

Secretary: *J. L. ...*

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORT AND
REGIONAL SERVICES**Furneaux Enterprise Centre****Submission to****Inquiry into Commercial Regional Aviation Services in Australian and Transport Links to Major Populated Islands****Geographic Location**

Flinders Island, eastern Bass Strait, between the main Tasmanian island and Victoria. 35 minutes flying time from Launceston and 75 minutes flying time from Essendon (using aircraft currently servicing the RPT route - Chieftans).

The adequacy of commercial air services in regional and rural Australia

The current situation on Flinders Island is stifling business development and planning, both for the tourism and general business sector. The lack of capacity makes expansion difficult for many and impossible for most.

Policies and measures required to assist in the development of regional air services

It is felt that there need to be some guarantees in place to help the RPT operator adequately service the route. These include:

- Guaranteeing minimum seat numbers (the Furneaux Enterprise Centre (FEC) has been informed that 65% is the break-even point)
- Helping the RPT operator justify the purchase of suitable aircraft for the route (even now, it is hard to book for a month ahead)
- Re-regulating the route to give the RPT operator some security
- Phase this out over a five-year period - so that the government is not always expected to provide the solution, but the RPT operator has a chance to develop their business with some safety.

It is felt that, for Flinders Island to grow some access issues need addressing. We, as a community, need easy access to mainstream links including, terminals, freight forwarding systems and national booking systems.

Small scale owner-operators have a number of problems when servicing a remote region like Flinders Island.

- They have limited capital available for expansion
- They suffer from competition from the charter market (exacerbated by a small total market size)
- They have limited ability to make use of (and thereby to justify the purchase of) a multi-use/multi-destination aircraft.

As far as suitable aircraft are concerned:

- The current situation is not ideal. Chieftans are too small to accommodate the freight and passenger requirements for the region. Also, it seems that they cannot be configured to carry half passengers and half freight due to the fact that everything loads through the same (rear) doors.
- ~~A Cessna Caravan would be an ideal freight aircraft for this region~~
- A 19-25 seat turbo-prop aircraft with a separate hold for freight and perishables would probably be an ideal aircraft for this region.

The adequacy of commercial air services to major populated islands and the adequacy of alternative sea services.

*amended
25/02/03
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