**10 March 2021**

**Regional aviation welcomes further government assistance**

The Regional Aviation Association of Australia (RAAA) has welcomed the Federal Government’s announcement today extending critical financial assistance to the aviation and tourism industries. It has been widely acknowledged that aviation and tourism have been the worst affected industries and earlier this year the RAAA, Airlines for Australia and New Zealand (A4ANZ) and the Australian Airports Association (AAA) called on the government to extend the support that has been in place.

The CEO of the RAAA, Mr Steven Campbell praised the government in extending this support stating that without these measures many regional communities would have lost vital air connectivity with major cities. Our aviation companies just could not sustain the losses in continuing these flights which provide vital medical supplies and freight to the regional communities.

“Airlines can’t just turn the tap on and off with schedules and aviation workers can’t work from home. Without this support our industry would have been decimated and regional communities effectively cut-off.” Mr Campbell said.

“We also know that the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are still very much hurting our industry and border closures have not helped. The extension to 30 September 2021 will hopefully see us turning the corner once the national rollout of the Covid-19 vaccines has had its impact.”

“I also welcome the announcement of further measures as part of the government’s 5-year plan and want to highlight the plight of smaller aviation organisations who are also doing it tough and are just as important to the aviation eco-system as the airlines.”

“Our flight training providers and maintenance organisations have also struggled due to the reduced demand flowing down from the lack of airline flying. Flying Schools who would normally see hundreds of international students through their doors each year have either shut their doors or in the process.”

“The 5-year plan must look beyond that time period, it must take in to account the large numbers of qualified personnel who have or will leave this industry, where are the next pilots and engineers going to come from? Action must be taken now to prevent future shortfalls”

“I look forward to continue to work with the government and its Department to work on long term solutions that will ensure the aviation eco-system is sustainable and able to play its vital role in supporting the Australian economy recover from this pandemic.” Mr Campbell said.

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The RAAA represents aviation across Australia. It has over 100 members and its Air Operator Certificate (AOC) holding members directly employ over 2,500 Australians, many in regional areas. On an annual basis, the RAAA’s AOC members jointly turn over more than $1.5 billion, carry well in excess of 2 million passengers and move over 23 million kilograms of freight. Our Regional Airport members also provide and manage critical infrastructure across Australian.