

Admin, LACO

Subject: FW: Inquiry into regional airfares

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From: Tegan Simmonds

Sent: Wednesday, 26 July 2017 12:03 PM

To: Committee, Economics & Industry Standing

Subject: Inquiry into regional airfares

To whom it may concern,

I would like to write to you to explain my own personal experiences relating to the exuberant prices of regional airfares within Western Australia.

I was born in the South West region, in a small town called Margaret River. Many know this town as a region famous for it's wine and surf. As like most small towns, the opportunities for employment within Margaret River are, unfortunately, not endless. There is limited work available, and as such, I have had to look broader and beyond to find suitable employment. This means I have to travel away from my family, my friends and my home. That's my choice and that's a sacrifice I have to make.

I previously resided in Kununurra, a remote town in the far North West of Western Australia. This is when the extreme prices of regional airfares first struck me. The thought of flying the four hour trip back to Perth was wrought with anxiety at the understanding I would need to save the same amount as an airfare to London. Needless to say, I rarely made it home when I wanted to and despite the Kimberley region being a beautiful holiday destination, not once did my family or friends come to visit me as they simply couldn't afford the flights.

I moved back home after one year in Kununurra, as I couldn't face being so far away from loved ones any longer. Yes, the distance is great, but it's made even greater when the cost of flying home is so expensive.

I then relocated to Karratha for employment, where I have lived for the past 12 months. I am a 24 hour carer for foster children and when I have respite days it is often short notice, meaning I can't book flights too far in advance and never have the opportunity to take advantage of sale prices. Just last week I went to book return flights between Perth and Karratha for early August. A one way flight with Qantas from Perth to Karratha on the morning of Monday 14th August was \$1025. That is less than I spent to fly from Perth to the United States of America. That is for a two hour domestic flight. It is unaffordable and just outrageous. How can that price be justified? Who can afford to pay that price? The simple question is WHY?

It isn't hard to understand that a reduction in prices will see an increase in ticket purchases. I have many friends and family who would love to fly to Karratha for a holiday and to visit me and see my new home, but as prices are too high they simply cannot afford it. I believe Karratha and other regional towns miss out on huge numbers of tourists simply because it's just too expensive to get here.

The high cost of flying is certainly making life difficult. I could not possibly remain here long term when the price of flights remain unaffordable for regular people. I know many people in very similar situations. If the flights were cheaper more seats would be sold, more tourists would visit and more people would be able to sustain longer term residency and employment in remote and regional areas.

Thank you for taking the time to look into this important issue that is negatively effecting thousands upon thousands of Western Australians.

I would also like to point out that it is actually more affordable for me to drive two hours north to Port Hedland and fly to Bali and back than it is to fly from Karratha to Perth and back. People are literally being forced to holiday internationally rather than domestically because it is so much more affordable! It is completely nonsensical.

thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

Kindest regards,

Tegan Simmonds.

Sent from my iPhone