

**Submission
No 22**

INQUIRY INTO REGIONAL AVIATION SERVICES

Organisation: Gilgandra Shire Council

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GilgandraShireCouncil
meeting community needs

PO Box 23
Gilgandra NSW 2827

Tel: (02) 6817 8800
Fax: (02) 6847 2521

Email: council@gilgandra.nsw.gov.au
Visit: www.gilgandra.nsw.gov.au

Contact: Randall Medd

13 March

The Director
Standing Committee on State Development
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Director

GILGANDRA SHIRE COUNCIL SUBMISSION – INQUIRY INTO REGIONAL AVIATION SERVICES

On behalf of Gilgandra Shire Council, thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the regional aviation services inquiry.

Gilgandra is located 45 minutes drive from Dubbo meaning Regional Passenger Transport (RPT) from Dubbo to Sydney has become an essential part of the economy, lifestyle and service provision for the Gilgandra community.

The residents of the Gilgandra Shire rely on having several daily return flights from Dubbo to Sydney. If the existing levels of service were to decrease there would be an immediate negative impact.

Aside from recreational and leisure travel, the regional air service plays an important role for our community in the following key areas:

- **Attending medical specialists appointments** – Gilgandra Residents required to travel to Sydney for specialist medical treatment frequently will fly as they can be to Sydney and back in a day rather than a two or three day trip by road.
- **Visiting medical specialist to the region** – Along with the rest of the Orana region, increasing we are services by medical services or specialists that will fly in. Up until recently Gilgandra was serviced by a dentist that flew from Sydney every week. Had this service not been available and affordable, our community would have been without dental services.
- **Access for businesses services and government agencies** – An increasing number of businesses in our community rely on support services that come out of Sydney or interstate to support their businesses. In addition, with many government services being centralised, government services fly into Dubbo to service the Orana Region.

Gilgandra Shire Council believes the three most important issues related to RPT are:

Reliability and frequency of service

The current arrangement of Regional Express and Qantaslink has created sufficient frequency of service and between the two carriers there are numerous flights available throughout the day. In addition, the frequency of service often compensates for reliability issues, such as delays and cancelled flights. All in all the two operators out of Dubbo has led to a very good level of service for this region.

Affordability

Council believe that whilst the service is overall very good, the costs are disproportionate to other routes. Without specials or last minute bookings, including taxes and fees most return flights are around the \$400 per person. This seems to be far more expensive than inter city routes. Whilst not airline industry experts, Council believe the enquiry should examine the costs and profitability of RPT in great detail. Council believe the current cost of the service is at its maximum affordability level for non business and government travellers. Any significant increase in the cost of the Dubbo to Sydney route will start to make the service unaffordable for many people.

Access to Sydney Domestic and International Terminal and CBD

With current discussion regarding a second Sydney Airport and previous discussions about relocating smaller regional services to an airport like Bankstown. Council believe the access to both the current Domestic and International Terminal at Sydney mean travel from Dubbo to other destinations other than Sydney is achievable.

Access to existing transport networks in Sydney is essential to make the RPT a feasible option for people from this region. If in the future, regional services were located outside the existing Sydney Airport, it would be safe to assume there would be an additional travel time required to get to the city from the airport. This is when RPT would lose its time advantage and people would consider if it was more efficient to drive.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to have input into the inquiry.

Yours faithfully

N J Alchin
Acting General Manager