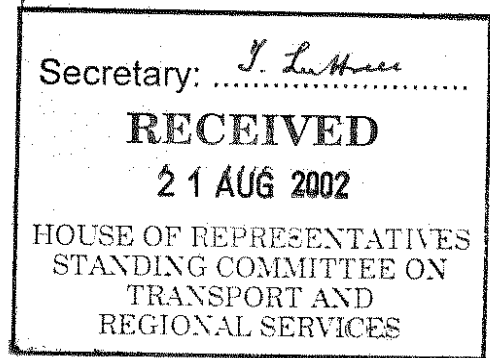


From:
Jadwiga & Wojciech Lipski
8 Desla Court,
Keysborough 3173
e-mail: jwlipski@primus.com.au
tel: 03 9264 9433 bh 03 9798 2411 ah



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

Melbourne, 13th August, 2002.

Re.: Air services between Melbourne and Flinders Island (Tasmania)

Dear Sir/Madam,

We live in Melbourne, but we have holiday property on Flinders Island. The Island is one of most beautiful places in Australia, located in the middle of Bass Strait between Wilson's Promontory and Launceston.

We travel to the Island 5 to 6 times per year, which is typical for people with holiday properties on the Island. Most convenient route for us is Moorabbin Airport to Whitemark Airport on Flinders Island. In recent years we have been experiencing more and more problems with deteriorating air services on this route:

- In the beginning of 90's there was an airline Aus Air providing regular services to the Island from Moorabbin – almost every day and on weekends twice a day.
- Also, first version of Island Airline was flying on regular basis from Essendon and LaTrobe Valley during that time.
- Aus Air has gone broke about 1998, leaving a gap in services from Moorabbin (we lost \$600 on pre paid tickets).
- Since than we were flying with Island Airline from LaTrobe Valley (Traralgon) until Island Airline went broke not very long after Aus Air (we lost another \$700).
- After collapse of the Island Airline, a new player started flying to Flinders Island from Moorabbin: Region Air.
- Region Air was flying until the beginning of 2001, when they ceased operation on this route, claiming that they have made the loss (nevertheless their charges were nearly twice of original Aus Air).
- Currently we have two choices:
 - charter with Dreamtime Flights from Moorabbin.
 - second version of Island Airline from Essendon or LaTrobe Valley, which is most inconvenient for us as we live 10 min from Moorabbin

Airport and we have 1 hour drive to Essendon and 1.5 hour drive to LaTrobe Valley.

- Dreamtime Flights charter have no schedule and therefore is very difficult to plan a trip (depends on their availability).
- All above-mentioned airlines have been using Piper Chieftain aircrafts (10 seaters), which seem to be adequate for the task.

Our individual transport problem to the Island is probably not most important issue in the general overwriting problem of getting there from Melbourne by more people. After all, we are in the privileged situation, being able to afford to pay for charter flights.

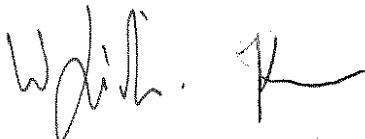
The Island needs more visitors to boost local economy. We do not think that we need large passenger jets landing on Island every weekend and bringing hundreds of visitors. This would deprive this place from its enigmatic quietness and affect local culture and environment. However, there is definitely enough place to accommodate more visitors looking for a chance to retreat and spend time with nature, away from busy life in the city. There are a number of people we know, who would be happy to travel there for holidays or for a weekend. The poor availability of air services and prohibitive cost of tickets prevents potential visitors to come to the Island.

We think that Piper Chieftain is a perfect size aircraft to cater for air transport to the Island. However, it may be more economical to run a little bigger aircraft. What we need for sure is the sealing of a long runway at Whitemark Airport. Currently North – East runway is gravel! This discourages some aircraft operators to come to the Island, fearing damage to the aircraft (particularly propeller). What we also need is a reliable and permanent air connection from Moorabbin to the Island. We think that chosen airline should be subsidized by Government at least initially, until number of people flying there will be sufficient to sustain the Airline on their own. This would push tickets price down and provide more people with the opportunity to go there.

Sea services between Welshpool and Flinders Island is important for transport of heavier goods to the Island, but we do not think it would play mayor role in weekend visitors (may be holiday). Possibly once a week diversion of one of our new ferries cruising normally between Melbourne and Davenport could be considered for holidaymakers. This would involve additional investment to prepare Whitemark or Lady Baron ports for such a large ship.

In summary, Government intervention and help in improvement of air services to Flinders Island is long overdue. We need quick and decisive action to bring the Island to its former accessibility and by the same help local community in further development.

Regards,



Jadwiga & Wojciech Lipski