

DATE: 11 March 2021

Support package recognises aviation's critical role in Australia's COVID-19 recovery

With the resumption of international flying still months away and Australia's domestic tourism industry playing catch-up from chaotic border closures, airlines have today welcomed the Federal Government's [announcement of a package that will provide targeted stimulus and support for domestic air travel and ensure aviation workers are job-ready for when international borders reopen.](#)

Commenting on the Government's announcement, which acknowledged the unique challenges faced by the aviation sector, Airlines for Australia & New Zealand (A4ANZ) Chairman, Professor Graeme Samuel AC, said the support package offered a vital lifeline to stem the loss of critical skills and experience from the sector's workforce.

"More than 34,000 airline employees, including pilots, crew and engineers, have been impacted by stand-downs or redundancies over the past year, where the COVID-19 pandemic saw international travel plummet by 98 per cent, and domestic by 86 per cent."

"The inconsistent state border restrictions and closures have left Australia's domestic market below half its pre-pandemic levels, lagging behind the rest of the world in its recovery. In order to be ready to stand workers back up when demand picks up and international travel eventually resumes, airlines need this support for retraining and recertification requirements," Prof Samuel said.

A4ANZ CEO, Dr Alison Roberts said, "We know how important aviation is to Australia. Not only does air travel directly and indirectly support over 770,000 jobs, but it provides essential connectivity for both people and critical freight – ensuring access to medical, financial, and educational services, travel for leisure, and to visit family and friends."

"This package recognises that one of the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and closed borders has been the lack of flying and other opportunities for workers to retain skills and currency. While JobKeeper has been a critical part of keeping people engaged and supported, airlines face significant costs to ensure that their planes and workforces are operationally ready, fully-trained, and have current certifications, even while flying is limited."

Prof Samuel said, "Thanks to the support from the Government thus far, airlines have been able to maintain a minimum air network across Australia, in both capital cities and regions, for routes that would otherwise not be commercially viable. We were pleased to hear the Government today commit to the [continuation of this support and other targeted measures](#) through to 30 September."

"The lack of consistency on domestic borders, however, has eroded consumer and business confidence, with 52% of Australians saying they won't travel due to fear of snap closures rather than health concerns. The announcement of an incentive-based program to stimulate air travel demand and support the broader tourism sector will need to be matched by a unified approach on domestic borders."

Dr Roberts said, "Today's announcements will help give the aviation industry its best chance of long-term survival, ensuring access to affordable air travel and supporting Australia's economic recovery."

"We look forward to continued constructive engagement with the Government on ensuring that we have effective aviation policy which delivers better outcomes for the sector, consumers and the economy as we emerge from the pandemic."

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