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Secretary: ... *J. Luff* ...

RECEIVED

16 AUG 2002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORT AND
REGIONAL SERVICES

95 Main Street
Currie
King Island 7256

15th August, 2002

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

Dear Sir,

I am writing in regard to the inadequacy of commercial air services to King Island and would like to point out some of the problems we have with accessing flights to and from King Island from both Melbourne and Tasmania.

My husband and I run a tourist accommodation property, together with a Touring Company on King Island. We have been involved in Tourism on King Island since 1987. During this time we have endured many setbacks and hardships related to the collapse of regional airlines and the lack of suitable aircraft to service King Island.

As part of our business we "package" holiday on King Island for many groups (including Senior Citizens and sporting clubs) and have found it extremely difficult at times to be able to secure enough seats on the aircraft to bring these groups to King Island. Only today I have had a cancellation of a group of sixteen people from Tasmania due to the fact that they could not secure flights from Tasmania with TASAIR on it's small aircraft. The cancellation of this booking means that we have lost almost \$5000 worth of business, which is a substantial amount for any business.

We have a large number of enquiries regarding holidaying on King Island, which often take a lot of talking and encouragement for the people to book when they find out that they have to fly to King Island on 6, 9 & 16 seat planes.

Tourism is a vital part of the King Island economy and we provide an ideal destination for those people in the city to get away from it all and relax and unwind. To be able to continue the viability of the tourism industry on King Island we need to be able to offer our clients a regular, safe and adequately sized plane to get here.

The planes from Tasmania are totally inadequate for our needs and need upgrading in the very near future. The Tasmanian Government is marketing Tasmania heavily on the mainland and overseas and King Island could benefit greatly from this campaign if we were able to supply the Tasmanian mainland visitor (or Tasmanians themselves) with a decent flight service **AT REASONABLE PRICES.**

We have two airlines servicing King Island from Melbourne; Regional Express and King Island Airlines. Regional Express has recently taken over the Kendall route flying from Tullamarine and King Island Airlines fly from Moorabbin Airport. Ticketing arrangements with Regional Express is totally



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inadequate at this time. Regional Express has decided to close the office on King Island leaving people with the option of booking their flights through Regional Express' call centre or on the internet. Payment for tickets has to be made by credit card, which is a problem for many travellers. Unfortunately Regional Express is only operating 16 seat Metro liners to King Island at present and with only 16 seats available for passengers we feel this service will be inadequate when the tourist season starts again in earnest in a month or so. We already experience difficulty getting our young people back from Melbourne, where they are completing their education at some Victorian Boarding Schools, at the end of school terms and long weekends.

King Island Airlines operate with 10 seat Chieftains and although the management try to accommodate as many passengers as possible it is often difficult to secure a seat on the planes at the times we wish to travel.

Prior to the demise of Kendall that company was offering a connecting flight to Tasmania which was proving to be a huge asset to the tourist industry here. Many tourists travelling to Tasmania for holidays would add on a few days stay on King Island as part of the Tasmanian holiday. With the cessation of this service we are back to the old situation of having the TRY to secure seats on the smaller planes IF we can convince the tourists to take in King Island during their Tasmanian visit.

The prices of the airfares to King Island from both Melbourne and Tasmania are another deterrent to securing the visits of many people. Return fares from Tasmania with TASAIR are \$330, and the Melbourne flights with Regional Express \$311 and King Island Airlines \$295. Why would people want to pay this much for a flight when they could travel from Melbourne to Sydney or Brisbane for less?

We, on King Island, are in the position of only have one form of passenger transport on and off the island. That is to fly. Surely there could be some form of subsidy put in place to make the airfares more reasonable which would allow us to encourage more people to the island, more people on planes and everyone's cash flow would be improved. The sky is our highway - the Bass Strait Ferries receive huge assistance from the Tasmanian Government - why is it they are not able to provide some of this funding for our "highway" travel.

I leave these points for you to ponder and look forward to meeting some of your committee here on King Island to discuss our transport issues in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Honess