

SUBMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE'S INQUIRY INTO CLIMATE ADAPTATION

TO: Environment Select Committee ("**Select Committee**")

SUBMITTER: NZ Airports Association (NZ Airports)

SUBMISSION ON: Select Committee's inquiry into climate adaptation

SUMMARY

1. This submission is made on behalf of the NZ Airports Association ("**NZ Airports**"). NZ Airports represents the interests of airports across New Zealand. In preparing this submission, NZ Airports has reviewed the Report of the Expert Working Group on Managed Retreat: A Proposed System for Te Hekenga Rauora / Planned Relocation ("**Report**") and the Community-led retreat and adaptation funding: Issues and options paper ("**Paper**").
2. NZ Airports members¹ operate 46 airports across the country, including the international gateways to New Zealand and the domestic airports which make up the national air transportation network. New Zealand's airports are essential infrastructure of national and regional significance which play a crucial role in the socio-economic wellbeing of our communities.
3. Airports are significant contributors to regional and national economies, including through their role in New Zealand's tourism and trade sectors. Airports have a strong multiplier effect on the economies they serve, enabling the development of additional industry and employment in their regions. Airports keep New Zealanders connected with family and friends, domestic and abroad, and enable Kiwis to enrich their lives and careers through national and international connectivity.
4. Airports and aerodromes facilitate the provision of medical and emergency services to all parts of the country. They are essential for resilient transport and freight connections in times of natural disaster or emergency, particularly when land transport is disrupted. This critical role is reflected in the current Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002, where airports are recognised as lifeline utilities. This status is recognised as Critical infrastructure Entities in the current Emergency Management Bill.
5. NZ Airports supports the need to address managed retreat, climate adaptation and other associated issues. However, it is critical that NZ Airports and airport operators are involved early on in any decision-making addressing climate adaptation and managed retreat options in their regions. If airport operations are impacted or constrained by adaptation or managed retreat without proper planning, it will have implications on the region's transport connections

¹ Our member airports include Ardmore Airport, Ashburton Airport, Auckland Airport, Chatham Islands Airport, Christchurch Airport, Dunedin Airport, Gisborne Airport, Hamilton Airport, Hawke's Bay Airport, Hokitika Airport, Invercargill Airport, Kapiti Coast Airport, Kaikohe Airport, Katikati Airport, Kerikeri Airport, Marlborough Airport, Masterton Airport, Matamata Airport, Motueka Airport, Nelson Airport, New Plymouth Airport, Oamaru Airport, Pauanui Airfield, Palmerston north Airport, Queenstown Airport, Rangiora Airport, Rotorua Airport, Takaka Airport, Taupo Airport, Tauranga Airport, Te Kowhai Aerodrome, Thames Aerodrome, Timaru Airport, Wairoa Airport, Wanaka Airport, Whanganui Airport, Wellington Airport, West Auckland Airport, Westport Airport, Whakatane Airport, and Whangarei Airport.

and an airport's ability to contribute to local and regional economies, leading to negative flow-on effects for those communities and regions.

KEY INTERESTS OF THE AIRPORT SECTOR

6. The airport sector faces unique climate change adaptation challenges. Many airports are located near the coast (including two of New Zealand's international airports at Auckland and Wellington). Airports are also inherently located on flat land which tends to be low lying. Established airports cannot readily move, and new airport sites close to their population bases are very hard to create. It is therefore important that existing airport infrastructure is protected where possible and future development options are enabled. Any new mechanisms providing for regional and local adaptation, and managed retreat processes, need to include adequate safeguards to ensure the ongoing and effective operation and development of New Zealand's airports.
7. Due to the above challenges NZ Airports:
 - (a) Supports a nationally consistent framework for risk assessment that will be used to inform decision making which will occur at the local level. Airports are located in a range of different locations and service a wide variety of communities. Not all of these airports will be impacted in the same way and to the same extent. Factors such as the location of servicing infrastructure, adjacent land uses, and surrounding environmental factors all influence the risk which will be faced by airports due to climate change effects, and the adaptation measures required to be implemented. NZ Airports, and the airport operators, need to be involved in all stages of decision making including any development of regional risk assessments, local adaptation planning, and relocation planning. Decisions made without adequate engagement with the airport sector could lead to detrimental outcomes to not only the airports but the infrastructure and communities the airports service.
 - (b) Requires certainty of the long-term future for airport planning. Long term planning is crucial for the efficient and ongoing operation of large-scale infrastructure, like airports. Airports regularly undertake master-planning for their activities. This typically projects long term planning for the next 30 years of direct infrastructure development and upgrades. It is critical that NZ Airports, and airport operators, are involved early on in adaptation and managed retreat processes to enable airports to plan for their future operations.

Relief sought

8. NZ Airports seeks:
 - (a) A requirement in any future legislation for the airport sector to be consulted with in all processes regarding climate adaptation (such as the development of regional risk assessments, local adaptation planning, and relocation planning). This consultation would include a NZ Airports representative (or representative of the relevant airport at a local level) as a member of the relevant decision-making bodies for any adaptation or managed retreat processes. For example, if the processes recommended by the Report are taken forward, this would include a representative on the new adaptation committees who will be engaging in local adaptation planning.

- (b) Airports are also interconnected with other critical infrastructure such as transport, electricity and three waters networks. The independent nature of critical infrastructure means that disruption in one sector can cascade and degrade services in others. Any powers which allow for the withdrawal of servicing infrastructure as part of adaptation planning need to be subject to an obligation that airports must have the requisite servicing infrastructure to operate safely and efficiently.

Next steps

9. NZ Airports, and the airports we represent, welcome the opportunity to engage further with the Ministry for the Environment and to present to the Select Committee on its submission.

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