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Flying thoughts on air freight



FRESH food products with short lifespans, such as chilled lamb and beef, have particularly benefited from the growth of passenger traffic linked to the commencement of the Qantas Emirates partnership in 2013.

Twenty years ago, back in the days when we used to fly to Europe via Singapore, Perth airport moved 1.9 million international passengers.

This number grew to 4.1m a decade later which dramatically increased air freight capacity to the Middle East and Asia.

At the bottom of all those outgoing planes is spare cargo space, what they call belly cargo, which we can fill with rock lobster going to China and chilled lamb and beef going to the Middle East.

Both regions have a solid percentage of high net wealth consumers who will pay an absolute premium for fresh product, but like the market for luxury cars, it is limited in size.

Produce too much rock lobster as we did pre-2008 and you flood the market, and the product ends up frozen in a container wandering the world looking for a home.

Produce too much lamb and it ends up as mutton, hopefully wandering onto a ship to enter the live export trade, but if that trade is not there, it ends up like frozen lobster in a container looking for a market.

Even when we have our volumes matching the market, we need to have those planes landing daily for if we don't keep up a consistent supply, then our product gets replaced by another producer such as New Zealand or South Africa who can both supply neat and lobster.

The failure to return to pre-COVID levels of international flights has impacted our high-end export sectors, hence the recent decision to stop Qatar Airways doubling its flights is going to hurt our fresh produce export industry.

Any opportunity to increase capacity should be embraced by the federal government, particularly when the sale yard of lamb has fallen 50pc since this Federal government came to power.

Qatar is the third largest market in the Middle East and North Africa for Australian chilled and frozen boxed beef and sheep meat.

Following the Qantas/Emirates flights into the UAE, Doha, the capital of Qatar, is the next logical airport to see increased flights into the Middle East.

Which makes the government's mad decision to not approve additional Qatar Airways flights beyond belief particularly for a government that is claiming the live sheep industry can simply transition from walking on a ship to being loaded into a container as boxed fresh, chilled, or frozen.

Remove the high-value live export market and cap the fresh airfreight market and we are left with the frozen market which pays

Interestingly our biggest imports are pharmaceutical and electronic products – think of all those Amazon and Alibaba purchases that arrive in a week.

But you may ask, what about hiring a dedicated air freighter aircraft?

Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane are currently the only airports in Australia with markets large enough to sustain dedicated international freight services, except for one weekly service to Toowoomba.

This leaves Perth totally reliant on spare belly capacity on international flights.

Currently Perth airport handles about 1000t a week of export airfreight with 80pc of the total fresh produce, but total airfreight movement remains well below pre-pandemic levels.

In 2022 total airfreight volumes were 17pc lower than 2019.

Outbound (exporting) traffic is particularly low – as of March 2023 (latest data release) the 12-month total freight was at the lowest since 2015.

Nationally Sydney handled over half of all of Australia's airfreight, but it is cost prohibitive to tranship from Perth back to Sydney then off to the Middle East, so the focus needs to be on increasing international freight out of Perth.

In 2019, which I'd choose as the most recent 'normal' year, the average inbound Qatar Airways flight to Australia contained 7.32t of freight, and the average outbound flight from Australia contained 12.56t of freight.

These numbers have been consistent over the past decade, so they work as a rough guide to extra freight capacity per flight added.

One interesting little factoid is aircraft type and model really matter.

The single deck 777 in full 300 passenger configuration, can carry 23,000kg, 132m³ of cargo in addition to a full passenger and baggage load, about twice the air cargo as the long-distance version of the double decker A380, also in passenger configuration.

In Perth at the moment, we are served by two nightly A380s (one Emirates and one Qatar Airways) – you know the big double decker planes that were once on their way out as being too big.

If the Middle East, airlines were able to add more flights to Perth, they would likely shift from their A380s to more frequent and lower passenger number 777 flights with a consequence of doubling the airfreight capacity on each and every flight.

But even if, or rather when, the government reverses its decision and allows Qatar Airways to double its current capped 28 direct return flights in and out of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Perth, this would add just an estimated additional 1,103t of outbound capacity per month nationally.

Double the flights to four out of Perth is likely to see them drop down to the single deck 777 which could see airfreight capacity increasing fourfold, but this is only an additional 100t a week.

Problem is this only soaks up 3000 lambs a week, nowhere near enough to save the industry from the looming disaster of shutting off the live export trade which is the ultimate fall-back option when we can't move our lambs through the system.

If the government is banking on boxed sheep meat replacing live exports, then it's decision on Qatar Airways is a step backwards.

But even when they reverse it, the additional air freight isn't going to make the slightest difference to the price of sheep in the sale yards, not that the animal activists or the Labor Party give a rat.

Government thinks gravel pits are super pits



In 2022 the new Work Health and Safety changes came into effect making it harder to get a permit of size, employees, or tonnage.

There is a transition period allowed the industry to continue to shut down as the backlog of work builds up.

About 30,000 people will be a senior site mine operator.

The exams are not a tick and a detailed understanding of the pass rate of around 30 per cent.

But there is a kicker – you need years of experience as a site operator. You can sit the Department of Safety (DMIRS) exam.

Where does that leave all those who can't find a person with the smarts to pass the exam to be able to close or be sold to a new owner?

This is an extension of the Laws that now treat every farm as a sand pit as if it was an iron mine.

Next time you see your supported either law and if you move to recognise the specific Where was their article in government out?

My guess is they too were with the Aboriginal Cattle actually supported the change.

Our conservative politician of the relentless march of time when it comes to primary industry.

If they don't, then expect sold into the hands of the corrupt Labor Party which prefers than front town hall meeting.

Would Labor Kingdom like the Middle



AM I missing something or have a problem with the Middle East?

We have never been given sheep exports other than a losing our social licence.

When we ask Federal Agriculture Minister to support the live export industry...