

**Aviation Legislation Amendment Bill (No 1) 2000 – Regional Airlines access to Kingsford Smith Airport, 5<sup>th</sup> April 2000**

Mrs HULL (Riverina) (1.11 p.m.) —I think that we need to recognise the benefits of this Aviation Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2000. Sure, we are increasing the level of foreign ownership to 49 per cent and there will be no restrictions on airline ownership within the 49 per cent cap, but this bill will also increase the maximum fine for breaching the Sydney airport curfew from \$110,000 to \$550,000. This bill will ultimately benefit Australian international carriers by enabling them to gain capital and negotiate alliances. This means that Australian airlines will not be in danger of becoming undercapitalised or losing market share. It means that Qantas is still protected by the Qantas Sale Act, and so it should be.

My extensive involvement within the New South Wales tourism industry puts me in a position of recognising the massive benefits that tourism brings to Australia, with an export value of in excess of \$16.3 billion. Our economy-contributing visitors overwhelmingly arrive here by aircraft and then depart by aircraft. It is this arrival and departure routine that requires this legislation. It is in the interests of an airline to break curfews. This is why we must increase the maximum fine for breaching the Sydney airport curfew from \$110,000 to \$550,000. This breach also applies to regional airlines that might think about breaking the curfew, even though their propeller aircraft really have no impact on the noise limits and levels. However, in order to provide a vital and critical service to rural and regional areas, our smaller regional craft comply with the curfew on which they really do not have any impact. It is no secret that there are those who would force our regional airlines out of Kingsford Smith airport in order to make way for more jet aircraft. It may be that they use the carrot of additional tourism dollars to substantiate these moves. However, to move our regional craft out of KSA would serve only to substantially reduce investment in Australia's tourism industry. It must have access to regional carriers to ensure long-term domestic tourism growth. In fact, most reports on the issue of curfews and caps at KSA have been compiled by those with vested interests. There has been little contribution from independent informants.

Having looked at this legislation and at the increases in fines for breaches of the airport curfew contained within it, I have complete faith that in years to come noise levels at KSA will reduce substantially, given that with better technology we will have quieter aircraft and better climb rates. That is a better outlook than that for the regionals, who will be pushed out of KSA and will face a vastly reduced economic future—not to mention the impact on the lives of rural and regional people, particularly in New South Wales.

Perhaps the opposition's acceptance of this Aviation Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) would be assisted by the installation of a parallel runway monitor. This would certainly assist by giving incentives to airlines not to break curfews. This in turn would assist the regionals in their fight to retain their slots at KSA as against being moved to Bankstown or any other option. The irony of this move is that we would have a substantial curfew fine applying not only to the suburbs around KSA; we would also need one around Bankstown. Quite clearly, regional airlines in the main do not want to lose their slots and be forced out to Bankstown. Bankstown residents do not want regionals at their airport. More jets will not be the ultimate benefit to KSA, as the curfew and the cap will prevent any additional noise, and we should remember that regionals and propellers do not create a significant noise factor at KSA.

The future of regional New South Wales's economic development hinges on reliable and frequent access to KSA. Regeneration of rural and regional areas will not occur if this access to the KSA curfew is denied. There may very well be some carriers that choose to operate additional flights in and out of Bankstown that are not related to their current access. This is certainly an option open to them. Perhaps our legislation should be looking at gaining more efficiencies at KSA in order to relieve some of the financial burdens related to aviation that the government is currently grappling with.

Convincing the passengers from rural and regional Australia that they should be relegated to a second-level airport in favour of metropolitan and international travellers is going to be enormously difficult, particularly when regional tourism is on the increase and its relationship with the domestic tourism dollar is undeniable. Just as this legislation is looking to protect the people of Sydney from excess noise levels, with the proposed maximum fine for breaching the curfew, others would look to increase this burden of noise on Sydney's people by relegating regionals to Bankstown, thereby opening the skies for heavier jets and much more noise. The simple fact is that more aeroplanes cannot be put into the Sydney basin without an increase in noise and without a greater risk of the curfew being broken.

There has also been no consultation with the community and suburbs of Kurnell and others to the south of KSA as to the moving of regional airlines out of their living areas to allow even noisier aircraft to replace them. A recent survey that was conducted at the Wagga Wagga airport has concluded that at least 48 per cent of travellers would be disadvantaged by a move to Bankstown as they would then need to join another flight. Without some massive expenditure on ground travel infrastructure, the 62 per cent of travellers going to the city and eastern suburbs would have their travel time increased significantly, thereby again impacting on rural and regional people.

The previous speaker spoke in significant terms of the curfew and the incentives to break the curfew. At the end of the day, there is a simple answer to Sydney's airport problems and curfew problems for the next 10 years to 15 years, and that is to allow the airport to operate at the capacity it is capable of handling and not to artificially constrain Australia's most significant national aviation asset. For the longer term, a new airport must be built and it needs all three areas of international, domestic trunk and regional services to be viable. I reiterate that there are no facts or proposals that are independent. We have studies paid for by vested interest parties; we have media leaks; and we have speculation, but never any facts. To ensure that our aviation industry maintains a strong presence, we must ensure that our airlines remain as competitive as possible. [start page 14733]