



**The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP**

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**Deputy Prime Minister  
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development  
Leader of The Nationals  
Federal Member for New England**

Ref: MC22-001209

Mr Steven Campbell  
Chief Executive Officer  
Regional Aviation Association of Australia  
Unit 3, 10 Kennedy Street  
KINGSTON ACT 2604

24 March 2022

via: [ceo@raaa.com.au](mailto:ceo@raaa.com.au)

Dear Mr Campbell

Thank you for your letter of 15 February 2022 outlining the Regional Aviation Association of Australia's (RAAA) 2022-23 Budget priorities.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of aviation to the social and economic wellbeing of Australians living in regional and remote areas, and this commitment is reiterated in the Aviation Recovery Framework 'Flying to Recovery' (the Framework) released in December 2021.

As you are aware, the Framework includes an additional \$15 million to improve the safety and accessibility of airstrips in remote communities through a ninth round of the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program. This round closed for applications on 17 March 2022, and I hope remote aerodrome owners and operators took up this opportunity to apply for funding for their infrastructure works. In addition, the Australian Government will shortly be opening the third round of the Regional Airports Program to support improvements to aviation infrastructure at regional airports.

The Australian Government has also recently agreed to extend the Regional Airline Network Support (RANS) Program to 30 June 2022, or until existing program funding runs out, whichever occurs sooner. The RANS Program has provided a critical lifeline to regional communities during lockdowns and border closures by supporting airlines to maintain a minimum level of connectivity across their network of regional routes. The Australian Government recognises that recovery has been slow in some sections of the regional aviation market, and this further extension to the RANS Program will assist airlines deliver services to regional communities as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Australian Government notes industry concerns in relation to the costs of security screening activities and its impact on regional passengers. Our Regional Airport Security Screening Fund has supported regional airports to purchase or upgrade their security screening equipment, and the Regional Airports Screening Infrastructure program is continuing to assist regional airports with the minimum necessary capital, and initial operating costs, of complying with enhanced security screening requirements.

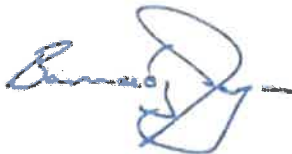
The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (my Department) is continuing to work with the Department of Home Affairs to consider support options for sustainable security screening at regional airports. An independent consultant was engaged in 2021 to gather information about screening costs, but only a small number of regional airports provided input. I would urge you to encourage your members to participate in any future screening cost data collection exercises. This will ensure that the Australian Government has a robust evidence base to inform consideration of an enduring support mechanism.

The Australian Government is aware of the RAAA's concerns about current and future workforce shortages, including of licensed aviation maintenance engineers. My Department is currently working on a transport skills project across all transport sectors, including aviation. This project is gathering a range of current evidence and data from industry, the tertiary sector and the Australian Bureau of Statistics, to identify and quantify the impact of COVID-19 on skills, and where there are current and predicted skills shortages and their causes. I would also urge you to encourage your members to provide data to support this work.

I thank the RAAA for their ongoing advocacy in this area and look forward to continuing to work with industry to address these issues.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Barnaby Joyce', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Barnaby Joyce MP