AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS ASSOCIATION

Regional Capitals Australia

REGIONAL AIRPORTS **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY** FACT SHEET

REGIONAL AIRPORTS ARE ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE, BUT MANY ARE STRUGGLING TO STAY VIABLE

The 2026 Regional Airports Financial Sustainability Survey, undertaken by ACIL Allen and commissioned by the Australian Airports Association (AAA) and Regional Capitals Australia (RCA), found that widespread financial losses and chronic underinvestment across 41 regional airports are putting essential community infrastructure under increasing pressure.

FINANCIAL REALITY

- **73%** of regional airports surveyed **operated at a loss**.
- **$519,000** was the **median loss** across surveyed airports.
- Every **small airport** surveyed operated at a loss, with a **median loss of $435,000**.
- **67%** of surveyed airports are **deferring required capital investment** due to funding constraints.
- **63% cannot fund** required safety or security upgrades.
- **85%** have **limited capacity to invest** in infrastructure needed to support air services.

Airport investment is occurring at a rate equivalent to a 30-year asset replacement cycle, while major runways and pavements may require investment every 10–15 years.

Source: ACIL Allen, Regional Airports Financial Sustainability Survey 2026.

MORE THAN A PASSENGER TERMINAL

Regional airports keep communities connected to services that save lives, respond to disasters and support national security.

- **93% support the Royal Flying Doctor Service**
- **83% support emergency services**
- **71% support disaster response**
- **61% support search and rescue**
- **46% support Defence activities**

All but one airport surveyed supported at least one essential or emergency service, yet only around half reported charging for their use.

PRESSURE IS GROWING

- **68% report greater reliance on government support to maintain services.**
- **61% report increased reliance on council or owner subsidies.**
- **66% face increased pressure to raise airport charges.**
- **63% say they must support services regardless of commercial viability.**

Without sustainable investment, regional communities face further deferral of critical infrastructure, greater pressure on councils and ratepayers, higher airport charges and risks to essential connectivity.

THE ASK

The AAA and RCA are calling for the Australian Government to:

ONE provide at least $50 million a year in permanent funding for the Regional Airports Program and Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program;

TWO review co-contribution requirements so small and remote councils can access Commonwealth funding; and

THREE establish permanent funding for federally mandated security and regulatory costs at regional and remote airports.

Regional airports are essential community infrastructure. Sustainable, long-term funding is critical to keeping them safe, viable and connected.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

INFO@AIRPORTS.ASN.AU OR CALL **02 6230 1110**

SECRETARIAT@REGIONALCAPITALSAUSTRALIA.ORG OR CALL **+61 434 274 457**