

Admin, LACO

Subject: FW: Submission for the Inquiry into regional airfares in Western Australia

From: Jo Cox

Sent: Wednesday, 26 July 2017 11:08 PM

To: Committee, Economics & Industry Standing

Subject: Submission for the Inquiry into regional airfares in Western Australia

Dear Economics and Industry Standing Committee Chair, Members and Staff

I am writing to you as a resident of Kununurra in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia (WA) concerned about the exorbitant cost of regional airfares, in particular routes to and from Kununurra.

A significant portion of the Kununurra and East Kimberley population reside in the region for a short to medium term basis. The costs of airfares is one of the leading barriers preventing residents from living in the region long term. The cost of airfares is often prohibitive for some individuals and many families in the area to travel via air. Residents often choose to drive interstate to Darwin in the Northern Territory, rather than fly to Broome or Perth, thus taking their spending money out of the State. Many residents find it more economically viable to travel to Indonesia from Darwin, than travel within WA.

The impact that high-cost regional airfares have on regional centre residents include:

- restricts access to social support including family and friends
- restricts access to training and education, more often available in capital cities
- restricts access to specialist health care available only in capital cities
- high cost for business related travel for all, in particular for the Health Department and the costs associated with the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS).

More affordable regional airfares would have multiple positive effects for regional towns and their residents. Towns such as Kununurra and Broome would be more accessible to intra and interstate travellers. The social and emotional well-being of residents would improve and the capacity of residents personal and professional development would increase which would have many positive flow of effects for the towns in which the residents reside. Many vital positions in health and other sectors are often vacant for extended periods due to the lack of qualified and experienced applicants applying for these positions. More affordable airfares to our State's capital city would be a incentive for individuals and families to move to regional areas for work and other pursuits. An increase in visitors to our regional town is vital for economical growth and sustainability for small and medium business owners.

An example of the high cost of regional airfares: I recently paid over \$2,000 for my four-year old son, three-month old daughter and myself to travel Kununurra to Perth return. Due to the costs, my husband was unable to join us. With the current costs of airfares In eighteen months when my youngest child is over two years old this same trip to visit grandparents and friends would cost the three of us over \$3,000, completely insurmountable for our family's budget.

My family and I urge the Committee to consider the broad ramifications the current cost of regional air travel has on individuals, families, local businesses and government agencies, and to collectively make multi-sectoral recommendations to airline companies, the local and state government and other organisations which influence the cost of air travel within WA.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Sadler