

Senate Inquiry into the State of Australia's Aviation Sector



December 2025



The voice
for
local
government

No one understands the challenges and opportunities facing Victoria in the 21st century better than local councils. From rapidly evolving technology to social changes, shifting economies to environmental pressures, our local communities and the governments that represent them—are at the forefront of multiple transformations happening simultaneously.

As the peak body for the Victorian local government sector, the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) offers councils a one-stop shop of services and support to help them serve their communities.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we live. We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee Australian Senate

Dear Committee Members,

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the State of Australia's Aviation Sector and its capacity to deliver reliable and affordable services to rural, regional, and remote communities. We appreciate the Committee's focus on ensuring equitable access, service frequency, workforce capability and long-term regional sustainability.

About the MAV

The MAV is the peak body for Victoria's 79 local governments, advocating on behalf of councils and their communities. Our position on this matter is reflective of our membership noting the importance of regional aviation as being integral to regional liveability, economic development, emergency management capability, and equitable access to essential services.

MAV State Council Position – Regional Aviation

At our October 2025 State Council meeting, Victorian councils endorsed a formal advocacy position calling for strategic and ongoing investment in regional air services across rural Victoria. Specifically, councils resolved that the MAV advocate to the Federal Government for:

1. **Route viability support** – including subsidies or minimum revenue guarantees for passenger routes servicing rural airports.
2. **Infrastructure investment** – dedicated funding to support upgrades and renewal of rural aerodromes.
3. **A coordinated Regional Air Services Strategy** – to ensure equitable access to passenger flights across rural Victoria and to guide long-term planning, regional service coverage, and network resilience.

This Inquiry provides a timely opportunity to advance these priorities on behalf of our members.

Councils with Active Aviation-Related Investment

A number of Victorian rural and regional councils have invested in aerodrome infrastructure over the past decade, demonstrating both ongoing need and a consistent commitment to maintaining safe, functional and future-ready aviation assets. These councils include:

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Ballarat	Gannawarra	Northern Grampians
Benalla	Glenelg	Southern Grampians
Buloke	Greater Bendigo	Towong
Campaspe	Greater Shepparton	Wangaratta
Central Goldfields	Horsham	Warrnambool
Colac Otway	Latrobe	Wellington
Corangamite	Mansfield	West Wimmera
East Gippsland	Moira	Yarriambiack

These councils collectively represent a significant portion of Victoria's geographic area, agricultural production, manufacturing capacity, and tourism economy. Their investments reflect both growing demand and a shared concern about the sustainability of regional aviation services.

Issues and Opportunities Identified by Victorian Councils

1. Declining Route Viability and Service Frequency

Many rural routes face long-term commercial viability challenges. Councils consistently identify declining frequency, high fares, and operator withdrawal risk as core concerns. Minimum revenue guarantees or route support mechanisms would stabilise essential services and allow carriers to maintain regional connectivity.

2. Ageing Infrastructure and Under-Investment

Rural aerodromes often require upgrades to meet modern aviation standards, support larger aircraft, accommodate emergency services, or maintain safety compliance. A recurring issue raised by councils is the absence of a dedicated, ongoing aviation infrastructure funding stream.

3. Lack of a Coordinated Regional Aviation Strategy

Councils strongly support the development of a cross-government strategy to guide long-term planning, identify service gaps, and ensure rural communities have fair access to passenger services regardless of geographic location.

Conclusion

Regional aviation is critical to the social and economic wellbeing of communities across rural Victoria. A strong partnership between all levels of government, industry and regional stakeholders is essential to delivering a resilient, fair and future-ready aviation network.

The MAV urges the Committee to consider the need for sustained investment, a national framework for equitable regional access, and support mechanisms that enable rural airports and carriers to operate reliably and competitively.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute. We would welcome further engagement with the Committee.

Yours Faithfully,



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