



# **Northern Tasmanian Regional Development Board Ltd**

A.B.N. 99 058 420 698

## **Response to the Inquiry into Commercial Regional Aviation Services in Australia and Transport Links to Major Populated Islands**

### **1. The adequacy of commercial air services in regional and rural Australia.**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The two essential airports in the region covered by the NTRDB are the Launceston Airport and Whitemark Airport on King Island.

These airports provide essential linkages between Victoria and Tasmania, and Victoria and Flinders Island respectively.

The other vital link facilitated by these two airports is the link between Flinders Island and mainland Tasmania.

#### **Passenger Services**

##### **Launceston Airport**

Launceston Airport is currently serviced by both Virgin Blue and Qantas Link. At the present time the frequency and capacity of these services is sufficient to meet the needs of travellers between Melbourne and Launceston.

The major disadvantage of the passenger service on this route, is the relatively small size of aircraft and therefore, the lack of capacity to attract package rates, and the opportunity for travellers to use airline reward flights to travel between Melbourne and Launceston.

This latter point disadvantages Tasmania in terms of holiday destinations and therefore the flow-on tourism potential of the State.

##### **Whitemark Airport**

Whitemark Airport is currently serviced by small nine seater aircraft, which severely limits the opportunity for the development of a tourist industry on Flinders Island and results in high priced access for local residents.

As an Island destination, thirty minutes flying time from Melbourne and less than one and a half hours flying time from Sydney, Flinders Island should have a strong tourist potential.

Similar sized islands, up to two hours flying time from Sydney, which are serviced by larger aircraft, enjoy a much higher level of tourism activity.

One of the limiting features for Whitemark Airport is the fact that there is only a single sealed runway, and this prevents the use of turbo prop aircraft as regular passenger transport to Flinders Island.

Sealing of the second runway would provide the opportunity for larger passenger aircraft to service the Island on a regular basis, with the potential of bringing over \$1.5M tourist revenue to the Island annually. Apart from the benefits to tourism, this would also provide equitable services to the Flinders Island population and support the development of high quality, live seafood exports from Flinders Island.

### Airfreight

Availability of reliable, competitively priced airfreight both in and out of Tasmania is fundamental to the development of industry on the Island.

Airfreight includes essential requirements for local industry, such as the provision of spare parts, document transfer, transfer of newspapers, provision of essential medical requirements such as drugs and radio isotopes and the opportunity for exporting live products, including flowers, live crayfish, crabs, oysters and perishables such as salmon and other fish products.

The Launceston Airport is central to Tasmania, with 95% of the population within a road distance of 200km from the airport. This makes the Launceston Airport a vital link in the efficient distribution of products throughout Tasmania. In the past this service was provided by Ansett Airlines, using Boeing 767 aircraft on an overnight service. With the demise of the Ansett Airlines, this service has been discontinued, and overnight services are now split between Launceston Airport and Hobart Airport. This reduces the efficiency and increases the cost of freight to Tasmania.

The reinstatement of a centralised airfreight service, with road distribution within two hours from the airport, would be an incentive for continuing growth and reinvestment in Tasmanian industry

## **2. Policies and measures required to assist the development of regional air services.**

Recommendations from the Standing Committee on Transport in November 2001, still apply within Tasmania. The encouragement of intrastate and regional airlines provides an important service to small and isolated communities.

Within the region covered by the Northern Regional Development Board Ltd, the airport which has the greatest impact on isolated communities, other than the Whitemark Airport, is the St Helens Airport.

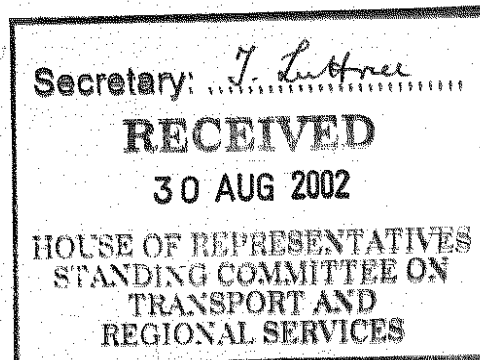
This airport can provide an important link for the St Helens community, particularly in emergency circumstances, when Flying Doctor services are required to bring critically injured patients from the large surrounding district of the East Coast to central hospitals in either Launceston or Hobart. Air services in these cases can reduce travel time from three and a half hours to forty five minutes.

The St Helens Airport also services the direct export of live fish from St Helens to markets in Melbourne and Sydney.

**3. The adequacy of commercial air services to major populated Islands and the adequacy of alternate sea services.**

The Northern Tasmanian Regional Development Board Ltd supports the Tasmanian Governments views with regards to access to Flinders Island and King Island.

In both cases, the only regular passenger access to these islands is by air. With the reduction of coastal shipping, air services to these islands is now more critical than ever.



---

NORTHERN TASMANIAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD LTD

Address: P. O. Box 603, LAUNCESTON, TASMANIA 7250,

Office: Level 1 Station Building, 2 Invermay Road, Inveresk 7249

Tel: (03) 6331 3988 Fax: (03) 6331 6378 Email address: [bnorth@businessnorth.com.au](mailto:bnorth@businessnorth.com.au)

L:\Regional Aviation Inq (TRS)\Submissions\elec subs [maybe]\NTRDB.doc

Last printed 31/08/2002 4:51 PM