

MEDIA RELEASE

28 September 2020



Aviation network extension welcomed, struggling airports still missing out

The Australian Airports Association (AAA) welcomes the extension of the Federal Government’s Domestic Aviation Support (DANS) program and Regional Airline Network Support (RANS) program but says more must be done to support our struggling airports.

AAA Chief Executive James Goodwin said these two vital initiatives have provided a lifeline to our airlines and helped Australians travel.

“The Federal Government knows the aviation sector was hit first and hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic and it’s encouraging to see the support for a basic national network extension to ensure essential workers can continue to get to where they need to be and to help re-start domestic tourism now that the state borders are starting to re-open,” Mr Goodwin said.

“In many regional communities, aircraft are often the only public transport system available to residents.

“Guaranteeing smaller air routes means regional communities have affordable, reliable and regular access to essential services such as doctors and education in the larger cities.

“Without this assistance, regional aviation networks would be in danger of becoming commercially unviable for airlines which could result in higher airfares or a complete loss of flights at the local airport.

“While these programs provide a huge helping hand to our airlines, our airports are still being considered as an afterthought.

“Airports have been good corporate citizens during this pandemic, staying open and in many cases reducing or waiving landing fees for airlines despite losing \$320 million a month in revenue.

“Even with this program in place, jobs on the ground are hard to sustain because the majority of regional airports are council-owned and don’t have access to JobKeeper.

“More than 70 per cent of staff at regional airports have been placed on reduced hours, been re-deployed or made redundant.

“To provide sector-wide support, the government must use the Budget to support the costs of essential, government-mandated services such as international and domestic security screening, airfield security and extra COVID-19 cleaning.”

ENDS.

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