

DATE: 13 July 2020

Airports put sector recovery at risk with divisive and inaccurate claims

With the aviation industry's recovery dealt further blows from sudden border closures during the peak school holidays period, airlines have reacted with disbelief and disappointment at the [Australian Airports Association \(AAA\)'s decision to air erroneous claims about unpaid fees](#).

Commenting on the AAA CEO's statement that airlines had received financial help from the Government worth around \$1.3 billion, Airlines for Australia & New Zealand (A4ANZ) Chairman, Professor Graeme Samuel AC, said it was [widely known that a significant proportion of this money did not go directly to airlines](#), which a basic check of the publicly-available AusTender site confirms.

"It is clear that while airlines have been supported to get a small proportion of their domestic fleets back in the air, the amounts they have actually received in Government support are a fraction of what has been quoted."

A4ANZ CEO, Dr Alison Roberts said, "The Government stated clearly its expectation that commercial arrangements during this economic crisis should apply principles of proportionality. Since the very start of the COVID-19 pandemic, our member airlines have been working with airports to reach agreements that reflect this."

"Claiming that debts are outstanding without clarifying that arrangements have actually been made for deferral or relief, or that the fees have since been paid, is misleading and wrong."

Prof Samuel said, "We had hoped that in this crisis, monopoly airports might work with their biggest customers to resolve these issues without the need for attempts at public shaming. Perhaps old habits die hard. It's an ill-advised strategy, however, as Australia's airports – with all the businesses that operate on their precincts – benefit most when airlines are thriving. The AAA seems to have overlooked this fact in its recent commentary."

"With passenger numbers at record lows, we know that airports have also taken a massive hit to their revenue. But the solution is not for them to look to cash-strapped airlines to recoup their losses or bolster their profits as we move forward. There has to be a better way, or the whole industry's recovery will be put at risk."

Dr Roberts said, "History shows that [airports recover much faster and on a greater scale than airlines after global economic shocks](#). But as we face our biggest economic challenge in over a century, the aviation industry – and the economy more broadly – simply can't afford to have the cost of airports' recovery being borne by airlines and their passengers."

"We are thankful that the Deputy Prime Minister has recognised the need for targeted support post-September, and we look forward to working with Government and the whole aviation sector, on the best approach to that support, for our recovery."

Media Enquiries: Graeme Samuel 0408 335 555 Alison Roberts 0405 323 254

Website: www.a4anz.com

Twitter: @a4anz