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# CIRMP EXPOSURE DRAFT MAY 2026

AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS ASSOCIATION (AAA)





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### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

The AAA respectfully acknowledges the enduring connection of the Traditional Owners to the lands and waters across Australia.

We extend our respect to the wisdom and guidance of elders, both past and present. In sharing our narratives, we recognise that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the original custodians and storytellers of their ancestral homelands.



## Executive Summary

The Australian Airports Association (AAA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Exposure Draft of the Security of Critical Infrastructure Legislation Amendment (Enhanced Critical Infrastructure Risk Management Program) Rules 2026. The AAA represents more than 340 airports across Australia, including designated airports, Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 airports, as well as regional and remote aerodromes.

The Exposure Draft does not list critical aviation assets among the asset classes subject to the enhanced CIRMP requirements in section 4A(1). The AAA supports this approach, as it is consistent with the Department's broader objective of reducing duplication between the Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018 and sector-specific aviation regulation, noting that section 4A(2)(b) also refers to assets covered by paragraph 30AB(1)(b) of the Act.

The AAA has a clear interest in the Exposure Draft because the March 2026 Transport Security Reforms consultation paper indicates that enhanced aviation obligations under the ATSR will be closely aligned with, and in some areas will largely incorporate, the CIRMP enhancement model. In particular, the Transport Security Reforms paper expressly proposes enhanced personnel and cyber settings for certain aviation entities, while the broader reform package also interacts with supply-chain, natural hazard and all-hazards planning obligations. It should also be noted that some of the AAA's airport members are also covered under the SOCI Act in relation to other aspects of their operations.

This submission builds on the AAA's earlier submission to the Transport Security Reforms consultation paper and is intended to support a coherent, practical and aviation-aware outcome across both reform processes that supports the Government's security objectives while remaining proportionate and workable for airport operators.

As section 4A(2)(b) refers to assets covered by paragraph 30AB(1)(b) of the SOCI Act, the AAA would welcome confirmation of the intended practical effect of that provision for aviation-related assets, including whether any aviation-associated assets may still be captured in particular circumstances.

Three themes run through this submission. First, where the CIRMP and ATSR frameworks deal with the same concept, the drafting and guidance should be aligned as closely as possible. Second, several provisions would benefit from modest refinement so they are easier to apply consistently across different operating contexts. Third, the final package should be accompanied by practical guidance, worked examples and implementation support.

Overall, the AAA welcomes the changes the Department has already made in response to consultation, including the extended grace periods, the retention of principles-based drafting in key areas, and the inclusion of an equivalent-framework pathway in section 8A(4). The recommendations below are intended to help the final rules work smoothly in practice, including where the same concepts may later be reflected in regulations affecting the aviation sector.

## 1. Application (section 4A)

Section 4A(1) of the Exposure Draft identifies the asset classes that will be subject to the enhanced CIRMP requirements. Critical aviation assets are not listed, although section 4A(2)(b) separately refers to assets covered by paragraph 30AB(1)(b) of the Act. The AAA welcomes the absence of critical aviation assets from the section 4A(1) list because it supports the policy objective of avoiding unnecessary duplication between the SOCI framework and existing aviation regulation.

At the same time, guidance on the intended boundary between the two regimes would be valuable. The Transport Security Reforms consultation paper indicates that, where an ATSA security program captures comparable all-hazards obligations, the responsible entity may be exempt from CIRMP obligations and regulated through the aviation framework instead. Clear guidance confirming how that intended outcome will operate for critical aviation assets would improve certainty for airports and related aviation entities.

To provide clarity to airports it would be helpful for the Department to explain how the final CIRMP rules will interact with residual SOCI obligations that may continue to apply to aviation assets in particular circumstances, including cyber incident reporting and any other obligations that are not displaced by the ATSA pathway.

This is particularly relevant where an airport operator or related entity is responsible for another class of critical infrastructure asset, such as a fuel, freight or other operational asset. A short guidance note on that interaction would help to promote consistency and reduce unnecessary interpretation work by regulated entities.

**Recommendation 1:** The Department to continue with its plans to align the final CIRMP Rules and the final ATSR all-hazards drafting wherever the same concepts arise, so that responsible entities are not inadvertently required to reconcile two different formulations of the same requirement.

**Recommendation 2:** The Department to provide guidance confirming how the proposed aviation pathway will operate where an ATSA all-hazards security program is intended to address matters that would otherwise sit within the CIRMP framework, including the treatment of any residual SOCI obligations that remain relevant.

## 2. Material risks (section 6A)

The AAA supports the addition of section 6A and, in particular, the decision to frame these matters as material risks rather than as more prescriptive notification or compliance mechanisms. That approach is consistent with a principles-based CIRMP model.

For section 6A(a), the main opportunity is guidance. The Department's accompanying material indicates that advice from government may be relevant to this material risk. The AAA considers that this can work well, if the Department clearly identifies the channels through which such advice will be issued for this purpose. This would help responsible entities distinguish between formal advice that should be incorporated into the CIRMP processes and broader contextual information shared through routine engagement.

For section 6A(b), the AAA supports the inclusion of foreign ownership, control or influence (FOCI) as a material risk. The AAA's preference is for the word "potential" rather than "possible risk of", as "potential" is clearer, more concise and more consistent in risk-management drafting. It also better reflects the way FOCI issues may arise in practice, including where the risk is indirect, latent or cumulative rather than immediate.

The AAA also encourages the Department to accompany the final rule with expanded FOCI guidance. Worked examples will be important, particularly for sectors, such as aviation, that often rely on specialist technology vendors, managed service providers and concentrated supply markets. Guidance confirming that responsible entities may continue to use vendors where no practical alternative exists, provided appropriate mitigations are in place, would also improve confidence and support consistent application.

**Recommendation 3:** The Department to publish guidance on section 6A(a) that clearly identifies the channels through which relevant government advice will be communicated for CIRMP purposes.

**Recommendation 4:** In section 6A(b), the Department should adopt "potential" rather than "possible risk of".

**Recommendation 5:** The Department to publish expanded FOCI guidance with practical examples, including examples relevant to aviation and other sectors that rely on specialist suppliers and managed service providers and clarify expectations where limited supplier availability constrains risk treatment options.

### 3. Cyber and information security hazards (section 8A)

The AAA supports the objective of strengthening cyber resilience for the higher-risk asset classes captured by section 4A(1). The cyber package in the Exposure Draft is materially improved by the use of principles-based drafting, the equivalent-framework option in section 8A(4), and the "consider whether" structure adopted for the critical-systems network protection provisions.

Section 8A(2) would be easier to apply if "[all of]" were omitted. The listed matters would still need to be addressed, but the drafting would more clearly reflect the intended risk-based character of the obligation. This would reduce the risk of unnecessarily rigid interpretation in operating environments that depend on cloud services, specialist vendors or remote support arrangements.

Further implementation guidance would be particularly helpful on three points: what constitutes a "timely manner" for replacement, patching and updates in relation to operational technology systems; how "advanced, novel and emerging technology" should be assessed in practice; and how offshore remote access and business-critical data arrangements can be managed proportionately where they are part of an established operating model.

The AAA strongly welcomes section 8A(4), which permits the use of an equivalent framework. That flexibility is important in mixed IT and operational-technology environments. The AAA encourages the Department to recognise ICAO Doc 10213 as an acceptable equivalent reference point for aviation-adjacent environments. Doc 10213 takes a function-led approach

that is well suited to operational aviation systems and can sit alongside more general frameworks such as ISO 27001, the Essential Eight and NIST. This provides a pathway that better meets the government’s security objectives while providing airports with an approach that is more practical to implement.

For section 8A(9), the AAA supports the Department’s move away from a prescriptive segregation obligation towards a “consider whether” model. This is particularly important for airports, where operational technology is often highly integrated with information technology, common-use infrastructure, airline and ground-handler systems, security screening interfaces, building management systems, access control, baggage handling, fuel, emergency management and other safety-critical or passenger-facing systems. In many cases, full operational independence for a fixed three-month period may not be technically achievable, may require disproportionate investment, or may unintentionally introduce operational, safety or continuity risks.

The AAA therefore recommends that section 8A(9)(b) be reframed by reference to the asset’s maximum tolerable outage, rather than a fixed three-month period. This would better align the requirement with the diverse architectures, dependencies and operational tolerances of airports, while preserving the policy objective of ensuring that critical systems can continue, be restored, or be safely operated during a compromise of connected networks. The Exposure Draft already defines “maximum tolerable outage” as the maximum period for which a critical system, service or other thing can be unavailable without disrupting the ongoing availability of the CI asset, and uses that concept elsewhere in the proposed supply-chain requirements.

If the three-month reference is retained, the AAA recommends that supporting guidance make clear that compliance does not require complete physical separation or uninterrupted standalone operation in all circumstances. Rather, compliance should be capable of being demonstrated through a documented, risk-based combination of network segmentation, logical access controls, traffic monitoring, least-privilege arrangements, manual or degraded-mode fallback procedures, third-party dependency management, restoration plans, rebuild capability, and tested recovery strategies.

This approach would better reflect the complex, integrated operating environments at airports while preserving the policy objective of ensuring system resilience. This would align with the draft requirement to consider whether segregation-related elements are required, rather than mandating each element in every case.

The AAA supports the structure of section 8A(10) and considers that “[elements]” is preferable to “[activities]” in sections 8A(9) and 8A(10) as it better reflects the design and control choices being considered.

**Recommendation 6:** In section 8A(2), the Department should omit “[all of]” so the drafting reads more naturally as a risk-based obligation.

**Recommendation 7:** The Department should publish implementation guidance on section 8A(2), including guidance on “timely manner”, “advanced, novel and emerging technology”, and the proportionate management of offshore remote access and business-critical data arrangements.

**Recommendation 8:** The Department should recognise ICAO Doc 10213 as an appropriate aviation-specific reference point or equivalent framework for the purposes of section 8A(4), whether in the final rules or in accompanying guidance.

**Recommendation 9:** To better accommodate operational technology systems like those used in airports, the Department could consider replacing section 8A(9)(b) with: “ensuring critical systems, including their components, can continue to operate, or be restored to an acceptable operating state, for a period aligned to the responsible entity’s documented maximum tolerable outage while other networks are in a state of restoration and recovery.”

**Recommendation 10:** In sections 8A(9) and 8A(10), the Department should adopt “elements” rather than “activities”.

#### 4. Personnel hazards (section 9A)

The AAA supports the overall direction of section 9A. The focus on access management, critical-worker suitability, ongoing monitoring and the management of incoming and outgoing critical workers is sensible and consistent with modern insider-risk practice.

The principal issue raised by airports is alignment. The March 2026 Transport Security Reforms consultation paper expressly proposes that, for enhanced aviation personnel settings, an onshore critical worker would not need a further AusCheck background check if the person already holds an NV1 clearance or an ASIC/MSIC. By contrast, section 9A(4) of the Exposure Draft currently recognises only AusCheck and NV1.

The AAA considers there is scope to align these settings more closely. Where a person has already been subject to an AusCheck-administered background checking process for an ASIC or MSIC, recognition of that pathway would avoid duplication and would support consistency between the CIRMP and ATSR reform streams. This could still sit alongside the responsible entity’s own suitability assessment.

The AAA also encourages the Department to ensure that the final definition and treatment of “critical worker” remains as consistent as possible wherever the concept is used across the broader reform package. That would make the final framework easier for responsible entities to explain and apply.

**Recommendation 11:** In section 9A(4), the Department should consider recognising a current ASIC and, where appropriate, MSIC as an additional pathway for onshore critical-worker access to critical systems provided the responsible entity remains responsible for assessing whether that pathway is sufficient having regard to the person’s role, access level and risk profile.

**Recommendation 12:** The Department should continue to align the treatment of “critical worker” across the CIRMP and ATSR reform streams so the concept is applied consistently in practice.

## 5. Supply chain hazards (section 10A)

The AAA supports the inclusion of enhanced supply-chain obligations. The focus on major suppliers, critical systems, vulnerabilities, maximum tolerable outage and vendor assessment is practical and appropriately directed toward material dependencies.

The key consideration for the final rule is workability across different operating contexts. The AAA encourages the Department to preserve a materiality-based approach so that the obligation remains focused on major suppliers, critical dependencies and meaningful risks rather than requiring exhaustive end-to-end mapping of every supplier relationship.

This is especially important in sectors that depend on specialist markets and concentrated vendor pools. In those environments, the most useful regulatory outcome is often not supplier substitution but stronger contractual and assurance controls, better contingency planning, clearer outage tolerances and well-documented mitigation measures. The AAA therefore welcomes the Department's broader consultation material recognising that use of a vendor may continue where no practical alternative exists, provided appropriate controls are in place.

For the square-bracketed wording in section 10A(5)(e), the AAA prefers "steps". That word best aligns with the practical, control-oriented character of the obligation.

**Recommendation 13:** The Department preserve a materiality-based approach to section 10A and support it with practical guidance and examples focused on major suppliers and critical dependencies.

**Recommendation 14:** In section 10A(5)(e), the Department adopt "steps" rather than "actions" or "activities".

**Recommendation 15:** The Department to include guidance and worked examples confirming how responsible entities can manage situations in which no practical alternative supplier exists, including examples of suitable contractual, operational and assurance-based mitigations.

## 6. Physical security hazards and natural hazards (section 11A)

The AAA notes that section 11A applies only to the asset classes listed at section 4A(1), and therefore does not directly apply to aviation assets. The provision itself is structured sensibly and recognises that non-physical hazards can have physical security consequences.

From an aviation perspective, the main observation is one of future alignment. If any part of section 11A is later reflected in the ATSR reform process, the AAA encourages the Department to ensure that duplicative obligations are avoided where equivalent or stronger requirements already exist under the ATSA, ATSR or existing emergency and business continuity arrangements.

The AAA also considers that any future cross-hazard import into aviation regulation should expressly recognise that existing emergency management, business continuity and aerodrome planning documentation may already address the relevant matters. A practical cross-reference approach would support clarity and proportionality and reduce duplication.

**Recommendation 16:** If concepts from section 11A are later reflected in aviation regulation, the Department to ensure that existing ATSA, ATSR, emergency management and business continuity requirements can be recognised where they already address the relevant matters.

## 7. Proposed section 30AG reporting addition

The note at the end of Attachment A indicates that the Department is considering a further requirement for responsible entities to report on implementation progress through section 30AG annual reporting. The AAA understands why the Department is exploring that option, but considers it would benefit from targeted, separate consultation if the proposal is advanced.

That would allow the Department to test the legal basis, the intended scope of the reporting, the interaction with other assurance mechanisms, and the practical burden on responsible entities. It would also give industry a clearer opportunity to comment on proportionate alternatives, such as transitional implementation updates or guidance-based assurance measures.

**Recommendation 17:** If the Department decides to progress an additional section 30AG implementation-reporting requirement, it should consult separately on the proposed drafting and its operation before finalisation.

## 8. Definitions and wording responses

The AAA welcomes the Department’s decision to identify particular wording choices for comment in the Exposure Draft. The AAA’s responses are intended to support clarity, consistency and ease of implementation.

In summary, the AAA supports retaining “[reasonably]” in the definition of “critical system” and “[unreasonably]” in the definition of “maximum tolerable outage”. The AAA also supports including the bracketed references to Australian waters in the definitions of “offshore critical worker” and “onshore critical worker”, so that the territorial application of those terms is clear and unambiguous.

For the remaining square-bracketed choices, the AAA’s preferences are set out in the Appendix. In short, the AAA supports “potential” in section 6A(b), omission of “[all of]” in section 8A(2), retention of “[relevant]” in section 8A(4), “elements” in sections 8A(9) and 8A(10), and “steps” in section 10A(5)(e).

**Recommendation 18:** The Department should adopt the wording preferences set out in Appendix B as a package, as they work together to produce a clearer, more consistent and more workable final instrument.

## 9. Implementation

The Exposure Draft’s revised grace periods are a positive and practical response to consultation feedback. The staged implementation structure is a useful improvement and will assist responsible entities in planning uplift work. However, the AAA considers that guidance, worked examples and implementation support will be essential, particularly where the same or similar obligations are later reflected in the ATSR framework.

The remaining implementation opportunity is coordination. The March 2026 Transport Security Reforms consultation paper proposes a two-year grace period for new transport-security

obligations, with staggered submission timing by cohort. Where comparable concepts are being settled through both the CIRMP and ATSR reform streams, aligned commencement expectations will be important.

The AAA therefore encourages the Department to continue coordinating the two reform processes so that responsible entities affected by both do not need to meet substantively similar obligations on different timelines without a clear policy requirement. Guidance, templates and worked examples will also be important to a smooth implementation experience.

**Recommendation 19:** The Department to continue to align the commencement approach, guidance and implementation support across the CIRMP and ATSR reform streams wherever the same substantive obligations are being developed.

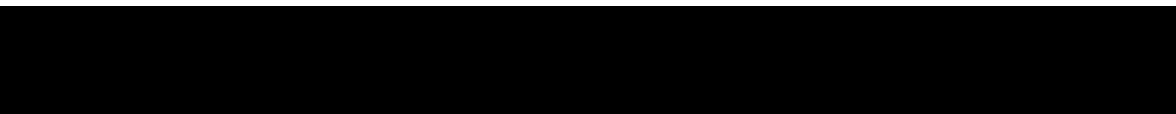
## 10. Conclusion

The AAA welcomes the Exposure Draft and appreciates the substantial work the Department has undertaken to refine the CIRMP enhancement package. The Exposure Draft is stronger for the practical adjustments already made in response to consultation feedback.

The recommendations in this submission are intended to support that trajectory. They focus on maintaining alignment across related reform processes, refining a small number of provisions so they are easier to apply consistently, and reinforcing the value of guidance and implementation support.

The AAA would welcome continued engagement with the Department as the final rules are settled and the corresponding ATSR reforms progress. A coherent, practical and well-aligned outcome across both processes will support stronger, more consistent security and resilience outcomes for government and industry alike.

### Contact



## Appendix — Summary of responses to square-bracketed wording

The AAA's preferred approach to the square-bracketed wording in the Exposure Draft is summarised below.

Provision	Square-bracketed wording	AAA position
Definition of critical system	[reasonably]	Retain "reasonably".
Definition of maximum tolerable outage	[unreasonably]	Retain "unreasonably".
Definition of offshore critical worker	[and Australian waters]	Include the reference to Australian waters.
Definition of onshore critical worker	[, including in Australian waters]	Include the reference to Australian waters.
Section 6A(b)	[potential/possible risk of]	Adopt "potential".
Section 8A(2)	[all of]	Omit "all of".
Section 8A(4)	[relevant]	Retain "relevant".
Section 8A(9)	[elements/activities]	Adopt "elements".
Section 8A(10)	[elements/activities]	Adopt "elements".
Section 10A(5)(e)	[steps/actions/activities]	Adopt "steps".



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