



INQUIRY INTO DETERMINANTS OF REGIONAL AIRFARES

Submission Paper

In regional Queensland, aviation should not be considered a luxury - but an essential service. This submission shares the lived experience of communities in the Maranoa, where airfares are often higher than those referenced in the Productivity Commission's Call for Submissions paper.

Presented to:
Productivity Commission

Prepared by:
Maranoa Regional Council

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1.1 Introduction

Regional aviation plays a critical role in supporting economic activity, access to essential services, workforce mobility and community connectivity across regional and remote Australia.

For communities across the Maranoa region in South West Queensland, aviation is not simply a convenience—it is an essential form of connectivity that enables residents, businesses and service providers to access major centres such as Brisbane.

Through Roma Airport, the Maranoa maintains an important link to national transport networks, allowing residents to access specialist healthcare, education, government services and economic opportunities that are not available locally.

However, increasing airfares, limited seat availability and service reliability concerns are creating growing challenges for regional communities that rely on aviation as an essential service.

1.2 Context and Development of this Report

This submission has been prepared in response to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Determinants of Regional Airfares.

The submission draws on the experience of Maranoa Regional Council as the local government representing communities across the Maranoa region, as well as feedback gathered directly from residents and businesses.

To help inform Council's understanding of regional aviation issues, a community survey was undertaken in early 2026 to capture feedback on the availability, affordability and reliability of passenger air services operating from Roma Airport. The survey received 649 responses from residents and ratepayers, representing one of the largest response rates Council has received for a community survey.

The insights gathered through this survey, combined with Council's experience supporting aviation infrastructure within the region, have informed the observations and recommendations outlined in this submission.

1.3 Why Maranoa Regional Council Involvement?

Maranoa Regional Council considered it important to contribute to the Productivity Commission's inquiry to ensure that the perspectives of regional communities are clearly represented.

As the local government for the Maranoa region, Council has a strong interest in policies that influence regional connectivity, economic development and access to essential services. Aviation plays a key role in supporting these outcomes for communities across South West Queensland.

Council is also a member of both the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils (WQAC), which represent the interests of local governments at national and regional levels respectively. These organisations are expected to provide submissions to the inquiry reflecting broader local government perspectives.

However, Council considered it valuable to also provide a submission that offers specific insights from the Maranoa region, drawing on local experience and community feedback to illustrate how airfare levels and aviation service settings are affecting regional communities in practice.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Regional aviation is a critical component of connectivity for communities across rural and remote Australia. For regions such as the Maranoa in South West Queensland, aviation is not a discretionary transport option—it is an essential service that enables residents, businesses and service providers to access healthcare, education, employment, government services and national markets.

The Maranoa region covers approximately 58,800 square kilometres—an area almost the size of Tasmania—and is home to around 13,500 residents. Roma Airport provides the primary aviation gateway connecting the region to Brisbane and the broader national transport network.

Community feedback gathered through a regional aviation survey conducted by Council in early 2026 demonstrated strong reliance on regional aviation services, but also highlight that airfare affordability, service reliability and connectivity are key factors influencing travel decisions.

For example, a typical one-way airfare between Roma and Brisbane can reach approximately \$500, despite the relatively short distance of around 439 kilometres. When combined with ground transport and accommodation costs, a short trip to Brisbane for a medical appointment or business meeting can quickly exceed \$1,400–\$1,700.

Regional aviation operates within a unique environment shaped by market size, aircraft capability and airport infrastructure. Regional airports are typically designed to support turboprop aircraft such as the Saab 340 and Dash 8 Q400, which are well suited to the scale of regional markets.

Government policies have played an important role in maintaining connectivity for regional communities. In Queensland, the regulated regional air service framework administered by the Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) has helped maintain services into Roma during periods of economic volatility and industry disruption. Similarly, State and Federal government funding for regional airport infrastructure has supported councils in maintaining safe and operational airport facilities without placing disproportionate costs on regional ratepayers.

However, further targeted policy support will be required to ensure that regional aviation remains accessible and sustainable into the future.

This submission identifies several opportunities for policy action, including:

- Expanding **resident airfare assistance programs** to improve the affordability of essential travel for regional communities.
- Recognising **regional airports as strategic infrastructure** assets and increasing long-term infrastructure investment through shared funding models across Federal, State and Local Governments.
- Maintaining **regulated regional air service** frameworks to ensure continuity of aviation services on routes that may not always be commercially viable.
- Supporting the **long-term availability of aircraft** fleets suited to regional aviation markets.

Regional aviation plays a fundamental role in supporting economic participation, service access and community wellbeing across rural and remote Australia. Ensuring that aviation remains accessible and affordable for regional communities will require policy settings that recognise aviation as essential connectivity infrastructure for regional Australia.

1. Why is regional aviation so important?

- a) What difference access to regular and reliable air services can have on regional economies (including tourism and migration)?
- b) How is regional aviation important for improving productivity?
- c) What role does regional aviation play in improving Closing the Gap outcomes? How does aviation affect regional and remote Aboriginal communities and communities in the Torres Strait?
- d) To what extent does air travel substitute or complement other modes of transport (road and rail) or forms of communication in your community?

Response to Information Request 1

“Affordable, reliable and connected aviation is an essential foundation for sustainable and productive regional communities.”

Regional aviation plays a critical role in supporting economic activity, access to essential services, workforce mobility and community connectivity across rural and remote Australia.

Around one-third of Australians live outside capital cities, highlighting the importance of aviation networks that connect regional communities with major service centres and the broader national economy (ABS, 2025; Australian Government Aviation White Paper – Towards 2050).

In regions such as the Maranoa in South West Queensland, aviation is not a discretionary transport option—it is essential to maintaining connectivity with major population centres and enabling participation in Australia’s economic and service networks.

The Maranoa has a population of approximately **13,500 residents**, dispersed across a large rural landscape covering around **58,800 square kilometres—an area almost the size of Tasmania** (ABS Regional Population, 2024).

Roma Airport serves as the primary aviation gateway for the region, providing critical connectivity between the Maranoa and Brisbane, which is located approximately **480 kilometres away by road**. While road transport remains important, the journey to Brisbane typically requires around **six hours of driving**, meaning aviation is often the only practical way to stay connected with metropolitan areas.

This may include one of our residents travelling to Brisbane for specialist medical treatment that is not available locally, a farmer attending industry meetings or procuring specialised equipment, or a gas sector worker connecting through Brisbane Airport to reach project sites across the Surat Basin.

These journeys reflect a broader reality across regional Australia: aviation enables people to access essential services, participate in the economy and remain connected to family and community.

Regional areas are continually competing to attract and retain skilled workers, families and businesses in order to sustain and grow their populations. Reliable aviation connectivity remains an

important component in supporting these outcomes. For communities across regions such as the Maranoa, regional aviation is not simply convenient—it is essential.

Further detail addressing the specific questions raised in **Information Request 1** is provided below.

In the Maranoa, aviation plays a critical role in supporting regional economies, improving productivity and enabling access to essential services. Reliable air connectivity allows businesses, workers and service providers to operate efficiently despite the region's distance from major economic centres.

Examples include:

- **Regional business operations** – local businesses rely on aviation to attend meetings, industry forums, procurement activities and training opportunities in major cities such as Brisbane.
- **Specialist service delivery** – visiting professionals such as medical specialists, consultants and government representatives rely on aviation to deliver services in the region that may only require a short visit.
- **Energy and resources sector activity** – engineers, project managers and technical specialists frequently travel between Brisbane and Roma to support gas and energy projects across the Surat Basin.
- **Tourism access** – aviation provides an important gateway for visitors travelling to regional destinations across South West Queensland.

Reliable aviation connectivity also improves productivity by enabling travel that would otherwise require extended road journeys to occur within a single day. Without aviation services, many business, training and government engagements would require overnight travel or significantly longer time away from work.

Aviation also plays a critical role in enabling access to essential services that are not available locally, particularly healthcare. Residents across the Maranoa frequently rely on aeromedical services such as the **Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS)** to transport patients to major hospitals in Brisbane and other centres for specialist treatment. While these services are critical in emergencies, returning home often relies on access to commercial aviation services.

For many patients recovering from surgery or ongoing treatment, the **six-hour road journey by car, or more than eight hours by bus**, back to the Maranoa may not be feasible, highlighting the importance of reliable air services.

High airfares are currently creating additional financial pressures for residents and businesses when travel cannot be completed within a single day. A typical return trip from Roma to Brisbane may involve airfares of approximately \$500 each way, in addition to ground transport costs of around \$120 for airport transfers and accommodation costs of approximately \$300 per night. Where flight schedules or seat availability prevent same-day travel, travellers may be required to stay an additional night in Brisbane.

In practical terms, a short trip to Brisbane for a medical appointment, business meeting or specialist service can quickly cost **around \$1,420**, excluding meals and incidental expenses. If an additional night of accommodation is required due to flight availability or timing, the total cost can increase to **approximately \$1,700 or more**.

In some cases, airfare affordability and limited seat availability may also discourage residents and businesses from travelling altogether. Council has heard numerous examples from residents who have postponed medical appointments, declined business opportunities or chosen not to attend training or industry events due to the cost or availability of flights.

Over time, these constraints can limit economic participation and reduce the ability of regional communities to remain fully connected to state and national markets, services and opportunities.

a) Relationship with other transport modes

In regions such as the Maranoa, aviation complements other transport modes but, in many circumstances, effectively substitutes them for longer distance travel.

While road transport remains essential for freight movements and local travel across the region, the vast distances involved mean that air travel provides a significant advantage when accessing major service centres such as Brisbane.

Residents and businesses across the Maranoa already travel considerable distances within the region itself. For example, Bollon Road—one of the longest roads within the Maranoa Regional Council area—extends for approximately 200 kilometres, illustrating the scale of travel often required simply to move between communities within the local government area. When combined with the additional six-hour road journey to Brisbane, aviation provides a clear benefit in reducing travel time and improving access to services and opportunities.

Examples include:

- Business travel** – a return trip to Brisbane by road can require more than 12 hours of driving, meaning aviation can significantly reduce travel time and allow regional businesses to engage more efficiently with state and national markets.
- Medical travel** – patients travelling for specialist medical appointments may not be able to undertake extended road journeys due to health conditions, particularly following surgery or ongoing treatment.
- Government service access** – regional residents may need to travel to Brisbane to access specialist government services not delivered locally.
- Network connectivity** – aviation also enables efficient connections through Brisbane Airport to other domestic and international destinations.

Research from organisations such as the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q) highlights that road travel in rural and remote areas carries a higher safety risk compared with metropolitan areas. Nationally, around **two-thirds of road fatalities occur on regional and remote roads**, despite significantly lower traffic volumes. Long travel distances, higher speed limits, fatigue and limited access to emergency services all contribute to this increased risk.

For some residents—particularly those who are elderly, unwell or travelling long distances—aviation can therefore provide a safer and more practical alternative to extended road travel.

Without aviation services, residents and businesses would face significantly longer travel times, reduced access to services and greater barriers to economic participation, as well as ultimately affecting the overall liveability and wellbeing of regional communities.

2. How much do fares influence demand for regional air services?

- a) What are the main drivers of demand for regional air services – including but not limited to fares?
- b) How have fares changed over time?
- c) To what extent have fares and demand changed since the COVID-19 pandemic?

Response to Information Request 2

“Demand for regional aviation is strong, but affordability, reliability and connectivity often shape whether that demand translates into actual travel.”

Demand for regional air services in communities such as the Maranoa is influenced by several interrelated factors including airfare affordability, service reliability, seat availability and the ability to connect efficiently with broader aviation networks.

Community feedback gathered by Maranoa Regional Council demonstrates the strong influence that these factors have on travel behaviour. In early February 2026, Council conducted a regional survey to understand how current passenger air services are affecting residents and businesses. The survey received 649 responses from residents and ratepayers across the Maranoa region, making it one of the largest response levels Council has received for a community survey.

The results highlight that **affordability is the single strongest factor influencing travel behaviour**, with reliability and connectivity also emerging as significant drivers.

Key findings include:

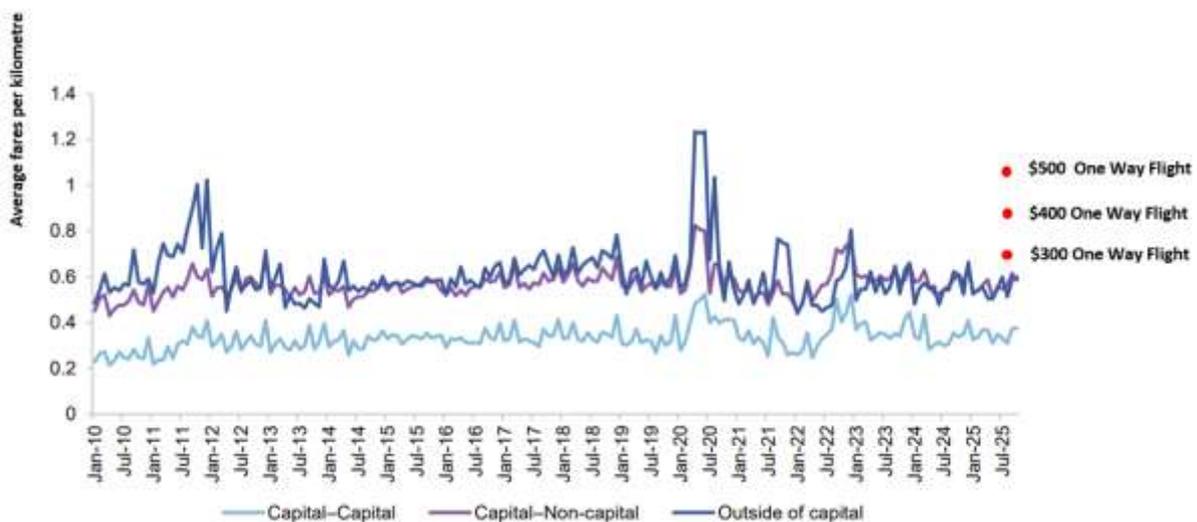
- **More than 90% of respondents reported they are flying less frequently or no longer flying from Roma due to seat availability or ticket prices.**
- **More than 85% reported flying less frequently or no longer flying due to reliability, reputation or connection concerns.**

This is consistent with broader national data showing that regional airfares are often significantly higher on a per-kilometre basis than capital-city routes. The chart below illustrates this pattern, with routes serving regional areas outside capital cities typically experiencing higher average fares per kilometre than capital-to-capital services.

The experience of residents in the Maranoa reflects this broader trend. For example, a typical one-way airfare between Roma and Brisbane can reach approximately \$500, despite the relatively short flight distance of around 439 kilometres.

At this price point, the airfare equates to **approximately \$1.14 per kilometre travelled**. By comparison, the data presented in the chart above indicates that average fares on regional routes outside capital cities typically sit at around \$0.55 to \$0.65 per kilometre, while capital-to-capital routes often range between \$0.25 and \$0.35 per kilometre.

When combined with limited seat availability and/or flight schedules that do not support same-day travel, these costs can quickly escalate into significantly higher total travel expenses once accommodation and ground transport are considered.



As outlined in Council’s survey results, these cost and service factors are influencing travel decisions across the community. Many respondents indicated they are now travelling less frequently, delaying travel where possible, or seeking alternative arrangements due to airfare levels and concerns regarding reliability and connectivity.

This demonstrates an important dynamic in regional aviation markets: demand for travel often remains present, but high airfares, service reliability and connectivity issues can suppress the extent to which that demand is realised.

For regional communities such as the Maranoa, improving affordability, reliability and connectivity therefore plays an important role in ensuring that regional aviation continues to support economic participation, service access and broader community connectivity.

3. What factors influence regional airfares?

- a) What are the key determinants of regional airfares?
- b) How do these factors contribute to differences between airfares available on regional routes and those available between major cities?

Response to Information Request 3

“Regional airfares are shaped not only by distance, but by the characteristics of regional markets, the aircraft that can service them, and the infrastructure available at regional airports.”

From our experience, airfares in regional Queensland are influenced by a combination of factors including market size, aircraft type and the infrastructure capability of regional airports. As a regional local government operating a significant aviation asset, these factors are closely interconnected and reflect the operating environment of regional aviation.

- **Market size** and passenger volumes are an important consideration. Regional communities typically have smaller populations and lower passenger volumes compared with major metropolitan markets such as Brisbane and Sydney. As a result, airlines must carefully match aircraft size and service frequency to the level of demand within a particular regional market.

In regional aviation, finding the right balance between seat capacity and service frequency is important. Larger aircraft can provide more seats per flight, however smaller aircraft often allow airlines to maintain more frequent and flexible services that can sometimes better suit the travel patterns of regional communities.

- **Aircraft type and capacity** therefore play a key role in shaping regional air services. Across regional Queensland, many routes are operated using turboprop aircraft such as the Saab 340 or Dash 8 Q400, which are well suited to regional aviation.

The Saab 340 typically carries around 34 passengers, while the Dash 8 Q400 carries approximately 70–74 passengers. By comparison, jet aircraft commonly used on major metropolitan routes may carry well over 150 passengers per flight.

In practice, these seating capacities are not always fully available in regional operating environments. Environmental conditions—particularly the high temperatures commonly experienced across regional Queensland—can affect aircraft performance and may require airlines to apply payload restrictions. In these circumstances, aircraft may need to operate with fewer passengers, reduced baggage loads or additional fuel management to ensure safe operations.

As a result, the effective number of available seats on some regional flights may be lower than the aircraft’s maximum seating capacity, which can further influence seat availability and the economics of delivering regional air services.

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- **Regional airport infrastructure** also plays an important role in supporting aviation services. Airports across regional Queensland are designed to support the types of aircraft typically used in regional aviation. Factors such as runway length, pavement strength and airfield configuration influence which aircraft can operate at a particular airport.

Maintaining this infrastructure is a significant responsibility for regional local governments. Airports must meet aviation safety and operational standards, requiring ongoing investment in runway maintenance, lighting systems, navigation aids and regulatory compliance.

From our experience, councils generally recover part of the cost of operating and maintaining airport infrastructure through airport charges such as landing fees and passenger fees paid by airlines operating services at regional airports. These charges help support the ongoing operation, maintenance, renewal and future upgrades of regional airport infrastructure.

However, this requires a careful balance. While airport charges help ensure regional airports remain safe and operational, they can also form part of the overall cost of airfares. At the same time, if airports are unable to recover a reasonable portion of these costs, regional councils may face increasing pressure to fund aviation infrastructure through general rates or rely more heavily on State and Commonwealth support for airport maintenance, renewal and upgrades.

For regional local governments with relatively small populations and ratepayer bases, maintaining airport infrastructure that supports reliable aviation services is therefore an important and ongoing responsibility.

Together, these factors demonstrate that regional airfares are influenced by the characteristics of regional markets, aircraft capacity and the infrastructure required to safely support regional aviation, rather than distance alone.

4. What characteristics of the regional aviation sector have influenced the level of airfares?

- a) To what extent is there competition between different air transport services in your region or for your business?
- b) Are there barriers to entry for new airlines in particular regional areas or across regional Australia generally?
- c) Are there barriers to expansion for existing airlines in particular regional areas or across regional Australia generally?
- d) To what extent do non-passenger services (such as air freight) help to support the commercial viability of regional air travel?

Response to Information Request 4

“Regional aviation works within practical realities where infrastructure, aircraft capability and demand must align to sustain reliable regional air services.”

Across regional Queensland, several characteristics of the regional aviation sector influence how air services operate and the cost structures associated with those services. From the perspective of a regional local government responsible for maintaining airport infrastructure, the interaction between aircraft capability, airport infrastructure and regional demand plays an important role in shaping how regional aviation services are delivered.

Regional airport infrastructure across Queensland has generally developed alongside the aircraft types most commonly used in regional aviation. Many regional airports have therefore been designed to support turboprop operations rather than the larger jet aircraft commonly used on metropolitan routes.

For some regional airports, infrastructure characteristics such as runway length and pavement strength mean operations are typically suited to aircraft such as the **Saab 340** or the **Dash 8 Q400**. In certain locations these aircraft may operate with operational concessions associated with infrastructure ratings.

While these infrastructure characteristics can influence the types of aircraft that operate into particular regional airports, they also reflect the practical design of infrastructure intended to support the scale of regional aviation activity.

Importantly, this does not necessarily suggest that regional airports should be widely upgraded to accommodate larger jet aircraft. Regional aviation requires a balance between **infrastructure capability, aircraft size and market demand**, and in many regional communities the use of smaller aircraft allows airlines to provide regular and reliable services where larger aircraft may not be viable.

These infrastructure realities can therefore shape how regional aviation services operate. While they may present practical constraints in some circumstances, they are largely reflective of the way regional aviation networks have developed to match the needs of regional communities.

Aircraft fleet composition is also an important consideration in this context. From a general observation perspective, there appears to be a broader shift within parts of the aviation industry toward airlines operating larger aircraft as part of fleet modernisation. While these aircraft may be well suited to high-volume metropolitan routes, regional aviation networks have historically relied on smaller turboprop aircraft that are better aligned with the scale and operating conditions of regional markets.

If there was one learning from the recent voluntary administration of Rex Airlines, it was the extent to which regional aviation across Australia relies on fit-for-purpose aircraft such as the Saab 340 and Dash 8 Q400.

These aircraft have formed the backbone of many regional aviation networks, enabling regular services into communities where passenger demand, airport infrastructure and operating conditions favour smaller aircraft. **Maintaining access to these types of aircraft remains an important component of sustaining reliable regional air services.**

Roma Airport provides a practical and contrasting example of how these factors can interact in a regional aviation market. The airport infrastructure has the capability to accommodate larger aircraft types than those currently operating on the route.

The Roma–Brisbane service is presently operated using Saab 340 aircraft under the regulated air service contract between the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) and Rex Airlines.

Community feedback gathered through Council’s regional aviation survey indicates strong underlying demand for regional air services, with affordability, reliability and seat availability identified as key issues for residents and businesses across the region. This suggests there may be latent demand for additional seat capacity or greater service flexibility where operational conditions allow.

Freight services are another important component of regional aviation networks and can play a supporting role in the overall sustainability of regional air services.

Historically, the Roma–Brisbane regulated air service included a freight component as part of the DTMR contract with Qantas. The loss of this freight capability has had noticeable impacts across the region.

Two examples from the agricultural sector illustrate the importance of timely air freight services:

- **Artificial insemination programs**, where aviation previously provided a reliable platform for transporting time-sensitive biological materials used in breeding programs across the region.
- **Critical agricultural machinery parts**, particularly during harvesting periods. Even a delay of one or two days in receiving replacement parts can affect a farmer’s ability to harvest crops before weather events such as seasonal thunderstorms impact crop quality or field access.

These examples demonstrate that regional aviation demand extends beyond passenger travel. Freight services can provide an important supporting role for regional industries and may offer opportunities to strengthen the overall sustainability of regional aviation services.

5. Have government policies or regulations made a difference?

- a) How do policies and regulatory settings – affecting airlines, airports, or other services – influence regional airfares, service levels or competition?
- b) What roles have governments played and what have been the most efficient forms of policy or regulatory intervention to improve access, pricing and service outcomes?

Response to Information Request 5

“Targeted government intervention has played an important role in sustaining regional aviation services – but further support is required to ensure regional communities remain connected.”

Government policies and regulatory settings have played an important role in maintaining aviation connectivity for regional communities. From Council’s perspective, two forms of government intervention have been particularly significant in supporting regional aviation outcomes.

Regulated Regional Air Services (State Government)

One of the most important policy mechanisms supporting regional aviation in Queensland is the regulated air service framework administered by the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR).

Roma Airport is currently serviced under a regulated air service contract. This framework provides a level of service certainty for communities where market conditions alone may not always support regular commercial air services.

From Council’s experience, the regulated air service model has played a critical role in maintaining aviation connectivity for the region during periods of economic volatility.

For example, the Maranoa experienced a significant economic adjustment during the downturn in coal seam gas (CSG) development activity, which previously supported strong aviation demand. Without a regulated air service framework in place, there is a strong possibility that the airline at the time may have withdrawn services from regional routes in favour of allocating aircraft to higher-yield metropolitan routes.

Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented disruptions across the aviation industry. During this period many airlines globally reduced or suspended services on less profitable routes. The regulated air service framework helped provide an important level of stability for communities such as Roma during this challenging period.

While the regulated air service model has played a valuable role in maintaining connectivity, it also highlights the broader reality that regional aviation services can remain vulnerable to market pressures without targeted policy support.

Government Support for Airport Infrastructure (State and Federal Government)

Investment from both State and Federal governments in regional airport infrastructure has also played an important role in supporting the sustainability of regional aviation.

Local governments across regional Queensland are typically responsible for the ownership, operation and maintenance of airport infrastructure. This includes significant long-term responsibilities associated with runway maintenance, lighting systems, pavement rehabilitation, safety upgrades and regulatory compliance.

Programs delivered by State and Federal governments have assisted councils to undertake these works and ensure regional airports remain safe, compliant and operational.

However, maintaining and upgrading aviation infrastructure remains a significant financial challenge for many regional councils with relatively small ratepayer bases.

Without continued support from higher levels of government, councils would face difficult financial choices in funding essential aviation infrastructure. In practical terms, this would likely require either:

- increasing airport charges and landing fees, which may contribute to higher regional airfares, or
- recovering infrastructure costs through local government rates, placing a significant burden on regional ratepayers.

For many regional communities, aviation functions as a form of public transport, enabling access to healthcare, education, employment and government services that are not available locally. As a result, maintaining safe and operational airport infrastructure is not solely a local government responsibility.

Ongoing investment from State and Federal governments will continue to play an important role in ensuring regional aviation remains accessible, affordable and sustainable for regional communities.

6. What could be done to make fares more affordable and to improve access to aviation?

- a) Where should policy or regulatory actions focus?
- b) What international examples of best practice could be useful in the Australian context?

Response to Information Request 6

“Improving the affordability of regional aviation requires targeted policy settings that recognise aviation as essential connectivity infrastructure for regional communities.”

Improving regional aviation affordability and access requires coordinated policy actions across multiple levels of government. From Council’s perspective, several targeted interventions could significantly improve the accessibility and sustainability of regional air services for communities such as those across the Maranoa.

Implement Government-led Resident Airfare Support Programs

Key Parties: Federal and State Governments

One of the most direct mechanisms for improving aviation affordability for regional communities is the introduction of resident airfare assistance programs.

Several jurisdictions have implemented resident airfare schemes designed to reduce the cost of travel for people living in regional and remote communities. These programs recognise that aviation in regional Australia often functions as a necessary form of transport rather than a discretionary travel option.

Expanding similar programs in partnership between the Federal and State Governments could help ensure regional residents are able to access affordable air travel when travelling for medical treatment, education, employment or government services.

For communities such as those across the Maranoa, targeted resident airfare support could help ensure that essential travel remains accessible, particularly where market conditions lead to higher airfares on regional routes.

Recognise Regional Airports as Strategic Infrastructure

Key Parties: Federal, State & Local Governments

Regional airports play a critical role in enabling connectivity for rural and remote communities. However, the responsibility for owning and maintaining this infrastructure typically sits with local governments that have relatively small ratepayer bases.

Major aviation infrastructure works such as runway upgrades, pavement rehabilitation, lighting systems and safety improvements require significant investment over long asset lifecycles.

Greater recognition of regional airports as strategic state and national infrastructure assets would support more sustainable funding models for maintaining these facilities.

Council supports the consideration of long-term infrastructure funding models that involve shared investment across all levels of government. For example, funding frameworks based on a 40/40/20 partnership model between Federal, State and Local Governments could help ensure that regional airport infrastructure remains safe and operational without placing disproportionate financial pressure on local councils or regional ratepayers.

Reducing the infrastructure cost burden on local governments can also help limit the need to increase airport charges and landing fees, which may ultimately influence the cost of regional airfares.

□ **Maintain Regulated Regional Air Service Frameworks**

Key Parties: State Government

For many regional communities, regulated air service frameworks play an important role in ensuring the continuity of aviation services where market conditions alone may not support regular commercial operations.

In Queensland, the regulated air service model administered by the Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) has helped maintain connectivity for communities such as Roma through periods of economic adjustment and industry disruption.

Maintaining these regulatory frameworks remains an important mechanism for ensuring regional communities continue to receive reliable aviation services where routes may otherwise be vulnerable to market volatility.

□ **Support the Long Term Availability of Regional Aircraft Fleets**

Key Parties: Federal Government and Industry

The sustainability of regional aviation networks is closely linked to the availability of aircraft that are suited to regional operating environments.

Aircraft such as the Saab 340 and Dash 8 Q400 have historically played a critical role in connecting regional communities. Ensuring that there is a long-term pipeline of aircraft capable of servicing regional routes will be an important consideration for maintaining regional connectivity into the future.

From a policy perspective, supporting an aviation environment that enables airlines to continue operating fit-for-purpose regional aircraft fleets will be an important part of sustaining aviation services for regional Australia.



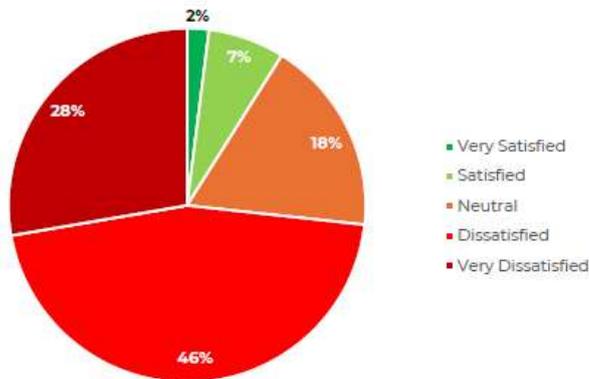
ATTACHMENT A

Summary of Feedback from the Maranoa Community

What the Maranoa Residents Are Saying

Air Services into Roma

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with the current flights between Roma and Brisbane?



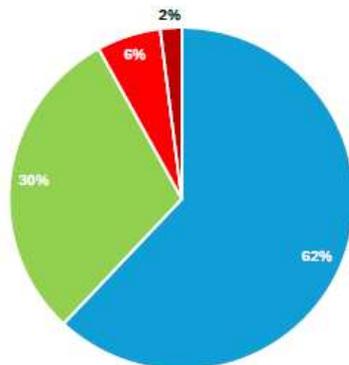
Survey results show overall satisfaction levels are currently low, with 74% dissatisfied, 18% neutral and 9% satisfied, indicating clear community concern alongside a small but present base of satisfied travellers.

74% dissatisfied

18% neutral

9% satisfied

2. Has seat availability or ticket prices affected how often you fly from Roma?



Yes - I fly less often than I used to **62%**

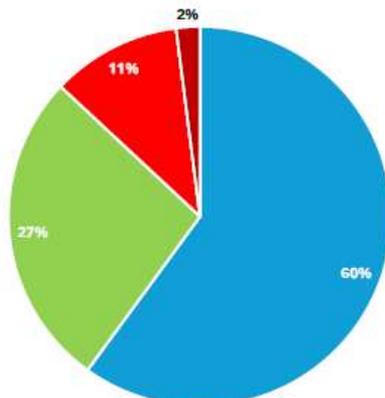
Yes - I no longer fly from Roma **30%**

No - these issues haven't affected how often I travel **6%**

I don't travel by air **2%**

>90% of respondents are flying less or no longer flying from Roma due to seat availability

3. Has reputation, reliability and ease of connections to other destinations affected how often you fly from Roma?



Yes - I fly less often than I used to **60%**

Yes - I no longer fly from Roma **27%**

No - these issues haven't affected how often I travel **11%**

I don't travel by air **2%**

>85% of respondents are flying less or no longer flying from Roma due to reputation, reliability or connection concerns.

