

## Getting the balance right on the Aviation Industry Ombuds Scheme

The proposed establishment of an Aviation Industry Ombuds Scheme represents a significant step toward boosting the flying public's confidence in Australian aviation services.

[In response to the Federal Government's consultation paper](#), the Australian Airports Association (AAA) has highlighted the need for the future scheme to operate independently with a sensible scope, possess clearly defined complaint handling processes and equitable funding arrangements to ensure optimal delivery for passengers and the sector.

The AAA has outlined recommendations for consideration in the scheme's development, which include:

- One million annual passenger cap for airports covered in the scheme. This still covers more than 90% of air travellers and lessens impact on recovering regional and rural airports
- Federal Government agencies, such as Airservices Australia, to be included in the future scheme
- The Aviation Industry Ombuds Scheme be made independent with a staged rollout

AAA Head of Policy and Advocacy Natalie Heazlewood said:

"Australian airports will be constructive towards getting the balance right around a future Aviation Industry Ombuds Scheme.

"With a complex number of factors influencing aviation, it is important the ombuds scheme is realistic and ensures consumers get full and timely airfare refunds.

"Many smaller regional and rural airports often operate at a loss and are still dealing with the fallout of the Rex Airlines financial collapse.

"Smaller Australian airports should be exempt from the scheme to help safeguard their current survival, while passengers would still be covered by Australian Consumer Law.

"Federal agencies, including Airservices Australia, form part of a passenger's journey and can influence flight delays and cancellations.

"Last financial year, only 1% of these delays were caused by airports in Australia and airline refund requests remain the top complaint received by the current Airline Consumer Advocate.

"The AAA has long called for an industry ombuds scheme to operate independently in the Australian market.

"It is also essential that any scheme does not have an adverse impact through higher airfares and greater operational costs for both airports and airlines.

“We’ll continue to work closely with industry on the important initiatives in the Aviation White Paper, ensuring measures deliver long term benefits to air travellers and communities across the country.”

The AAA is national voice for airports, representing the interests of more than 340 airports and aerodromes across Australia. It also represents more than 150 corporate members supplying products and services to airports.

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