

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

To the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee

Greetings,

My name is Keith Cox and I am a Mount Isa resident of over 50 years. Airfare pricing is having a significant impact on the liveability of our community especially when there is an urgent need to travel. My wife and I had to make an emergency rush to Bundaberg late last March after being advised by the Doctor in ICU that her Father was in a critical condition, possibly unlikely to last the next day or so. We were fortunate that there were seats available to get us to Bundaberg by that evening but at the cost of \$2200 one way for the pair of us. Unfortunately the imminent flooding of central Queensland from cyclone Debbie didn't allow us the luxury of only flying one of us with the other taking the 16 hour drive as a cheaper option.

My son was recently married in Japan and we were able to secure flights from Cairns to Osaka on Jetstar at \$446 each return. Of the 20+ people that travelled from Mount Isa to Japan for that special occasion, the vast majority of us elected to drive to Cairns over a day or two to save significant money compared to the exorbitant cost of airfares. The current cheapest cost of flights to Cairns is \$670 return with Qantas or \$544 with Rex. These 2 hour flights cost more than the 7 hour flight overseas.

There are many opportunities to experience concerts, conferences, attend weddings and other celebrations that just have to be missed, simply because the price of flying is prohibitive.

I have recently booked fares to Brisbane for my 30th wedding anniversary, in late May – that is six months notice - with the best price available for the days required being around \$836 return. With a two day drive either way, flying is really my only credible option but \$1700 for the pair of us doesn't make it easy.

Our city is located in remote Queensland outback. We do choose to live here for a number of reasons, but we also see the impact of our isolation on the many people that travel out here to work for a season in their lives. For those that are leaving family on the coast to live here, the cost of that separation is often a determining factor in their desire to be here, the effect on their relationships and general sense of wellbeing. Having airfares priced at a realistic level for a 2.5hour flight doesn't seem unreasonable and would make a difference to our sense of isolation.

Regards,

Keith Cox