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Submission on Draft Master Plan

I have read a large part of the Canberra Airport Preliminary Draft Master Plan 2009 ("DMP" below) as time has permitted (having been notified only on this last day about the period of so-called public consultation), and would like to submit the following comments. I make them as a private pilot and aircraft owner who would have continued to use the airport regularly if its policy had not become entirely repressive of General Aviation.

The Airport's Aim and Adherence to it

The general direction for Canberra Airport in relation to commercial passenger transport and major freight operations, including using Canberra as an international gateway, is entirely reasonable given Canberra's unique position and role in the country.

However commercial passenger and freight operations are not the only factors wherein the Airport should follow its published aim to "**serve the region's evolving transport needs**" (DMP 1.4). Until the current operators took over the airport there was a thriving General Aviation industry and flying activity based at Canberra Airport. Far from being served, this has been discouraged by unaffordable rentals, access fees, and access restrictions. Unlike most other major Australian cities, Canberra has no airport to serve its General Aviation industry or recreational aviators. Below are listed no fewer than five major deficiencies in Canberra Airport's adherence to its aim just quoted. How can any better adherence to assurances in the current DMP be expected?

1. The introduction of Security Controlled Airports in Australia has been an inconvenience for operators of light aircraft, but in Canberra the requirements have been carried to ridiculous extremes. Having only flown in and out from other airfields during the last year, I am horrified to learn the following from a reliable source: unlike other such airfields in Australia which require only possession of a current ASIC identifier, Canberra Airport seemingly demands 30 minutes prior notice and an escort on the ground for all persons departing via light aircraft or having arrived in one.
2. Similarly, in recent years general aviation aircraft have been priced out of the Canberra Airport market. A fuel tariff imposed by Canberra Airport, unreasonable and regular increases in movement and parking fees and hangarage rentals, and the growth in commercial traffic have resulted in displacement of most of the locally based light aircraft population. Since the airport was sold, the light aircraft population has reduced from about 160 aircraft to fewer than 25. The owners of these aircraft, and others that have

been acquired since privatisation, have relocated to regional airfields up to 200 km from Canberra, at great inconvenience to the owners.

3. This bias against general aviation in Canberra has resulted in the loss of six of the seven flying schools and all but one of the aircraft maintenance organizations since privatisation. One of the businesses driven off Canberra Airport is Corporate Air. They have just spent \$1.5m on hangarage alone at Goulburn. The associated income and employment associated with their business has also moved to Goulburn.
4. The use of Canberra Airport as a centre for Flight Training proposed in the Canberra Airport Draft Development Plan is impractical as there are already severe restrictions placed on light aircraft movements and the types and times of training operations permitted. Furthermore, such light aircraft operations are incompatible, and potentially dangerous, when mixed with significant levels of commercial air transport, freight and VIP operations. This is particularly relevant due to the growth of high speed commercial aircraft in recent years.
5. The bulk (80%) of the privately owned light aircraft whose owners reside in the ACT are operated by Recreational Pilot's License holders, who do not normally have access to Canberra Airport anyway, and the holders of Private or Commercial Pilot's Licenses (20%) have been forced to relocate. The draft plan is a gross mismatch to community expectations for general aviation and recreational aviation members of the community.

Nothing in this Draft Development Plan indicates a change of attitude to the presence of light aircraft on the part of Canberra Airport's owners. In that respect **the region's evolving transport needs** have not been met, are not being served, and have not been addressed in this plan.

What should have been included

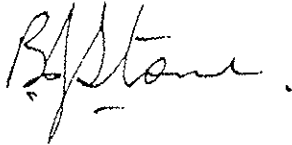
These needs would best be met by having a new secondary airfield located outside controlled airspace but in the ACT, leaving Canberra Airport to pursue its aspirations to become an international and domestic commercial venue. A secondary airfield properly located would bring businesses and employment back to the ACT, would best meet the needs of locally based aviators, and would provide an operational base for fixed and rotary wing emergency services aircraft near to potential fires and away from the traffic conflicts at and close to Canberra airport.

This development project should have been undertaken years ago to avoid the negative effects of Canberra Airport on General Aviation in the region. Some plans have been proposed at varying levels of detail by private individuals, but the amazing thing is that the Canberra Airport operators have not enthusiastically supported such infrastructure development. The siege mentality they have instead displayed in relation to General Aviation has held back progress of the General Aviation industry and further damaged their public reputation, already poor due to noise and road considerations.

Proper consultation

Finally I should mention that a public newspaper advertisement for submissions is no longer, in this information age, a valid way to attract comment from interested parties. For example, it would have been easy and inexpensive to email all Pilot's License holders and Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineers resident in the ACT. (This could still be done in the available time frame).

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. J. Stone". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

(Brian J Stone, PhD, BSc, FIEAust)