

To Whom It May Concern

**RE: ENQUIRY INTO THE OPERATION, REGULATION AND FUNDING OF AIR ROUTE SERVICE DELIVERY TO RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES.**

I am currently a resident of Mt Isa and have resided here for 10years. Like the majority of people in Mt Isa, I relocated to work in the mines and myself, my husband and children are proud to call Mt Isa home. Our families are located in Brisbane and Toowoomba and over the years we have been the victims of high price fares from regional airlines.

With regards to the terms of reference being investigated, I can relate to the following

- a) Social and economic impacts of air route supply and airfare pricing: with a young family, the cost of flying from Mt Isa to Brisbane is often more expensive than flying overseas. A one way ticket costs between \$381- \$455, depending what day the flight is. For our family (2adults, 1 child, 1 infant) to do a return trip to Brisbane, it will cost us between \$2,286- \$2,730. Even using the recently introduced resident discount fares, the price is still above \$2000. The above pricing is also assuming that we book at least 3-4months prior to taking a trip. QANTAS constantly advise that they have sale fares, which can be as low as \$250 one way, are often not available for when the average working family needs to travel. I.e. evenings, weekends, school holidays. Financially, the majority of Mt Isa families can not afford to outlay this cost which contributes to them becoming 'isolated'. Mt Isa residents are unable to enjoy the social luxury of air travel to take a holiday and/or visit family due to exorbitant airfares.

In addition, our families are also not able to regularly visit us due to the high cost. Mt Isa is an isolated city, the nearest 'big' city is Townsville- a 10hr drive away. Families in Mt Isa do it tough, particularly young families. They do not have the luxury of grandparents and other extended family being able to 'jump on a plane' to come and help out for a few weeks if required due to the exorbitant price fares. This puts additional strain on families which is through no fault of their own, rather the airlines which service the region.

- b) consistency of aircraft supply and retrieval of passengers by airlines during aircraft maintenance and breakdown: In 2017, I experienced the following delays, due to maintenance issues
  - a. March 2017: turned back once due to maintenance issues and resulted in a 5hr delay. Arriving in Mt Isa at 11pm (was meant to arrive at 6pm). This same flight also had people from the 9am flight as that flight was cancelled due to maintenance issues
  - b. July 2017: a delay of 1hr due to maintenance issues
  - c. November 2017: a delay of 2hrs due to maintenance issues.

While I acknowledge the safety of passengers is the airlines first priority, the question needs to be asked why there are so many maintenance issues. The reliability of flights to/from Mt Isa is now at a point where if a connecting flight needs to be made with another airline, people are flying down the day before to ensure they make their flight. Social media forums during 2017 regularly had comments about delayed or cancelled flights by QANTAS. The enquiry is encourage to request reliability and maintenance data from QANTAS and I am

confident it will show that at least one flight a week was delayed or cancelled due to maintenance issues.

In summary, I acknowledge that airlines need to cover their costs to ensure that the business remains profitable but regional areas are being exploited by airlines as they know that their customers have no choice but to fly with them. I hope this enquiry results in cheaper airfares, so the residents of Mt Isa and other regional areas can enjoy regular holidays and visits to family, like so many other Australians.

Regards

Monica Joseph