

Ms Jessica Shaw
Chair
Economics and Industry Standing Committee
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Jessica

Firstly, thank you for conducting this inquiry and the opportunity to make a submission.

The Agricultural Region is serviced by two regional air services to Geraldton and Esperance.

Geraldton

Services in Geraldton, an unregulated air service, are provided by Qantas and Virgin Australia. Geraldton has a population of around 40,000.

Both airlines run morning and evening flights except on Tuesdays, when Qantas does not run a morning service. Both operators provide one flight each day on weekends.

Qantas and Virgin operate Fokker 100 aircraft on this service capable of carrying up to 100 passengers.

Ticket prices are generally in the order of \$192 - \$198 one way with usual baggage arrangements.

Geraldton Airport is operated by the City of Greater Geraldton and is a profitable asset for ratepayers. It is in urgent need of a runway upgrade and an extension to either 2400m or ideally a new runway of 2900m to be a potential diversion airport for Perth in the event of an incident.

My office has received very little feedback from the Geraldton community about the cost of airfares.

Esperance

Services in Esperance, a regulated service, are provided by Regional Express under a deed of agreement until February 27, 2021.

Esperance has a population of around 15,000.



Three flights are available to and from Perth daily, with a fourth flight out available on Fridays. There are either two or three flights available daily on weekends.

Rex operates a Saab 340 between Esperance and Perth capable of carrying 34 passengers. Ticket prices are far more varied.

A \$129 Community Fare is available either 60 days or more before flying or 24 hours before the flight. This option has been taken up by around 8 000 or 15% of passengers. Aside from this option, flights generally range in price from around \$200-\$360 one way.

Whilst these prices are comparable to Regional Express services of similar flight duration such as Coober Pedy to Adelaide, Mildura to Sydney and Charleville to Brisbane, they are also comparable to fares from Perth to Sydney or Bali.

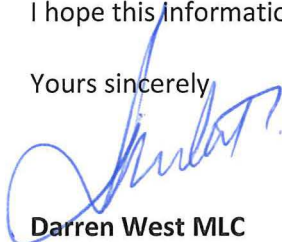
Community feedback is that these prices make the service too expensive for families, who often make the eight hour drive to Perth due to the high cost of multiple fares. There has also been a suggestion that flights could be packaged with hire car and accommodation providers to attract visitors from Perth to spend a weekend in Esperance and support the local tourism industry.

Standard luggage allowances are 15 kg checked and 7 kg carry on. These may vary without notice should the plane need to carry extra fuel in inclement weather. Some community members find these allowances too low, especially for travellers that are flying overseas, although these limits can sometimes be negotiated with Rex.

Esperance Airport is owned and operated by the Shire of Esperance.

I hope this information will be useful to this Inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Darren West MLC
MEMBER FOR AGRICULTURAL REGION

27 July 2017