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NEW THINK TANK CALLS FOR STATE GOVERNMENT ACTION ON AVIATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The Carpenter Government is being urged to consider introducing carbon offsets on intrastate flights to help mitigate the climate change impact of aviation fuel emissions.

The recommendation is one of several contained in the discussion paper *Climate Change, Aviation and Western Australia: Policy Prescriptions for the WA Government* released today by new State think tank the WA Policy Forum (WAPF).

Written by The Hodgkinson Group's David Hodgkinson, an aviation lawyer and consultant, the discussion paper explores the significant impacts of aviation on climate change and details action the State Government can take to address these impacts.

The detailed document is the first to be published by the WAPF, Western Australia's first State focused think tank.

Mr Hodgkinson said that while the State Government has established climate change policies, there is no policy in place to address the impact of aviation.

"We know from academic and other studies around the world that aviation has by far the greatest climate impact of any transport mode - and it is only going to increase as passenger numbers rise," he said.

"In WA, passenger numbers are growing steadily – in the second half of 2007, almost 4.6 million passengers passed through Perth airport – more than 500,000 more than last year.

"The contribution that air travel makes to greenhouse gas emissions is such that any climate change mitigation strategy must take it into account."

The discussion paper suggests three stand-alone strategies that could be implemented by the State Government to raise awareness about the carbon costs of intrastate flights and to address the climate impacts of aviation.

1. Support an airline default, or opt-out passenger offset scheme. This would involve a voluntary, separate surcharge for the full carbon cost of the flight to be levied in addition to the price of intrastate tickets. Passengers could choose to pay any proportion of this surcharge. If the passenger chose not to waive any proportion, it would stay at 100 per cent.
2. Offset the carbon costs of intrastate WA passenger and charter flights for a specific period. This would involve the State Government offsetting some or all of the carbon costs of WA passenger and charter flights for a specific period. This strategy is designed to draw attention to the carbon costs of these flights, the importance of addressing climate impacts of aviation and to demonstrate action that the WA government is taking to address climate change.
3. Support carbon offset "concessions" at WA airports for intrastate flights. This would involve the Government partnering with an organisation to offer carbon offsets at WA airports to passengers flying within WA.

"Elsewhere around the world local and state governments are taking direct policy action on aviation and its climate change impacts," Mr Hodgkinson said.

"Taking action in the ways suggested in the paper affords the WA Government an opportunity to take the lead in Australia and the Asia Pacific region – the region in which aviation growth to 2025 will be most significant – and to steer the process of change to build a cleaner sky."

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About the WA Policy Forum

Every society needs fresh ideas to improve. Western Australia faces unique challenges, yet until now there has not been a think tank dedicated specifically to our State. The West Australian Policy Forum intends to fill that gap.

In common with other think tanks, the WAPF does not take policy positions itself and is not affiliated with any individual political party.

WAPF intends to issue regular research publications with the aim of stimulating debate within the community and encouraging action by the State Government. These will cover topics including climate change, homelessness, education and the State budget.

The Forum's inaugural paper is *Climate Change, Aviation and Western Australia: Policy Prescriptions for the WA Government* by aviation lawyer David Hodgkinson.

Other papers and essays are being produced for the WAPF from eminent Western Australians, including a team led by Professor Peter Newman of Curtin University's Sustainability Policy Institute (<http://sustainability.curtin.edu.au/>) and Dr Ray Wills of the Western Australia Solar Energy Association. (<http://wasea.fasthit.net/>) These will be released in the coming months

The Directors of WAPF are Julian Roche, David Ritter and Raj Selvendra (biographies attached). WAPF is independently funded.

Visit <http://wapolicyforum.org.au> for more information.