
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Finding the right balance

Cabin crew ratios on Australian aircraft

**House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications**

October 2011
Canberra

© Commonwealth of Australia 2011

ISBN 978-0-642-79577-9 (Printed version)

ISBN 978-0-642-79578-6 (HTML version)

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Australia License.



The details of this licence are available on the Creative Commons website:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/au/>.

Cover photography courtesy of ThinkStock.

Contents

Membership of the Committee	v
Terms of reference	vii
List of recommendations	ix
1 Context of the inquiry	1
A brief explanation of cabin crew ratios	1
The current proposal to alter Australia's cabin crew ratio	2
The history of proposed ratio changes and prior parliamentary consideration.....	3
Origins of the current cabin crew ratios.....	3
Earlier consideration of a 1:50 cabin crew ratio in Australia.....	4
Civil Aviation Legislation Amendment (Mutual Recognition with New Zealand) Bill 2005	5
2007 Senate Estimates	7
Granting of exemptions to the 1:36 rule	7
The rationale behind the proposal.....	10
International harmonisation	10
Aircraft design and certification	11
World's best practice?	11
Cost savings	14
Committee comment	16
2 Issues arising from the inquiry.....	19
The role of crew in maintaining safety and security	19

Measuring ratios and safety through evacuation demonstrations	21
The role of passengers in emergency evacuations	25
The role of passengers in security incidents	28
Committee comments.....	28
CASA's review processes	30
Training.....	32
Crew Fatigue.....	34
Airside security and ASIC passes	35
Committee's overall conclusions	37
 3 Dissenting Report.....	 41
 Appendix A – List of submissions.....	 47
 Appendix B – List of witnesses	 49



Membership of the Committee

Chair Ms Sharon Bird MP

Deputy Chair Mr Paul Neville MP

Members Mr Paul Fletcher MP

Mr Robert Oakeshott MP

Mr Ed Husic MP

Mrs Jane Prentice MP

Mr Stephen Jones MP

Mr Mike Symon MP

Committee Secretariat

Secretary Ms Julia Morris

Researcher Officers Mr Shane Armstrong

Mr James Nelson

Administrative Officers Ms Tamara Palmer

Mr Peter Pullen



Terms of reference

The Committee is to inquire into the assignment and ratio of cabin crew to those aircraft that require the carriage of cabin crew under current regulations.

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) is currently considering a regulatory proposal that addresses the assignment of cabin crew members to aircraft that require that carriage of cabin crew. Under the current arrangements, operators of Australian domestic aircraft carrying more than 15 but not more than 216 passengers are required to carry at least one cabin crew member for each 36 passengers or part thereof 1:36).

Since 2006, CASA has permitted a number of Australian operators to operate certain aircraft with a ratio of one cabin crew member up to a maximum of 50 passenger seats.

CASA has proposed to implement the 1:50 cabin crew-passenger seat ratio for aircraft configurations of between 20 and 216 passengers with the gaining of approval conditional upon on an operator having in place a CASA-approved safety management risk plan.

In response to this proposal, a number of issues have been raised, which would benefit from further consideration.

The Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications will inquire into and report on:

- the current aviation safety regulatory system for aircraft operators in relation to the application of the cabin crew to passenger ratio including current exemption provisions;
- the role of cabin crew in managing both passenger safety and security;
- the factors that determine the cabin crew to passenger ratio;

- domestic and international practice in respect of cabin crew to passenger ratios; and
- measures to enhance aviation safety that may be considered in future requirements on aircraft operators for a safety risk management plan covering the cabin crew to passenger ratio.



List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the Civil Aviation Safety Authority and the Office of Transport Safety work together to determine an appropriate level of passenger compartment security for Australian domestic flights, taking into account previous incidents both in Australia and abroad.

Recommendation 2

That the Civil Aviation Safety Authority consider passenger compartment security in any future review of cabin crew ratios.

Recommendation 3

That, prior to finalising the process, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority publish on its website all non-confidential submissions made to it through the Notice of Proposed Rule Making process.

Recommendation 4

That the Civil Aviation Safety Authority advertise Notices of Proposed Rule Making that directly affect passengers in publications that are widely read by the travelling public, such as in-flight magazines, and that CASA seek submissions from the public into the advertised Notices of Proposed Rule Making.

Recommendation 5

That the Civil Aviation Safety Authority ensure that Australia becomes compliant with the International Civil Aviation Organisation's Standards and Recommended Practices relating to cabin crew flight and duty time limitations as a matter of priority.

Recommendation 6

That the Civil Aviation Safety Authority cease providing new exemptions to the 1:36 cabin crew ratio currently mandated by Civil Aviation Order 20.16.3, and that all exemptions to the Order currently in place not be renewed upon expiry.

Recommendation 7

That the 1:36 ratio be retained until such a time that it can be demonstrated that a change to a 1:50 cabin crew ratio in Australia will not result in reduced levels of safety or security.