



**SUBMISSION NO. 100**

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30.8.02

House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services  
Parliament House  
Canberra  
ACT 2600

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Submission to "Inquiry into Commercial Regional Aviation Services in Australia AND Transport Links to Major Populated Islands."

We make this submission as long time residents of Flinders Island, Tasmania. We rely on regional transport:

- as commercial fishermen to freight perishable scalefish of the island,
- as a family to move on and of the island for schooling, business and extended family commitments,
- and as farmers we rely on the shipping to transport stock and goods.

Air travel is the only reasonable way to travel on and off the island, the shipping service being designed for the transport of stock and goods can carry some passengers but the sailings are irregular and the travel time involved is unsuitable for most needs. The shipping caters well for movement of stock and cargo between Flinders Island and Tasmania but does not provide such a good service between Welshpool, Victoria and Flinders Island. Welshpool is the other traditional destination port for islanders with a significant amount of our stock going that way. Return shipping of cargo from Welshpool to Flinders is unreliable with some cargo waiting two months at Welshpool.

Flinders Island only regular RPT service is supplied by Island Airlines Tasmania Pty Ltd, at present operating chieftain aircraft max of 8 or 9 passengers. The service to Launceston, which operates at least twice daily on week days and once daily on weekends, has almost reached saturation point. On 29<sup>th</sup> August I tried to book two tickets to Launceston on Monday morning 9<sup>th</sup> September for medical appointments, I could only get on e Sunday evening and the other Monday night. This type of loading 10 days out from date of travel is reasonably common. Yesterday we were also notified that an ex islander now in Melbourne was only expected to live another two days, two family members managed to obtain seats to Launceston, two other close friends have not been able to leave the island as the RPT service is fully booked both to Launceston and Melbourne today, their only other option is to charter a flight at a cost they cannot afford. The consistency of such heavy loadings indicates an RPT operator operating at

full capacity however the economics of running an airline in such a regional area preclude the ability of the airline to economically expand in to bigger aircraft.

The Flinders Island Community having been through hard times with the wool and beef industry is trying to build a tourism industry to enable it to survive the hard times in agriculture and to give its children an industry to come home to. The provision of just thirty-two seats per week from Melbourne, our biggest tourism market, is not sufficient to build the tourism industry on. The tourism industry has grown as charter aircraft operators are delivering the groups, which the RPT service can't or won't cater for, to the island. Once the RPT operator has 1 or 2 seats booked on an aircraft he cannot accommodate groups that wish to come to the island. We are building an industry flying groups into the island for fishing charters. We would have a much more viable business if the RPT service could provide for these groups by operating larger aircraft than they are operating now. We are also concerned that proposed CASA regulations will make it impossible for these charter aircraft to service the island as they do now.

As fishermen we have considerable problems moving small amounts, under 300 Kg from the island, the freight capacity of passenger carrying chieftain aircraft being minimal. Over that volume we charter single engine aircraft to move the freight to Victoria. Freight costs are high compared with similar businesses in Tasmania, which have the option of cheaper airfreight or using shipping and claiming on the Bass Strait Equalisation Subsidy.

This is a brief submission indicating some of the points faced by our community, some of which we face daily in the scale fish industry. We feel the Federal and State governments need to address the problems faced by regional communities like ours that are reliant on air transport. The small regional airlines that dare to service communities like this need government support to be able to continue and to be able to upgrade the services they provide. We would be pleased to meet with the committee should it come to Flinders island.

Yours sincerely

Carol Cox  
For LJ & CD Cox