

## **Admin, LACO**

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**Subject:** FW: Parliamentary Enquiry into Airfares

**From:** Maria Bolten Magnay  
**Sent:** Friday, 28 July 2017 4:25 PM  
**To:** Committee, Economics & Industry Standing  
**Subject:** Parliamentary Enquiry into Airfares

I'd like to add my comments –

What stands out for me when I think of our regional airfare prices is our 2015. At the beginning of that year, my Mother was diagnosed with cancer. When we got the news, our family purchased four last minute airfares and travelled to Perth. Yes, it did cost us a lot but we didn't really think too much about it as we were overwhelmed with the diagnosis at the time. It came at a time where we had just skipped our annual family holiday because we didn't have enough money to fly anywhere. It took a big hit to what we did have in savings.

Fast forward a few months later and it was my Mother in law that was now hospitalised. Peak tourist season, my husband flew interstate to be with her. In family emergencies, there's no question about going – no matter the financial hardship. After my Mother-in-Law left hospital and returned home, so did my husband. Alas, the following week she was hospitalised again. My husband flew interstate again. This time she never recovered and never returned home. I booked flights for my children and I to join our family and attend the funeral. In my sleep deprivation I booked the wrong flights. When I called Virgin to rebook, I cried and the operator took pity on me and took good care of my booking and didn't even charge me the flight cost difference. I will be forever grateful to Virgin for that compassion.

The financial impact of having two sicknesses and a death in our family was significant – it made an already very, very stressful year that much worse. Yes, we reconsidered where we live, why we live there and if we should stay. Two years on, we are still recovering from the financial nightmare of that year. Just last month my husband had to have emergency dental surgery. Flights to Perth were \$1600 via an interstate route – one way. Even as I write this, it makes me reconsider living here.

Kununurra is a very isolated place and the cost of flights has made us feel much more isolated. We have certainly changed our habits and now drive to Darwin and then fly from there to minimise flight costs. In the wet season, there is never certainty that we won't get cut off by swollen rivers and miss flights anyway. Every trip is fraught with that anxiety.

It pains me to see flights to Europe for less than what I can fly to my capital city for.

It upsets me that our regional airline no longer sponsor any community events. It seems that they only take from our community now. Yes, our community do feel taken advantage of. I do believe in a free market but I question them in such a highly regulated industry. It's not easy for competitors to join in – perhaps REX will spread their wings in 2018 and offer up some competition.

I can offer no real solutions to you but thank you for allowing us to comment. Best wishes for a successful outcome with your inquiry.

Maria Bolten Magnay