



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

19 September 2006

Still cause for concern for regional airline access to Sydney Airport despite PM's guarantees

Productivity Commissioner reveals other 'options'

Last Thursday, Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor sought and received the Prime Minister's guarantee that regional airlines will continue to have access to Sydney Airport under the same conditions as were in place at the time when Sydney Airport was sold in 2002.

As a result of his question and subsequent media coverage of the issue, Mr Windsor received an email from Dr Neil Byron, Commissioner – Productivity Commission to reassure Mr Windsor that moving regional airlines to Bankstown was not on the agenda.

However, Mr Windsor is concerned with other comments made by Dr Byron which refer to the treatment of regional airlines which could have a negative impact on regional airlines and their users.

“The Productivity Commissioner, Dr Neil Byron has revealed a scenario for regional airline users that will have major implications for their continued ability to fly in and out of Sydney.

The Commissioner has indicated in his email to me that *‘There may be options like increasing the minimum size of aircraft at KSA from 18 seats to 24 or 30, or alternatively moving some regional flights to shoulder periods at KSA (outside the peak slots).’*” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor believes that this treatment of regional airlines and therefore those who use them, would be nearly as bad as shunting them out to Bankstown.

“People from country centres may only have access to 18 seat plane services to Sydney and to increase the seat capacity to anything more would mean preventing existing services from accessing Sydney Airport or if they were moved to shoulder periods – outside peak slots – it would mean that people using regional airline services would have less time on the ground to do their business or health related activities causing them to have to overnight with added expense to them.

This was one of the issues we battled with in 2001 when country people won the concessions that are now in place for the size of aircraft and the ringfencing of landing slots for regional airlines.

I will be writing to all NSW Local Government Councils alerting them to the possible recommendations,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor believes that NSW country people should have priority of access to their capital city over visitors from overseas.

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“Why should overseas aircraft most of which would have travelled between 8 to 14 hours, be given access at peak domestic demand times when the needs of country people to be able to get into Sydney early and get out later allowing for a full day’s activity should come first.

There was a big battle in 2001 and there will be an even bigger battle if they try to change the way things are now,” Mr Windsor said.

Attached is a copy of the email from Dr Neil Byron – Commissioner – Productivity Commission

-----Original Message-----

From: Byron, Neil

Sent: Friday, 15 September 2006 3:22 PM

To: Windsor, Tony (MP)

Subject: Regional Airline access to Kingsford Smith Airport - NewsAlert - Friday, 15 September 2006 13:33 .
[SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Dear Mr Windsor,

I have just seen your media release from yesterday re **Regional Airline access to Kingsford Smith Airport**

I would simply like to reassure you, as a Commissioner on that Inquiry, that we had made no recommendation to stop, or even limit, regional airline access to KSA, nor even considered making such a recommendation. Our report does not envisage any changes to the "Regional ring fence" in the foreseeable future.

The issue was certainly raised that, as passenger numbers into Sydney continue to rise, the implications of the "regional ring fence" for the efficient management of Sydney airport and airspace will increase and the matter **may need to be reviewed in future**. There may be options like increasing the minimum size of aircraft at KSA from 18 seats to 24 or 30, or alternatively moving some regional flights to shoulder periods at KSA (outside the peak slots). We gave no weight in the report to the suggestion from Bankstown that they would like to see more regional flights coming there instead of KSA and, frankly, we find it hard to imagine that happening, for many reasons.

The final paragraph of the section on the regional ring fence at KSA (p122) states:
"However the Commission emphasises that it has not sought to analyse these possible approaches and therefore makes no judgement on their efficacy."

I thank you sincerely for your interest in the Inquiry and for your suggestion that constituents contact us to discuss the Draft report. We certainly look forward to hearing from them, but I do hope they respond to what we have actually written there, not to misinterpretations in the media. We are very happy to send copies of the report to anyone, on request, and it is of course available at www.pc.gov.au

Yours faithfully,

Neil Byron

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Dr Neil Byron
Commissioner
Productivity Commission