

The Committee Secretariat
House of Representatives

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SUBMISSION NO. 156

J. Lyng
Secretary
RECEIVED
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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSPORT AND
REGIONAL SERVICES

22-9-02

ENQUIRY INTO REGIONAL AIR SERVICES

8/11 EVANS ST
MOONEE PONDS
VIC 3039.

Dear Sirs

I would very much like to make a contribution towards this very important enquiry, and I submit the following, immediately, today, hoping that you will accept a late submission.

I will attempt to be concise and brief. I have just returned to Melbourne from 2 weeks on my ^{holiday} property on Flinders Island, (which I have had for 12 years)

I have noticed that the quality of air service has not changed in the 20 years I have been visiting F.I. I don't believe it has gone backwards, literally, as the Piper Chieftan is, in aviation circles, considered the bare minimum twin engined aircraft suitable for low capacity RPT. That is, there is no aircraft (ie 8-10 seats) suitable, other than the ubiquitous Chieftain. This same, classic, relic, has been the focus of many accidents - those that the public are more aware of include WHYALUA AIRLINES, and

MONARCH AIRLINES. Just weeks ago, I am told, the entire Australian fleet of chieftains were grounded, pending mandatory modifications, not unlike Ansetts B767s. 2 of 4

The point I am making is that the chosen aircraft type is ROCK BOTTOM.

(For a short few years, Airlines of TASMANIA, which no longer flies (thanks to CASA, wholeheartedly) operated 15 seater Metroliner (Turbo propeller) which KENDELL AIRLINES successfully operated to King Island (KI) and N/W Tasmania before the introduction of SAABS SF340's.

A standby fare of \$80 (Traralgon, VIC to FI) was available, or \$105 Essendon to FI on these Metroliners. They were pressured^{used}, and thus flew high, and above the weather. And more importantly, they were quieter, and quicker, and safer. Today, a return airfare, ex Essendon, will not give much change out of \$400! And residents do not fare much better.

Apparently the current operators (ISLAND AIRLINES TASMANIA) are keen to operate larger aircraft viz 15+ seaters, with 2 PILOTS (CASA requirement) but runway ^{surface} strength on the N/S runway is inadequate. ie it requires sealing, and perhaps reinforcing (increased loading strength) I'm not sure.

The local council (FLINDERS COUNCIL) operate the airport, but state they cannot afford the cost of sealing this gravel strip.

The other runway, is sealed, but is length limited, restricted by the main road, and the beach, at each extremity. Hence the only option is to seal the runway.

So, I suggest that the council is lobbied / persuaded to "seal the strip", and a subsidy is provided to support larger aircraft, on a reduced frequency. I believe PROMAIR were provided with a subsidy on the FI to Launceston leg (about 15 years ago); I do not know the situation recently.

Also, the boat service, is pathetic. VIZ MATHEW FLINDERS (flat barge like construction!!) purposely built (Operated by Southern Shipping, Bridport). They mainly sail Bridport (TAS) to F.I; they sail to Port Welshpool erratically, depending on cattle sales. I am told that they want "out" of the service. This computer-designed vessel has ~~two~~ sleeps about 8 (MAX) and is ideally suited for calm waters (ie FI to TAS) but not the treacherous seas of Bass Strait. Because of its flat bottom, it is not real fast! Meanwhile, TASSIE recently scored 2 new vessels, to be operated on a daily basis! ^{SPRIT of TAS} 122

I believe these will run at a loss due to

overservicing. the demand is just not there for travel to TAS, even given September 11, 2001.

Some friends recently travelled on the inaugural sailing, and I'm told there was an abundance of vacancies. Cabin crew said they would "wait and see".

I recently contacted TFLINE, suggesting they consider diverting their SeaCat (Summer) Service, from Welshpool (Sorry, now Melbourne) via FI to Tasmania, on some of their sailings.

The Manager was not receptive to this possibility, but on a bright note, said he believed that the existing service provided by Southern Shipping was about to improve!

FI is not unlike Wilsons Promontory (and geologically was once part of a land chain joining Victoria to TAS before the last ice age.) thus it is very beautiful and naturally endowed. It is one of Australia's best kept secrets. Please seek out tourism information to convince yourselves!

IN conclusion, what I am saying is that everybody (ie the FI community, Tasmanians, Victorians and all potential tourists) deserve a far superior & improved service than is currently available.

Could I please be kept informed of the proceedings and outcome of this enquiry?

Yours faithfully
Stephen Foulkes (Stephen FOULKES)