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BY EMAIL

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Mr Clive Mathieson
The Australian
GPO Box 4245
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mr Mathieson,

Two recent articles in *The Australian*, 'Radical overhaul to deliver safer skies' (11 July 2015) and 'Pilots back reforms for air space overhaul' (13 July 2015) continue to make false and misleading claims about air traffic services in Australia and about Airservices Australia.

It is disingenuous to assert that Airservices is 'defying moves by CASA' in relation to the provision of air traffic information services at Ballina Airport and misrepresents the information that we have provided to your journalist.

Neither the airport operator, nor the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), are seeking to introduce a Unicom radio service at Ballina.

As we advised *The Australian*, Airservices is working with the operator of Ballina Airport to develop the most appropriate and cost effective options for providing radio information services.

Ballina Airport has approached Airservices to discuss access to our Fire Control Centre at the airport for the airport to provide a Certified Air/Ground Radio Service (CA/GRS) which would provide a better level of information services than a Unicom. This type of arrangement between the aerodrome operator and Airservices is not new and is already being successfully used at Ayers Rock where a CA/GRS is currently in place.

Ballina is one of the very few locations in Australia where, in line with CASA regulations and recommendations, a new rescue and fire fighting service has been introduced and there is currently no air traffic control service. CASA is currently reviewing the airspace classification at Ballina to determine whether an air traffic service is required and Airservices will support the outcome of that review when it is finalised.

Your article 'Radical overhaul to deliver safer skies' (11 July 2015) makes assertions about the level of air traffic services provided in Australia that are irresponsible and incorrect. Contrary to your reporting, all passenger flights in Australia are supported by continuous air traffic services throughout their entire flight, in all types of airspace and at all locations.

In addition, a comprehensive suite of weather information services is available to all pilots both before and during any flight in Australia through services provided by the Bureau of Meteorology in conjunction with Airservices. This includes automated weather services available during flight as well as services provided by air traffic controllers over the radio.

I note that this is the fifth time that Airservices has had to write to *The Australian* in four weeks about eight inaccurate and misleading articles that *The Australian* has acknowledged form part of a “sustained campaign.” We again ask you to refrain from making these inaccurate and misleading claims, and publish corrections at the earliest opportunity.

This selective reporting also fails to provide balance and objectivity, which appears to contravene News Limited’s own Code of Conduct and the Journalists Code of Ethics. A fair and reasonable reader who considers the questions from your journalist and the answers we provided (see the weekend’s answers attached), coupled with the stories published, is likely to be disappointed as this is not what people would expect of *The Australian*.

Safety is, and will always be, Airservices number one priority. Australia’s aviation safety record is among the best in the world and we welcome a debate about the future of airspace management in Australia that is responsible, based on facts and that makes a positive contribution to the ongoing improvement of aviation safety and efficiency.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Barton', written in a cursive style.

Mairi Barton
Executive General Manager
Corporate and Industry Affairs

13 July 2015

12 JULY 2015 – RESPONSE TO THE AUSTRALIAN

1/ Will Airservices back or oppose the initiative announced by CASA chairman Jeff Boyd to lower the floor of Class E airspace where reliable radar coverage permits?

2/ Will Airservices back or oppose lowering controlled airspace around Ballina from 8,500 feet to 5,000 feet?

Airservices is the service provider for air traffic management and aviation fire and rescue and we comply with the policies set by the Australian Government and regulations set by the aviation regulator, CASA.

Safety is our number one priority and where the Government makes policy change or CASA makes a change to regulation, we implement any recommendations in relation to our services and operations.

Decisions on airspace classification and the level of air traffic service are made by CASA in accordance with the principles of the Government's airspace policy and following careful analysis and consultation.

These regulated service levels are based on a risk-based graduated service model and the safety of passenger transport services in the first priority of CASA, Airservices and the Australian Government.

All passenger flights in Australia are supported by continuous air traffic services throughout their entire flight, in all types of airspace and at all locations. Radar is used in all types of airspace where coverage is available.

A regular review of the airspace at Ballina is nearing completion by CASA and Airservices will support the outcome of that review when it is finalised.

Airservices welcomes the release of the 2015 Australian Airspace Policy Statement on Friday which reaffirms the Australian Government's expectation on aviation agencies to ensure airspace management is in the best interests of all Australians.

This includes an expectation that "the administration of Australian-administered airspace: shall be in the best interests of Australia; shall consider the current and future needs of the Australian aviation industry; shall adopt proven international best practice airspace systems adapted to benefit Australia's aviation environment; and shall take advantage of advances in technology wherever practicable."

3/ Will Airservices back or oppose Mr Boyd's plan to grant, on a case-by-case basis where there is a solid commercial and practical case and safety is not compromised, exemptions or extensions for aircraft owners to install ADS-B?

Airservices is committed to working with the aviation industry as we transition towards a new era in navigation and encourages industry bodies, airlines and smaller operators who have questions to contact us at any time.

Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast (ADS-B) technology provides enormous safety and service benefits.

Recent data on the use of ADS-B demonstrates the Australian aviation industry's support for this transition to new technology with 65 per cent of all flights operating under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) in Australian airspace was conducted using ADS-B technology during the first half of 2015. Broken down, 99.5 per cent of flights by Australia's major airlines, 79 per cent of flights by business jets and 95 per cent of all turbo propeller aircraft flights, at or above 28,500ft, used ADS-B during the first six months of this year.

Airservices welcomes the recognition by visiting US aviation consultant Jeff Griffith (*'Safe landing crucial for flight reform'*, *The Australian*, 11 July 2015) that Australia has been very proactive in modernising its air traffic control system, building new centres at Brisbane and Melbourne and moving to satellite-based technology. Mr Griffith acknowledges that Australia was the first in the world to successfully implement high-altitude ADSB.

4/ Will Airservices back or oppose Mr Boyd's initiative to free up the range of information airport ground staff who are not serving or former air traffic controllers can provide to pilots via the Unicom radio service?

Regulations surrounding Unicom services are a matter for CASA.

5/ Given Mr Boyd's support for the above, and airport manager Neil Weatherson's desire for it, will Airservices reconsider applying to CASA under the current rules for its fire and rescue staff at Ballina to man the Unicom to provide basic air traffic and weather information as their counterparts do in the US, or will it continue to reject the proposal and force Mr Weatherson to make expenditures, that he will have to pass on ultimately to the air travelling public via charges to airlines, to fund retired air traffic controllers to perform this task?

Airservices and the operator of Ballina Airport are working together on developing the most appropriate and cost effective options for providing radio information services that meet CASA requirements and the needs of industry.

Ballina Airport approached Airservices to discuss the option of providing access to our Fire Control Centre at the airport for the airport to provide a CA/GRS service, which would require CASA approval. This type of arrangement between the aerodrome operator and Airservices is not new and is already being successfully used at Ayers Rock where a CA/GRS is currently in place.

Airservices works closely with aerodrome operators where our facilities are located and welcomes these kinds of discussions with aerodrome operators who wish to increase their services.

Airservices is fully funded by airlines and other air users through ACCC-approved charges for provision of services for air traffic control and aviation fire and rescue that meet strict international standards and safety regulations.

Airservices Aviation Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) staff are specially trained professionals who provide important first response emergency services at Australia's airports. Our services include rapid response to any incident, anywhere on an airport, in less than three minutes. We also provide rapid response to fire alarms and other emergencies anywhere on the airport and in terminal buildings, including rapid first aid response to any medical incident.

In 2014 ARFF made more than 6700 responses nationally, with 28 lives saved.