

SUBMISSION NO. 36

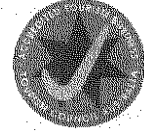


# Flinders Island Adventures

Sea & Land Tours . Explore . Fish . Walk . Dive . 52 Islands

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The House of Representatives Standing Committee  
On Transport and Regional Services.  
Parliament House.  
Canberra ACT 2600.  
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Secretary: *J. Luddington*

**RECEIVED**

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORT AND  
REGIONAL SERVICES

The Honorable Members.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to your inquiry into this most important matter, an area of services upon which we are totally dependant for all passenger movements on and off Flinders Island.

Please find attached our submission and we would be delighted to discuss with you first hand, some of the problems of having to rely on Regional air services; should you be able to visit Flinders Island during you deliberations.

Yours faithfully,

James Luddington



## Introduction.

Flinders Island lies 100 nautical miles south of Wilson's promontory and 40 miles off the north east coast of Tasmania. With a population of 950 the island's industries are shared between farming, fishing and tourism.

Flinders Island Adventures has been providing a range of tours of Flinders and the outer islands for over 20 years, hosting visitors both from mainland Australia and small numbers from overseas.

Transport services on and off the island are by air, with Island Airlines using 9 seater Piper Chieftain aircraft and a proliferation of charter services in single and twin engine planes, working out of Launceston and Bridport in Tasmania, Essendon and Moorabbin in Victoria. These services mainly use the airport at Whitemark on Flinders which has a short sealed runway facing into the hills in the east and a long gravel runway northwest with reasonable approaches, but not suitable for use by modern turboprop aircraft in its present state.

Southern Shipping provides the sea freight services to Flinders Island with a 300 ton livestock barge weekly out of Tasmania and very irregular sailings to Port Welshpool in Victoria. This vessel has the capacity to carry 12 passengers with no comforts or regular sailing schedules and is just not a proposition for the reliable transport of either residents or visitors with or without their vehicles on and off the island.

History. Flinders Island, since the cessation of services by Ansett around 28 years ago, has been served by a succession of small airlines who have either withdrawn or failed one after the other, some 17 in all. Proving that a dedicated island service cannot operate effectively running to the island alone. **The economics of a 9 seat plane, supporting booking facilities, terminals, staff etc just does not work.** The current situation leaves us without the seat availability, access to main terminals, access to national booking systems and modern aircraft the traveling public expect. The Mobil avgas crisis shut the island down for 7 weeks mid summer at considerable economic loss and demonstrated that in a situation where a community is completely dependant on air as the only means of transport, that a better system is required.

Trade and Tourism. The Island falls under the jurisdiction of Tasmania and services such as health education etc. are sourced via Launceston as the regional center. Residents use Launceston as their main supply point, as the shipping service concentrates on the run from Tasmania. Investment in farms and other industries on the island comes principally from Victoria. Most visitors come from Victoria and further north and Flinders is seen as a separate destination to Tasmania, our experience has shown, that trying to route visitors via Launceston does not work. People who have recently invested here in farms and other activities, also wish to travel direct and not via Tasmania. Air freight products such as fish and lamb also need to travel by the shortest route to the major markets to our north.

Jurisdiction. Flinders falls into several areas of government responsibility. The Flinders Council owns and operates the main airport on the island.

Tasmania provides government services to the island and the regional center Launceston.

3

Victoria is the source of much of our investment, markets and visitors and the major hub for dispersal to other areas. The Federal Government, as the over-riding authority has responsibilities in most key areas in aviation and trade between states and also administers the Bass Strait passenger equalization scheme that assists travel to and from Tasmania by sea, a service that we do not have access to.

**Current Situation.** Flinders Island has minimal air services despite this being the only practical way on and off for passengers and high value perishable freight to the economic detriment of the island.

**Recommendations.** In accepting that the island can be a very viable economic unit, with it's food production and tourism based industries, this inquiry is pivotal in defining the role of the various governments involved.

**Tasmania.** To ensure a daily service to Launceston to meet freight and passenger needs both current and future. To work with the Flinders Council to have an all weather airport on Flinders with a sealed runway suitable for turboprop aircraft.

**Victoria.** To ensure suitable access for regional air services, as the major hub for northbound passengers and freight.

**The Commonwealth.** As part of it's of regional development program the Commonwealth Government address the following, airport development on the island jointly with the Flinders Council and State Government. Access to airport and terminal facilities at Tullamarine. Review the Island's lack of access to the Tasmanian Passenger Equalisation scheme, with a view to assisting the start up of a 4 day per week service with an 19 to 25 seat turboprop from Tullamarine to Whitemark, by a reputable regional carrier such as O'Connor Airlines or Regional Express. With assistance from the Commonwealth, mainland Tasmania has much improved access at an affordable price. Flinders Island residents and visitors benefits from none of this, to the economic and social disadvantage.

Flinders Island for years has put up with very second rate air services with **minimal input** from all areas of government, to the detriment of residents and economic development.

**As a viable community with no practical alternative means of transport on and off the island for people, perishables and express freight, effective air transport is absolutely essential.**

I urge you as a committee to visit Flinders Island during your deliberations, to see first hand the current situation and to discuss with the community the means of improving thereon.

James Luddington for Flinders Island Adventures.