

16 August 2022

Director - Engagement, Advisory and Projects Section
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Via Email: IA.Review@infrastructure.gov.au.

To Whom it May Concern,

Independent Review of Infrastructure Australia

I write in response to the letter from Mr Mike Mrdak AO and Nicole Lockwood dated 29 July 2022 regarding their independent review of Infrastructure Australia (the Review). The Australian Airports Association (AAA) welcomes the opportunity to participate in the Review.

The AAA represents the interests of more than 340 airports and aerodromes Australia wide – from the landing strips in remote communities to major international gateway airports. There are a further 150 corporate members representing aviation stakeholders and organisations that provide goods and services to the airport sector.

The current purpose of Infrastructure Australia (IA) – to advise governments, industry and the community on the investments and reforms needed to deliver better infrastructure for all Australians – is generally sound. IA also provides important value from its ability to take a national view on the planning and provision of infrastructure in comparison to the multitude of state-based 'i-bodies' that take a necessarily narrower, jurisdictionally based view.

While the AAA understands IA's wide remit in assessing the national infrastructure needs across the various domains, there is a need for the IA Board and Secretariat to have a greater role in identifying airport and airport related infrastructure investment and the benefits to the community and economy. To that end, more airport / aviation experience at both Board and Secretariat levels would be beneficial.

Based on the AAA's interactions with IA in previous years, there is a low level of comprehension for the issue that face owners and operators of airport and related airport infrastructure. Given IA's historic focus on infrastructure with significant investment of public funds, the engagement with airports tends to be peripheral outside the four largest Federally leased 'gateway' airports (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth) and Western Sydney Airport.

There are, however, areas that show an improvement in IA's understanding of the role airports play in the national transport network. Examples from its 2021 *Australian Infrastructure Plan* include:

- The focus by IA on maintaining curfew-free conditions for passenger and freight at currently unrestricted airports is welcome – echoing the Australian Government's *Freight and Supply Chain Strategy* and the *National Urban Freight Planning Principles*.
- Similarly, the understanding of the importance of infrastructure projects that improve landside connectivity to airports, particularly rail links to the gateway airports in Melbourne and Perth, demonstrating the value of airports as both economic and transport nodes.

- Finally, recognition of the value of airports in maintaining connectivity between capital cities and regional and remote centres shows a sound understanding of the role of regional airports in the national transport system.

Similarly, IA's 2019 *Australian Infrastructure Audit* identifies the pressures that changes in land use present to transport corridors and facilities, including airports. The AAA recommends IA better embeds land use protections for transport infrastructure into its policies and assessment procedures. In the case of airports, it could achieve this by adopting the *National Airport Safeguarding Framework* (NASF) and the *National Urban Freight Planning Principles*.

The AAA recommends IA remains a body which provides independent and transparent advice to government, industry and the community on the future transport and infrastructure needs of the nation.

Should you have any questions regarding this submission, please contact the AAA's Director of Policy and Advocacy, Scott Martin via telephone on 0437285739 or via email at: smartin@airports.asn.au.

Yours sincerely

James Goodwin
Chief Executive