



Labor's Aviation Policy

Martin Ferguson MP

Shadow Minister for Transport and Infrastructure

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Australia's aviation safety record is the envy of the world.

However, regulatory changes being considered by the Howard Government are threatening Australia's excellent safety record.

A Federal Labor Government will act to reverse new regulations that could jeopardise the wellbeing of the travelling public and work against the interests of Australian aviation.

The Australian industry has withstood the international decline in aviation and it has expanded locally, bringing major benefits to the economy. In fact, Australian aviation is a shining example of world's best practice when it comes to passenger movement, freight transportation and general aviation.

In recent years the industry has managed to survive the impact of 9/11 and the Bali bombings, the collapse of Ansett and the onslaught of SARS.

In the wake of such tragedies, Australian travellers and the thousands of people working in the aircraft industry want assurances that Australia's aviation safety record will never be compromised. A Labor Government will ensure safety is paramount.

More and more Australians are taking to the skies and Australian aviation companies are making gains in the international marketplace – this happy combination of circumstances should help ensure a bright future for an industry that brings wealth and opportunity to our country.

Under Howard Government, Australia's aviation safety has been under threat. The Coalition has buckled under pressure from industry players, pushing changes to suit their own personal agendas. The Government has pandered to the interests of a few, ignoring the advice of experienced professionals. Those who speak out against what they see as direct threats to airline safety have been bullied, harassed or ignored by the Howard Government.

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) has endured much turbulence in recent times; it stands accused of being the captive of the aviation industry, of falling victim to political interference and neglecting safety.

Labor has welcomed the Howard Government's move to support Labor's policy to abolish the CASA Board. In answering directly to the Minister for Transport, CASA will become more publicly accountable.

CASA should be adequately resourced and safety should be its priority. The review of regulations and internal CASA reforms, designed to streamline and simplify rules and procedures, should continue.

Labor believes that as a safety regulator, CASA should fully consult the aviation industry while remaining an independent authority. It must not be managed or dictated to by industry.

Airspace management reform

The Howard Government has mismanaged the design and implementation of the National Airspace System (NAS), a system that is fundamentally flawed. It has messed with established structures and compromised the integrity and safety of our airspace.

The Howard Government has relied on enthusiastic amateurs and failed to involve industry professionals in the design and implementation of NAS. As a consequence, the Government has delivered a system that reduces safety for the Australian travelling public and people working in the aviation industry.

The Minister for Transport and Regional Services handpicked a team to implement NAS without including a single commercial pilot or air traffic controller.

Labor has called on the Howard Government to consult with aviation industry professionals or risk a flawed airspace management system not suited to Australian conditions - but the Government has refused to do so.

A Federal Labor Government will inquire into the process that resulted in the development and implementation of NAS. The inquiry will focus on the role played by:

- Federal Government agencies.
- Special structures established to develop and implement NAS.
- The Minister for Transport and Regional Services.

Labor will ensure our airspace regulators restore a safe airspace system, free of political or other outside interference.

Labor supports the ongoing involvement of industry professionals in the design and implementation of airspace management reform in Australia.

On 30 August 2004, John Anderson issued two Directions to Airservices Australia. One requires Airservices Australia to establish and operate radar at a number of additional airports. The cost of the establishment of these radar is estimated to be \$150 million.

Section 16 of the Air Services Act states that costs incurred by Airservices Australia, if greater than would otherwise have been incurred as a result of Directions from the Minister, must be paid for by the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth has not budgeted for this expense and has not conducted any safety or needs case to show that the Directions from the Minister are necessary.

When the radar prescribed in the Directions become operational, operating costs will be met by users of the regional airports. This will substantially increase the costs for operators of aircraft using airports such as Mackay, Albury, Hobart and Maroochydore.

Labor does not support these Directions for there is no demonstrated need for this infrastructure.

Labor will rescind the Directions and instead encourage Airservices Australia to expedite the development of Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast (ADS-B) technology, which is more effective and cheaper than the proposed radar.

Labor will halt the implementation of all further stages of NAS until stage 2 (b) has been revised and fully implemented.

All further stages of NAS will be fully reviewed by Australian aviation industry professionals prior to their implementation.

Airservices Australia

The previous Labor Government began the process of separating safety regulatory functions and service provision functions.

Labor continues to support the establishment of the Airspace and Environment Regulatory Unit but this should not undermine Airservices Australia's safety management responsibility.

Labor, unlike the Coalition, has ruled out the privatisation of Airservices Australia.

In proposing to review the status of Airservices Australia, the Howard Government is clearly seeking revenge following the organisation's questioning of changes to air safety regulations.

Rather than the Howard Government's focus on domestic competition, Labor will encourage Airservices Australia to grow as an internationally competitive business.

This cannot be achieved if the operational arm of Airservices Australia's business is split off and privatised.

Mutual Recognition with New Zealand

Labor supports closer economic and regulatory harmonisation with the aviation industry in New Zealand.

Aviation safety systems will not be compromised in achieving harmonisation. For example Labor will insist that Australian cabin crew ratios be maintained.

The Howard Government has shown it is prepared to compromise Australia's aviation safety without justification.

Rather than pursue Mutual Recognition of Air Operators Certificates with New Zealand, Labor will continue to press for outcomes that do not compromise Australian aviation safety.

Terminal Control Units

Labor is opposed to the Howard Government's Terminal Control Unit (TCU) Airservices Integration Project, as it will jeopardise both safety and highly skilled jobs in our regions.

Labor will stop implementation of the Howard Government's proposal to close Sydney, Adelaide, Cairns and Perth TCUs, as the risk to the safety of Australian Aviation is too great.

Airservices Australia will be asked to reconvene the TCU Working Party to improve efficiency without the need to close Sydney, Adelaide, Cairns and Perth TCUs.

International Air Services

Labor recognises that international aviation is a vital contributor to the Australian economy and will ensure the industry continues to grow.

International air service agreements will operate to maximise the return for Australia. In particular, Labor will ensure that jobs and opportunities in the Australian airline industry are accorded highest priority when negotiating these agreements.

Labor's fair go for Regional Aviation Safety and Services

Network charging of airport charges

Labor will direct Airservices Australia to revert to a network charging system in consultation with the industry. In doing so, Labor will end the Howard Government's location specific charging regime for airport charges.

The introduction of the current location based charging by the Howard Government has resulted in significant cost increases for the users of regional airports equipped with fire services, towers and terminal navigation facilities.

While the reintroduction of network charging will help regional airlines, it will not alter the requirement for Airservices Australia to scrutinise their operations. It will force Airservices Australia to focus on safety, not profit, as the primary consideration.

Review of the Airports Act

In 2002, the Howard Government commenced a review of the Airports Act.

The review was to consider the effectiveness of the Act relating to Airport Master Plans and Major Development Plans, and airport obligations with respect to public consultation.

Submissions to the review closed on 28 February 2003, at which time the process ground to a complete halt.

Labor will conclude this review.

Government use of smaller airlines

Labor recognises the importance of competition on major routes, including Canberra.

The Howard Government has permitted low levels of patronage on smaller airlines by Australian Government officials on routes to and from Canberra.

Labor will establish an independent assessment of airline patronage by Australian Government officials.

Labor will encourage use of small airlines where it is cost effective to do so.

Labor will investigate contracting direct flights from Canberra to New South Wales regional centres for travel undertaken by Australian Government officials.

Labor will ensure that regional airlines such as Rex have access to appropriate facilities at Sydney Airport. Labor will not allow Sydney Airport to use its monopoly to disadvantage regional airlines.

Integrated Sydney Transport Plan

There is a pressing need for an integrated transport plan for Sydney – to examine infrastructure and environmental issues, and to make Sydney a better place for families.

As part of the integrated Sydney transport plan, Labor supports the building of a second airport for Sydney. This is important for the economic future of Sydney, New South Wales and the nation.

Labor believes people living in Sydney should not be subjected to future noise levels predicted for Sydney Airport. It is important to ease the impact of aircraft noise and improve the quality of life for residents living in this densely populated area of Australia.

Labor is committed to:

- The legislated cap and curfew at Sydney Airport.
- Implementing the Long Term Operating Plan.
- Ensuring all those eligible for noise amelioration measures receive them, and will consider the particular needs of schools and the unique circumstances of Sydenham.
- committed to support slot allocation priorities that preserve access for regional airlines while giving preference to larger aircraft.

Labor recognises that Badgerys Creek is no longer a viable option for Sydney's second airport. Labor will not build an airport at Badgerys Creek.

In government, Labor will immediately conduct a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) into sites south of the Nepean River

through the Southern Highlands. Labor will work with the NSW Government and draw upon expert advice to identify sites within the designated corridor.

The EIS will ensure that the impact from the construction and operation of a new airport is minimized.

Labor will develop an Integrated Transport Plan in consultation with the New South Wales Government and local government.

Bankstown Airport

Labor believes that people living near Bankstown Airport need certainty as to the future operations at the airport.

Labor will not allow large jets and regular public transport (RPT) jets to use Bankstown Airport.

The Coalition Transport policy does not rule out large jets using Bankstown airport nor does it rule out RPT jets using the airport.

Labor recognises the development potential of Bankstown Airport as an aviation industry training centre. A Federal Labor Government will provide \$350,000 for a study to determine whether training facilities for the aeronautical engineering industry should be relocated to Bankstown Airport.

Major skill shortages exist in the industry and Labor will work with industry to overcome these shortages.

Technology and training

Australian aviation training ranks with the best in the world. Airports like Jandakot in Perth and Moorabbin in Melbourne are selling their training expertise internationally.

Labor will foster the development of the general aviation sector and see that the potential of the aviation industry as an important export industry is realised.

Aviation Security

Aviation Security Act

Aviation security is the top priority for the travelling public in Australia, yet the Howard Government is failing them.

The events of 11 September 2001 – where the world witnessed the devastating consequences of an aircraft used as a weapon – frightened the travelling public.

It took the Howard Government an unbelievable two and a half years after September 11 to fix our air security legislation.

It was not until almost 30 months after these terrible terrorist acts that aviation security legislation was passed.

Despite this long delay the Howard Government still did not get it right.

Labor will conduct an independent post implementation review of the Act to ensure it meets Australia aviation security needs.

Regional Airport Security

Labor will not overlook security for regional travellers.

The Howard Government has introduced limited safety and security measures for regional airports. A Federal Labor will spend \$35 million to upgrade fences, lighting and alarm systems at regional airports. A further \$12 million will be invested each year for four years to improve security at all 146 regional airports.

Labor recognises that even with these improvements to security at regional airports, they remain vulnerable.

A Federal Labor Government will address this vulnerability by funding the purchase and installation of passenger screening equipment in regional airports that are used by more than 50,000 passengers a year. These include airports in major regional centres such as Albury, Burnie, Devonport, Lismore, Bundaberg and Gladstone.

This fully funded initiative will cost \$17 million in 2004-05.

Under the Howard Government, major airports and larger regional airports (those serviced by aircraft fitted to carry more than 100 passengers) are required to screen all passengers boarding flights. Aircraft operating from other regional airports are not subject to this requirement.

Many of these regional airports cannot afford to purchase and install passenger screening equipment. Every day, flights leave these airports for major regional centres and capital cities without passengers being screened.

A Federal Labor Government will address the urgent security needs of our key regional airports, ignored by the Howard Government.

Checked Baggage Screening

Australia's international airports have introduced checked baggage screening in the last few years. At present fully checked baggage screening is concentrated on international routes thought to pose the greatest security risk.

Labor will ensure that all international flights have checked baggage screening by 31 December 2004.

Labor recognises the threat does not stop with international aviation.

Labor will move, in cooperation and consultation with airport owners and operators, to full domestic checked baggage screening for domestic aviation. Labor will aim to have full checked baggage screening at categorised airports by 31 December 2007.

Airport Security

Recent events at Sydney Airport have highlighted the inadequacy of security systems at Australia's major airports.

The introduction of Security Cards for all people working in secure areas of Australia's airports was designed to ensure that all workers underwent identity checks by relevant authorities.

Airports have been issuing Visitor's Day Passes and Extended Visitors Cards to casual employees, who have not been subjected to full security checks.

These workers are supposed to be supervised while in secure areas, but this is not always enforced.

Labor will crack down on this loophole to Australia's aviation security system.

Labor will work closely with companies contracted to Australia's airports to ensure that a system is in place that requires all casual workers in secure airport areas to have a current Airport Security Card.

Labor will also more rigorously require companies to properly train workers in security related procedures and in dealing with security related incidents.