



02 March 2022

The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development
Via email: minister.joyce@infrastructure.gov.au

Cc Senator Susan McDonald
senator.mcdonald@aph.gov.au

Dear Deputy Prime Minister

Urgent request for support for aviation operators at Moorabbin Airport

On behalf of the members of the Regional Aviation Association of Australia (RAAA), in particular our members based at Moorabbin Airport, I am writing to you in your capacity as the Minister responsible for aviation in Australia, to seek your urgent intervention in rejecting the Airport's Master Plan.

I am aware that you have held meetings with some of our members based at Moorabbin who have highlighted to you the degradation of aviation infrastructure at the airport, with the current Master Plan submission planning further impediments to aviation activity. We believe this is in violation of Division 5 of the *Airports Act 1996 (the Act)* which has clear obligations for Federally leased airports to **be used as airports**. Moorabbin Airport continues to restrict aviation activities to promote non-aviation commercial development. Under Section 81 of the Act, you may refuse to approve the Master Plan based on sub-section (3)(a) which states:

(3) In deciding whether to approve the plan, the Minister must have regard to the following matters:

*(a) the extent to which carrying out the plan **would meet present and future requirements of civil aviation users of the airport**, and other users of the airport, for services and facilities relating to the airport concerned;*

You will no doubt be fully aware of the plight of general aviation (GA), this has been highlighted recently in the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee's inquiry into GA in Australia. With an estimated 25% of commercial pilots that were trained in 2019 coming through Moorabbin Airport flight training schools, it is clear that any reduction in ability for these operators to conduct their business will have a direct effect to the number of pilots coming through the system. This reduction will only add to the ever-increasing gap on supply of pilots for Australian airlines and commercial operators. There are also a number of aviation support businesses under threat such as vital maintenance organisations who are also slowly getting squeezed out of their leases and hangar space.

Your own Department recently highlighted these pressures on GA at federally leased airport through the Aviation Recovery Framework paper which stated the government would:



“place a stronger focus on ensuring proposed developments to support airport operations, including works to encourage GA participation, are delivered within indicated timeframes and not de-prioritised in favour of non-aviation development.”

The Moorabbin Master Plan that is currently in its final phase before approval is sought from you, has become a line in the sand for GA and their ability to continue at urban GA airports such as Moorabbin. It is our fear that your approval will be the death knell for many GA operators at the airport and will signal to the GA industry that this government will not uphold the intent of the *Airports Act 1996*.

A refusal to approve the Master Plan however, will send a clear signal to the aviation industry prior to the upcoming election that this government is prepared to stand up for GA and provide confidence to those essential GA businesses to continue to provide critical resources for our aviation industry.

Best regards,

Steven Campbell

Chief Executive Officer

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