Reference: 06640-2010

Mr Neil Savery
National President
Planning Institute of Australia
PO Box 5427
KINGSTON ACT 2604

Dear Mr Savery,

As you are aware, the Parliament passed the Airports Amendment Bill 2010 during its final sitting for this year.

This legislation is the result of two years of industry consultation and gives effect to many of the Gillard Labor Government’s airport planning and development reforms, which were announced in the National Aviation Policy White Paper, Flight Path to the Future.

These reforms recognise that airports exist primarily for aviation purposes, to serve the national economy and the flying public. The Bill improves transparency around long-term development and planning at airports while recognising the important contribution that airports make to our national economy.

As part of our commitment to engage with the industry, the Government carefully examined the relevant Senate Committee’s report and made important amendments to the Bill.

These amendments included:

- changing the term ‘incompatible development’ to ‘sensitive development’ to recognise that each proposal must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. These developments will remain prima facie prohibited unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated;
- clarifying that ‘educational institutions’ which are a sensitive development in section 71A do not include facilities that provide in-house training to staff of organisations conducting operations at the airport;
- excluding routine runway maintenance such as patch repair of runways, taxiways and aprons, runway resurfacing, line marking, jet blast protection and the upgrade of navigation aids from undergoing a major development plan process; and
• introducing a materiality test so that only a runway alteration that ‘significantly’ changes flight paths or patterns of aircraft noise will require a major development plan.

The new requirements concerning airport master plans will commence operation on the day after the Bill receives Royal Assent. This means that all draft master plans, including exposure drafts, released for consultation after the legislation commences operation will be required to comply with the additional requirements.

These legislative measures will be accompanied by guidelines which the Government will release for consultation with stakeholders, to assist with the implementation of new requirements.

I would like to thank you for the constructive role you and your organisation have played during the public consultation on the Government’s aviation policies.

Yours sincerely

ANTHONY ALBANESE