

Thank you for the opportunity for the Shire of Broome to be here today to present further on our submission to the inquiry. Welcome to this iconic part of the world – rich in culture, heritage and natural beauty but faced with this issue of the price of regional airfares.

The Shire of Broome welcomes this inquiry by the State Government to help shine a light on our circumstances, and seeks urgent action to reduce further impacts from the high cost of domestic airfares to Broome.

With support from all stakeholders, Broome is well positioned to make rapid progress as a result of the economic opportunities in the region. There is a strong willingness from local leadership to drive growth and development. However in order to do so, we require both the State Government and the airlines to come to the table and demonstrate a commitment to the prosperity of the region by implementing urgent and overdue actions.

Tourism, community and business in Broome are all hurting due to the cost of travel to and from our town. Research clearly depicts dropping tourism numbers, and this is not for want of a great product or market appeal. Growth in air travel is shown to be on the back of growth in the region's off-shore liquefied natural gas industry rather than tourism. The Shire welcomes and promotes the activation of a diversified economy for the region, but continues to hold concerns regarding the impacts on availability and pricing of airfares for both tourists and residents alike in the face of oil and gas expansion.

Broome is already geographically isolated – the current state of regional airfares only exacerbates this. Regional air travel is a key means of connectivity - but community and business are virtually held to ransom by the price of available airfares, and often unable to affordably access health or education services outside Broome; or travel to be with family and friends.

Travel to Broome is significantly more expensive than comparative routes on the east coast, which is having significant impacts on our local economy, and visitation rates.

Through the following recommendations, the Shire calls on both the State Government and the regional airlines to demonstrate their commitment to our region by taking long overdue action to address the cost of regional airfares to our town. Broome's growth and development demands it, and requires demonstrated investment and action by all stakeholders.

Recommendation 1:

The Shire seeks State Government support in advocating for increased seating for the Perth to Broome route to reflect the extra demand associated with the two major LNG projects that are accelerating demand.

Recommendation 2:

The Shire calls on the State Government to partner with the Broome Airport to conduct further research and modelling into the full extent of forecast increases in demand for airline seats to Broome due to the growth of the oil and gas industry.

Recommendation 3:

The Shire requests that the State Government facilitates the introduction of local pricing on the Perth to Broome route by Qantas and Virgin Australia – which would guarantee lower and capped prices for Broome residents.

Recommendation 4:

The State Government is requested to lead the development of a business case and funding package to attract additional year-round services to the Broome-Perth route and direct services from the East Coast to and from Broome.

Recommendation 5:

The State Government is requested to investigate the development of a high season international route from Melbourne or Sydney to Broome and on to south east Asia.

Recommendation 6:

The Shire requests that the State Government press for cabotage to be allowed between Australian regional international airports and the four primary international airports in Australia (Perth, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney).

Thank you for your time today, and we look forward to receiving questions and having further discussion.