified at the time that this area would require further work in future years. When recently investigating the condition of the older part of the runway, it was recommended that Council should overlay the whole of the air strip, the airfield lighting system was also non-complaint because of its age. Due to seasonal weather, the opportunity to complete these projects individually is limited, therefore Council has to consider completing the works at the one time. The combined cost to Council for these projects is likely to be in excess of $10 million.

Having a safe and compliant airport is essential for a region that relies heavily on tourism for its local economy, and large capital costs such as this take many years to recoup with limited airlines to contribute towards the upkeep.
**FINANCIAL CHALLENGES**

**AERONAUTICAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICIT**

$170 million

**NEW SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS**

$25 million

*This is the funding required for essential repairs and upgrades of runways, taxiways, aprons and lighting systems. This figure is based on a 2016 ACIL Allen Report, using 2014-15 data.

*These are the estimated infrastructure costs for regional airports to meet the Government’s new security requirements.

**HOW CAN GOVERNMENT HELP? CREATE THE REGIONAL AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (RAIF)**

**$100m for essential infrastructure**

This new fund would deliver $25 million per year over four years, to assist regional airports undertake essential aeronautical repairs and upgrades and adapt their infrastructure to meet the Government’s security requirements.

**Future-proofing regional Australia**

Providing this essential funding assistance will not only ensure regional communities can continue to enjoy safe and efficient air transport, it will also future proof regional Australia for generations with infrastructure that drives economic growth.

**Co-contribution model**

As with other Commonwealth funding initiatives, it is envisaged the RAIF would adopt a co-contribution model. This would see 50 per cent of the funding provided by the Commonwealth, and the remaining 50 per cent provided by state and local government.
**ELIGIBLE REGIONAL AIRPORTS**

*This is only an indicative list.*

**NSW**
- Adaminaby
- Orange
- Parkes
- Peak Hill
- Port Macquarie
- Quirindi
- Scone Memorial
- Tamworth
- Taree
- Temora
- Tenterfield
- Toowoomba
- Toorak
- Wagga Wagga
- Waroona
- Wellington (NSW)
- West Wyalong
- Wyong
- Young

**NT**
- Batchelor
- Emu Valley

**VIC**
- Apollo Bay (Marengo)
- Ararat
- Bacchus Marsh
- Bairnsdale
- Ballarat
- Benalla
- Bendigo
- Birchip
- Boort
- Cobden
- Cohuna
- Colac
- Corryong
- Donald
- Echuca
- Edenhope
- Hamilton
- Horsham
- Kaniva
- Kerang
- Latrobe
- Mangalore
- Maryborough (VIC)
- Mildura
- Mount Hotham
- Nhill
- Orford
- Patchawallack
- Porepunkah
- Port Fairy
- Portland
- Pyramid Hill
- Robinvale
- Sea Lake
- Shepparton
- St Arnaud
- Stawell
- Swan Hill
- Warracknabeal
- Warrnambool
- West Sale
- Wycheproof
- Yarram-Parkside
- Yarrawonga

**QLD**
- Atherton
- Ayr
- Biggenden
- Boonah
- Bowen
- Bundaberg
- Caloundra Aerodrome
- Charters Towers
- Chinchilla
- Clare
- Dalby
- Dulacca
- Eidsvold
- Emerald
- Gayndah
- Herberton
- Hervey Bay
- Home Hill
- Ingham
- Innisfail
- Kingaroy
- Maryborough (QLD)
- Miles
- Milparinka
- Millmerran
- Monto
- Moranbah
- Moura
- Mundubbera
- Nanango
- Nebo
- Pittsworth
- Proserpine-Whitsunday
- Coast
- Redcliffs
- Roma
- Southport
- Stanthorpe
- Tara
- Thangool (Biloela)
- Theodore
- Toowoomba
- Tulia
- Warwick
- Windorah

**SA**
- Bordertown
- Coonawarra
- Kadina
- Kangaroo Island
- Keith
- Kingston SE
- Lucindale
- Maitland
- Millicent
- Minnipa
- Moolboola
- Mount Gambier
- Naracoorte
- Padthaway
- Peterborough
- Port Augusta
- Port Lincoln
- Port Pirie
- Prominent Hill
- Quorn
- Renmark
- Robe
- Streaky Bay
- Tintinara
- Tumby Bay

**TAS**
- Bruny Island
- Burnie
- Cape Barren Island
- Devonport
- Flinders Island (TAS)
- George Town
- King Island
- Queenstown
- Smithton
- St Helens
- Strahan

**WA**
- Albany
- Argyll
- Balgo Hill
- Beverley
- Boolgaeda
- Boyup Brook
- Bunbury
- Busselton
- Cervantes
- Collie
- Cranbrook
- Cunderdin
- Denmark
- Dongara
- Dowerin
- Fortescue Dave Forrest
- Jurien Bay
- Kellerberrin
- Kojonup
- Leonora
- Mingenew
- Narrogin
- Quairading
- Wongan Hills

**SUPPORTERS**