

Ms Lyn Beverley
Secretary
Select Committee on Commonwealth
Bilateral Air Service Agreements
PO Box 6100,
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Email: cbasa.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Beverley,

Questions taken on Notice: Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

We refer to the appearance by Mr Matt Raos and Mr Fathi Atti of Qatar Airways before the Senate Committee on 27 September 2023 and provide the following responses to the questions on notice:

Q. Identify how the media contact to Qatar Airways came about around the 10th or 11th of July and whether there was actual media publication at that time, and perhaps if you could come back to us on that?

A. Qatar Airways would like to take this opportunity to clarify that we became aware of the decision of the Australian Government after the Australian Financial Review published an article on **18 July 2023** stating that the Transport Minister said: *"The Australian government is not considering additional bilateral air rights with Qatar"*. In this article, it was disclosed that, on **10 July 2023**, the Transport Minister sent a letter to the group of women involved in the Federal Court proceedings to assure them that the Qatar's request was no longer being considered.

Q. The DPM dinner. Again, perhaps if on notice you could provide details of what that dinner was and where it was and when it was?

A. The Annual Prime Minister and Ministry Dinner 2023 was held on Wednesday 1 March 2023 in Sydney with the Prime Minister, Hon. Anthony Albanese MP and the Federal Ministry. The event was held at Doltone House, Jones Bay Wharf (Level 3, 26-32 Pirrama Road, Pyrmont NSW 2009).

Q. If you're able to take that on notice, whether mediation is also being entered into?

A. We refer to the response to this question provided in the letter from Morris Mennilli, the solicitors acting on behalf of Qatar Airways in Federal Court proceeding DHI22 & Ors -v- Qatar Airways Group Q.C.S.C. & Ors (NSD 837 of 2022) dated 29 September 2023 (**Morris Mennilli Letter**) sent to the Committee.

Q. Can I please request on notice copies of the documents by Qatar Civil Aviation Authority dated the 16th of August 2022 and the 14th of August 2023, as these were not included in the submission?

A. We would like to clarify for the benefit of the Committee that Qatar Airways is not the custodian of the requested documents; however, we would like to reiterate our support for the Committee's Inquiry and we would like to inform the Committee that we have already requested QCAA to submit, on an urgent basis, the requested documents directly to the Committee Secretary.



Q. I would also like to request on notice copies of documents from the Department of Infrastructure and Transport dated the 14th of July 2023 and the 25th of August?

A. Whilst Qatar Airways is not the custodian of the requested documents, given our support for the Committee's Inquiry, we would like to inform the Committee that we have also requested that QCAA submit, on an urgent basis, these documents directly to the Committee Secretary.

Q. On notice then, can you put – give us actually the actual statistics. I understand the complete statistics of the gender breakdown of your senior executives and also of the board members. Thank you.

A. There are seven Board members and one of the Board members is female (that is, 14.3% of the Board). In addition, across the organisation, 38% of our workforce are female, 26% of those in management positions are female and 25% of our Senior Executives (that is, Vice Presidents and Senior Vice Presidents) are female.

Q. On 28 October 2020, the Qatar Government Communications Office issued a press release about the incident on 2 October 2020 at Doha Airport. This release said that a "comprehensive, transparent investigation into the incident" would be conducted. On 30 October 2020, a further press release was issued saying that the investigation revealed that "standard procedures were violated". On 31 October 2020, a statement was issued by the Foreign Ministry of the State of Qatar and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which stated that "the officials involved have been referred to the Public Prosecution Office".

(a) Given that one of the staff involved was criminally prosecuted do you agree that the response to the incident involved criminal conduct? Given that so many people were clearly involved, why is it that only one person was prosecuted?

A. We refer to the response to this question provided in the Morris Mennilli Letter.

(b) The State of Qatar said that the investigation would be 'transparent' so why haven't the details of the investigation and prosecution of this person been made public?

A. We refer to the response to this question provided in the Morris Mennilli Letter.

In relation to the matter raised by the questions generally, it should be recognised that the circumstances that has resulted in the Federal Court proceedings was an unusual and isolated incident that we, together with other commercial airlines, experienced. In each country we operate in, we need to respect and abide by local laws as well as comply with the lawful direction of local authorities which we do at all times. Therefore, it is beyond our ability to assert any control over any local authorities in whichever country we operate, including in Qatar.

Q. During the period of Covid there was obviously Qatar airlines was carrying out a lot of freight work on behalf of initiatives from the then federal government. Are you able to quantify the amount of money that were paid during that freight period?

A. In April 2020, the Australian Government established the International Freight Assistance Mechanism (IFAM) to keep global air links open in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Qatar Airways received **AUD934,000** from the Australian Government for carrying cargo through the IFAM program between 01 April 2020 and 30 June 2022, with a balance of **AUD104,540** waiting to be received.

Q. *What date was the lobbyist appointed?*

A. Fitzpatrick Advisory were engaged on 01 November 2022.

Please advise if we can be of any further assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Justin Kestel
Regional Manager Australia and New Zealand

