

INDUSTRY PROFILE - Aviation Ground Operations



**Transport, Postal and Warehousing
Air and Space Transport
Ground Operations**

ANZSIC: 5220

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1. Background

1.1 Industry Regulatory / Licencing Bodies

- The national regulator overseeing activity in this space is the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA). Together with the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities, and Airservices Australia, they constitute a tripartite structure for providing safe aviation in Australia.
- At State level, the Department of Transport (DoT) coordinates, develops and influences government and the aviation industry in providing the best aviation services and infrastructure for Western Australia.

2. Workforce Opportunities and/or Challenges for Industry

2.1 Industry Overview

The below trends discussed will impact on industry's capacity and future workforce requirements.

Perth Airport

- Qantas has limited flight capacity out of T3 and T4, which Mr Cook said was limiting the state's tourism opportunities. There are concerns that delays in relocating Qantas operations from Terminal 1 to T3 or 4 may be limiting WA's ability to increase more non-stop overseas flights, such as the recently announced manila route.

Regional Airports

- Ongoing interest in green energy initiatives such as hydrogen places plausible investment cases for the expansion of facilities at Esperance Airport to cope with an influx of larger aircraft and passenger numbers (i.e. workers) to the region.
- Air north, a regional airline, reports that pilot shortages are continuing to cause cancellation or delays for remote residents relying on these services. For some industries relying on FIFO believe these services are essential to keeping skilled people in regional areas, such as the Kununurra for the longer term; this may have a flow on effect to those industries potentially exacerbating other workforce shortages.
- Tourism businesses in the Southwest region of WA have renewed calls for the state government to fund the expansion of the Busselton Margaret River Airport, with the facility expected to see nearly 100,000 passengers this year. Since the trial began the passenger numbers have been higher than expected with another part contributor to this being continued direct FIFO services being offered to other intrastate destinations

2.2 Industry Opportunities

Airfares:

- Jetstar offered a range of sales including a 48-hour flash sale over Christmas, which affected over 80,000 domestic and international fares with travel dates available from mid-January through to mid-September 2023. With airlines continuing to encourage customers to check government travel requirements before booking their holidays, as a result of uncertainty regarding the potential for more COVID-19 flareups or other factors affecting or restricting travel (i.e., war in Ukraine).
- The sky-high cost of domestic flights in Australia should return to 2019 levels by July this year according to the nation's consumer watchdog, with the cost of overseas travel also set to fall. The COVID-19 pandemic grounded most flights in 2020 but, when travel resumed, ticket prices soared far above their usual level as airlines struggled to get back up and running. As carriers add more domestic flights to their timetables and iron out their processes to avoid delays and cancellations, the cost of airfares should start to normalise. The pent-up demand for travel has been much stronger than airlines had initially anticipated and they did not retain the capacity to meet it. The ACCC has now stepped in and if passenger capacity does not increase in the first

half of 2023 the ACCC would consider that anti-competitive behaviour which it would 'take very seriously'. This will impact on Airlines future workforce needs, as they will need to ensure they have enough workers to fill capacity for flights (including new routes, and discounted airfares).

Regional Airfares

- The State Government's Regional Airfares Zone Cap (RAZC) scheme has proved popular with regional residents, with more than 28,400 capped fares flown during the first three months since the launch of the scheme on 1 July this year. The Karratha-Perth route had the highest uptake of capped airfares during the three-month period from July to September 2022, with 6,404 one-way fares flown. The Broome route was the second highest, with 4,052, followed by Kalgoorlie with 3,317 and Port Hedland with 3,013. The RAZC scheme gives people living in regional Western Australia access to capped airfares for travel to and from Perth on 18 regional air routes, all year round. Fares are capped at \$199 one-way for regional residents living within 1,000 kilometres of Perth, and \$299 one way for those living more than 1,000km from Perth. The zone cap fare is for personal travel only and must be booked as a return trip, with the flight starting from the region. The scheme is an Australian-first initiative which is supported by the State Government and is helping improve liveability in the regions by addressing the high cost of regional airfares. The scheme will be reviewed later this year.
- Lack of affordable housing continues to be an issue, though the LDSC understands there are several regional initiatives planned to boost housing and other infrastructure (access to Drs and Mobile and Broadband/internet access) in the regions (i.e. Broome, Karratha, Goldfields, Collie etc) over the next few years which will assist with these pressures in the longer term.

2.3 Industry Challenges

Housing Access for Aviation Workers

- These workers like many other industry sectors is faced with housing (affordability and low stock availability), childcare, infrastructure and amenities (i.e. broadband and mobile coverage), and access to healthcare (i.e. GPs). One stakeholder raised concerns over the rise in youth crime which is in-turn impacting the desirability for permanently residing in these areas. To alleviate this some companies are now offering FIFO roles out of Perth to combat the extensive worker shortages.
- An increasing number of WA households are considering house sharing or seeking more housemates to alleviate the rising living costs and fight inflation. Given the current housing shortages in remote and regional communities this may place additional strain on workers in these regions to access suitable accommodation. With additional implications, such as noise and fatigue also needing to be a consideration for workers on shift work.

Flight Crew

- Flight crews continue to demand better pay and working conditions. 1200 cabin crew employees for Qantas have been participating in ongoing discussions. There were concerns that the airline's proposed agreement would extend shifts from 9.5 hours to 12 hours and reduce rest periods to 10 hours, which the union worries could increase fatigue. This may have flow on effects to fatigue regulations and training and will need to be monitored.

Ground Crew

- Some of the delays being experienced at airports Nationwide, have been the result of a shortage of workers (due to staff availability as well as the surge in the demand for travel), with some groundcrew being moved to service alternate flights at last minute. There was a significant spike in cancelled and delayed flights in the middle of the year, as explained in our September 2022 Airline Competition in Australia report," a spokesperson told 9news.com.au. Although Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics (BITRE) reported that airlines have since significantly improved their reliability these delays and high flight costs will likely continue for some time with several bottlenecks impacting airports, such as staff shortages (from pilots, security and

baggage handlers. The record high fuel prices are also a factor with major airlines like Qantas and Virgin Australia reducing some flight availability as a result of these factors and consumer grievances, particularly during June and July.

2.3 Supply and Demand for Workforce

712911 Baggage Handlers

- Due to the mass exodus of workers, particularly in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions, there is an acute shortage of ground handlers with the skills and experience to work in this industry. The rate of which aviation services have resumed following the pandemic, the capacity for airlines to keep pace with the number of flights made available has placed additional pressure on industry to source, retain and train workers to these roles; and replace those experienced workers who have been lost to industry as a result of the significant impact of COVID-19 on the aviation sector.
- It is not just a labour shortage; industry is also facing a skills shortage for these workers. Maintaining skilled resources is challenged - ground handling operators are forced to look at more flexible rostering practices and employment contracts to better attract workers. This has impacted on operator's workforce planning ability to support growth and optimise resources.
- In some instances, to cope with the shortfall of workers, strategies have been adopted to cover leave and workforce gaps (i.e. amalgamation of job roles across cleaning, maintenance of facilities, hospitality, security and ground handling). This should only be viewed as a short-term fix as this is not sustainable in the long term. The loss of these experienced workers has also impacted on the ability to successfully create mentoring programs and succession planning within companies for these roles.

Aerodrome Reporting Officers (aka Air Transport Professional NEC)

- Under the legislation, and in accordance with *regulation 139.110 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulation 1998 (CASR)* the operator of a certified aerodrome is required to have personnel in the position of Aerodrome Reporting Officer.
- Based on the level of experience some Aerodrome Reporting Officers can be upskilled to become Senior Aerodrome Reporting Officers (S/AROs). This role is also in critical shortage. Additionally, CASA has recently expanded the requirements based on the Manual of Standard (MOS) and now require the Shire or airports to nominate a responsible person for this role with decision making authority.
- Regional public aerodromes are typically managed by Local Government Councils which provide services. These positions are usually combined with other duties within the council (such as groundskeeping and maintenance) and have much stricter education and licencing requirements than the ground handler roles on their own.
- It has been reported by industry stakeholders that in some instances that regional airports (Goldfield-Esperance, Pilbara and Kimberly areas) are being bypassed due to the establishment of airstrips and aerodromes that are closer to mine sites. Some mining and resources companies are also investing in the development and construction of private aerodromes. This adds to the number of aerodrome reporting officers that will be needed to ensure safe operations increasing the level of competition for these workers.
- Due to WA's extensive mining and resources operations that are serviced by the aviation sector, there are multiple regional areas require these workers. In some cases, it may be dual roles that they undertake (such as housekeeping and industrial cleaning on mine sites). Industry Stakeholders report that in as much as efforts are placed to lure interstate workers to WA, the reverse is also occurring, with FIFO roles being offered based from Perth to similar jurisdictions (i.e. QLD, SA) that have comparable mining and resources operations.
- There are approximately 140 total airports in WA; 97 Public, 38 Private, and 5 Military. Of these 5 airports are also designated international airports (even if they do not even if they have limited or no scheduled international services. Not all of these airports need to be manned, however, this shows the extent of demand for workers at these airports to keep them maintained and in serviceable condition (particularly for emergencies such as Royal Flying Doctors or DFES).\

- Given the skills shortage of experienced AROs or ground handlers, many companies are now offering these roles as FIFO. Additionally, some companies are offering new occupational titles, potentially as a way of increasing attractiveness of the job (for privately run aerodrome), for instance:
 - Mining companies (i.e. BHP) are also seeking FIFO ARO's for their WA iron ore aerodrome.
 - Northern Rise (a hospitality provider) are seeking a S/ARO for their remote WA aerodrome. They have combined a FIFO ARO role with a bus driving role (transporting residents) and require in addition to the ARO certification, a MR or HR licence, and PTD authorization.
 - Ventia is seeking FIFO from Perth or Geraldton to roles in South Australia
 - Some specialized charter airlines (i.e. Paspaley Pearls Group) located in Perth, are also hiring Fixed Base Operator/s) (FBOs) for FIFO roles. This is essentially a ground handling role, however specialises in providing support to high-capacity turboprops and business jets. Usually this term applies to the organisations providing this service, however, some job ads within Western Australia are now using this term.
 - This occupation may also be known as Service Attendant. With Sodexo also offering FIFO rosters across WA remote aerodrome sites (such as those servicing the mining and resources sector).
 - RAMS are recruiting AROs for services in Perth.

2.4 Migration Pathways

- The Great Southern Development Commission is looking to address skilling shortages through establishing a Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) with the government To progress to the next step in this process, the RDA Great Southern needs to determine if there is an actual shortage of skilled and semi-skilled labour, that this shortage cannot be filled by Australian residents and that there is evidence provided by industry in their recent employment procurement processes. If it is clear that there is a labour shortage in the Great Southern, the next step is to undertake a formal study and business case to support the DAMA application. This may assist the aviation sector to source and attract more workers to industry in this region.

2.5 The Impact of COVID-19 on the Workforce

- Over the past two years the aviation industry has undergone unprecedented change and transformation, with diverse opportunities emerging across this important sector. With airlines reporting more profitability as they recover from the economic losses wrought by COVID-19. However, fuel costs are expected to reach about \$5 billion for the 2023 financial year - a record high despite Qantas still running at about 70 per cent of its pre-COVID international capacity. Qantas said a \$200 million investment in additional staff would help maintain its improved operational performance throughout the new COVID-19 wave, and the busy holiday period. Although in recovery airlines said capacity remained "constrained", despite over a million sale fares being launched in October 2022.
- Following the grounding of most airline activity during COVID-19, a significant proportion of workers in this sector (i.e. baggage handler) were furloughed, if not let go completely. As a result many of them have secured alternative employment in other industry sectors and may not return to the aviation sector. This is in part due to increased job security, less reliance on erratic shiftwork linked to airline schedule, and improved family-friendly work conditions (no longer 24/7 conditions). Consequently, as the demand for air travel heightens, so too will the need to have adequately skilled workers to keep pace with the increased capacity requirements of airlines.
- Due to the mining activity continuing in regional centres, ARO were kept in roles during the pandemic. There is a continual requirement to upskill and refresh when operating in this role. In addition, there is a significant number of aerodromes situated in WA alone, and with similar operations this role is highly sought after in other states (i.e QLD).

2.4 Technology

- In November 2022, CASA began public consultation on the draft advisory circular (AC) for vertiport design (needed for air taxis). The draft AC (or guidance material) sets out the design guidelines for future vertiports. This is the first of its kind in the Australasian region. Consultations will close 31 March 2023. This will need to be monitored to determine its impact on training and skills development as advances in this area continue to be brought into line with regulations, policies and procedures.
- The area of AI and its impact on the assessment practices will need to be monitored. ChatGPT is a chatbot launched by OpenAI in November 2022 and has the ability to generate human-like text, making it capable of using natural language conversations. Due to this ChatGPT is having an impact on the Assessment space both at secondary schools and for those offering online learning in determining the authenticity of individuals work for assessment who may be using the AI to submit work not of their own making. Schools are looking for ways to mitigate these effects, with some planning to return to paper and pencil based assessments conducted in the classroom to ensure they are accurately assessing individuals understanding of concepts in their submitted work. This trend will need to be monitored to see how/if it affects the VET area. Within the UK they have also recognised the potential for students utilising ChatGPT with permission and if it may create biases in grading, as well as the possibility it could replace human instructors and how this may affect the fair grading and assessment of individuals work. Some National retailers are also investigating it's potential to provide training.
- In addition ChatGPT has also been identified as a possible area to assist in career planning. In particular it can Level up job searches by targeting opportunities for career moves, assist in elevating résumés, and assist in preparing responses to interview questions. As not everyone has access to career resources this can be a hidden benefit of AI.
- Further there are concerns around the roll-out of such technologies (i.e. ChatGPT) and the lack of consultation, from both from a consumer/public perspective - large companies tend to trial new technologies on their customers without informing them (i.e. Kmart and Bunnings face recognition as an example). This has the potential to impact customers (i.e. customer experience/satisfaction) as well as workers (in regards to understanding how and when to utilise these technologies). These technologies are often introduced into workplaces without consultation with the workforce. The Award states there is a requirement for this to occur however, industry feedback has been that this is rarely enforced. Further this area will need to be monitored to ensure that workers gain the requisite skills to understand, interact with or use this technology. As well as to understand their rights if used in the workplace from an industrial relations perspective.

3.Environmental, Social, People and Corporate Governance (ESPG)

Perth Airport has outlined a number of ESG Targets:

- Environmental Targets:
 - Net Zero by 2040
 - Reduction of PAPL-only Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions to be carbon neutral by 2030
 - 50% Renewable Energy across all of PAPL Estate by 2030 (incl. PAPL, tenants and operators)
 - No net loss of biodiversity from future development
 - Preservation of Munday Swamp Wetland
 - 75% Resource Recovery Rate by 2030
 - PAPL scheme water use (total) to remain below 2019 levels at 2030 despite expansion strategy (excl. Tenants/others)
 - ACA Level 4 Accreditation by 2026
- Some of Perth Airport's Other ESG Targets:

- RAP moves to stretch level by 2024 and elevate level by 2026
- Sustainability certifications for all new infrastructure projects
- PAPL workforce is reflective of population diversity metrics by FY25
- 40:40:20 gender diversity mix at all levels of the business by FY24

4. Training and Education Needs

4.1 Current and Anticipated Training Needs

- AVI20216 Certificate II in Aviation (Ground Operations and Service) and AVI30416 Certificate III in Aviation (Ground Operations and Service) are available to workers in this industry (including as a traineeship). However, some companies only rely on internal training specific to their needs. Due to the urgency related to staff shortages, the number of employers prefer accessing internal based training (in house) to fill vacancies quicker.
- Baggage/ground handlers transport baggage and freight around the airport) and must have the appropriate licences to operate:
 - Trucks,
 - Baggage Carts
 - Forklifts
 - Scissor-Lifts and
 - Conveyors (for loading and unloading)
- In addition to training, it is a regulatory requirement for airside workers to also possess:
 - Specific licences or tickets required by industry (i.e. ASIC)
 - ADA holder or the ability to obtain an ADA (Authority to Drive Airside)
 - Ability to pass drug and alcohol testing (at a CASA facility)
- For those workers that are undertaking multiple job roles, other licences and training may be required (i.e. white card on mine sites).

231199 Aerodrome Reporting Officers (Air Transport Profession NEC):

- Although industry is willing to take on inexperienced people and train them, only those workers that can attain the appropriate clearances and qualifications can be accepted into the ARO role. Applicants must also be willing to undergo pre-employment alcohol and drug screening at a CASA approved facility.
- Formal training not required for some airside workers, however, if you work as an ARO then they must be trained to the primary requirements of CASA Advisory Circular : “An ARO is required to be trained to carry out the tasks prescribed in section 13.03 of the Part 139 MOS. Although this MOS provision also requires an ARO to be trained to request NOTAMs to be issued, an aerodrome operator may choose to limit this authority to request the issue of NOTAM to a limited number of AROs.”
- The following may be used to train or upskill for AROs or S/AROs:
 - AVI30119 Certificate III in Aviation (Aerodrome Operations),
 - AVI40120 Certificate IV in Aviation (Aviation Supervision)
 - AVISS00073 Aerodrome Reporting Officer Supervisor Skill set,
 - AVISS00053 Aerodrome Reporting Officer Skills Set (Release 2)
 - AVIF0035 Manage human factors in aviation operations may also be well regarded.
 In addition to training, it is a regulatory requirement for airside workers to also possess:
 - Specific licences or tickets required by industry (i.e. ASIC)
 - ADA holder or the ability to obtain an ADA (Authority to Drive Airside)
 - Current Aerodrome Reporting Officer licence
 - CASA Radio Certificate
 - (AROC) Aeronautical Radio Operators Certificate
 - Aerodrome Reporting Officer & Aerodrome Works Safety Officer Certificate
 - Dangerous Goods Certificate
 - National Police Clearance (or the ability to obtain one)
 - Able to undergo a pre-employment medical, including drug & alcohol testing

- Forklift ticket and bus driver qualifications (HR or MR licence and a Passenger Transport Driver (PTD) Authorisation) (*desirable for some ARO roles on mine sites*)

For those workers that are undertaking multiple job roles, other licences and training may be required (i.e. white card on mine sites).

4.2 Training Challenges and Opportunities

- As the ARO occupation requires mandatory training per CASA regulations, training is being delivered in WA. However, there is a high cost for regional aerodromes associated with sourcing and accessing trainers, given the low number of trainees who are required to complete this training and/or refresher courses. To cope with this some regional aerodromes are collaborating to share costs of this across their aerodromes. This includes, but not limited to sending their employees together to attend the same session. However, this is not always viable for all regional aerodromes due to the tyranny of distance between regional/local government areas. Due to the critical shortage of workers, transporting AROs to the metropolitan area is also no longer viable, as there are no other workers to replace them whilst on leave as they attend the training.
- In general terms, a lot of focus tends to be solely placed on flight crew (i.e. pilots) with other roles not being as acknowledged. It has also been noted by stakeholders that ground crew roles, (i.e. ramp officers, load controllers and other affiliated ground handling roles) are under-valued. They play an essential role in the aviation supply chain and ensuring that flights, luggage, and freight arrive on time and schedule. Synonymous with increased flight activity due consideration should be given to ARO job roles, as they are vital to regional aerodrome operations.
- Also critical to these roles is elements such as Situational Awareness and safety protocols. As individuals interact with Aircraft, Airside vehicles (refuellers, baggage carts, scissor lifts, Stair Trucks). This skill is very much needed and with the loss of experienced workers it has become more challenging to pass on and develop this ability for new entrants.
- Whilst industry is open to taking inexperienced workers there is still a minimum level of training required to operate safely in this environment. This applies to both metropolitan airports and regional (private and publicly run) aerodromes, hubs and airports.
- Supply chain challenges have also impacted this sector. Tracking and coordinating the use spare of parts in airports needs to be taken into consideration. Especially in regionally centres delays could have significant impacts on the service an maintenance of equipment leading to delays for the baggage handlers to fulfil their roles and duties.
- Applicable to both in-house and externally sourced training, the lack of trainers has been noted (i.e. workers leaving the industry completely, or no access to people who are adequately experienced to mentor or train).
- Partnerships and industry working groups are needed to create better links with industry and RTOs. This would assist RTOs and TAFEs to foster more and varied opportunities for staff to return to industry to maintain their currency. In addition, it would assist RTOs and TAFEs to ensure they are aware of industry issues, challenges and any barriers to training, particularly for those in regional and remote areas.

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Please also refer to the Aviation Flight Operations industry profile for more information.

6. Industry Consultation

Industry Consultation: Regular industry consultation is undertaken by the LDSC through the Road Transport Industry Advisory Group (IAG), the Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), LDSC Annual RTO Forum, the LDSCs Board of Management (BoM) meetings, regional consultations, participation in industry advisory committees, teleconferences, email and social media and the use of online surveys.

Participation in group and individual meetings varies year on year. Continued and ongoing contact is made throughout the year via emails, newsletters, surveys (our most recent State of the Industry Survey had 89 industry respondents: across all industries under the LDSC remit. This data has also been included in these responses); and other channels by the LDSC to members and non-members of the Road Transport IAG and RTO IAG networks.

Participating organisations for the Aviation sector included **many small, medium and large companies** providing both flight operations (i.e. airlines) and ground operations services (i.e. maintenance and management, ground handling and mechanical engineering) and organisations with an aviation related interest (i.e. Royal Flying Doctor Services (RFDS) and the local Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCIs)) across WA, **Airports and Aerodromes** (across WA), **Industry Associations** (i.e. Regional Airports Association (RAA)), **Unions** (i.e. the Transport Workers Union (TWU)), the **licensing/regulatory body for Aviation** (i.e. Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) and Airservices Australia (AA)), **Local and Commonwealth Government Departments** (i.e. local Shire Councils, The WA Local Government Association (WALGA), the Department of Transport, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities, School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), Defence West, and the Western Australian Defence Industry Workforce Office (WADIWO)), the **WA Industry Training Council Network**, and **Registered Training Organisations** (RTOs).

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