

Dear Sir ,

I understand that our Council has been asked to provide you with some data regarding an issue experienced by overseas visitors to our Municipality . Would it be possible to include these comments in any future reviews of service provision ?

Benalla`s climate and facilities are considered highly suitable for glider aircraft use .During the warmer part of each year we have an influx of overseas visitors who base themselves in Benalla to pursue flying gliders. Many of these visitors reside in England They bring their disassembled gliders in shipping containers from overseas to Benalla usually arriving from November onwards and staying till approximately Easter

Prior to the 2007 / 2008 season overseas aircraft owners had been able to have their gliders transported in containers directly to Benalla where they had the seals opened and the containers and aircraft inspected by Quarantine Officers at our airport .This provided them with expedient transport and eliminated double handling.

Last season the visitors bringing aircraft from overseas were advised by Quarantine Officers that it would no longer be possible to have the containers opened and inspected at Benalla Airport . We understand that this was due to changes in Australias Biosecurity regulations . The options were to use facilities at either Wodonga or Corowa that were approved for the necessary inspections

An interim accommodation was reached whereby the containers were able to be opened and inspected at the premises of a Benalla based seed retailer that had the necessary authorisation to have Quarantine inspections take place at his premises . While this interim arrangement proved satisfactory there was the need to transport the aircraft and containers from the seed merchants premises to the airport where they were assembled and made ready for use .It is unclear whether this arrangement will be possible for the coming glider season

Before the visitors departed at the end of last season we held a meeting with Mr Derek Westwood - the person who organises the transport of the aircraft from overseas. He advised us that there was the potential to increase the number of aircraft brought to Benalla from overseas and that this would be more likely if it were possible to resume having aircraft Quarantine inspections at Benalla Airport . Such an arrangement would produce cost and time savings for overseas visitors

From our Councils perspective increased overseas visitation is highly desirable due to the significant economic benefits to our Municipality brought by having them here .Therefore we would support any initiative that would bring about the result of restoring the ability to have quarantine inspections at Benalla Airport resumed

Regards
Paul Charlton
Facilities Maintenance Coordinator

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