

# Submission

To the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Regional Airfares

My husband and I moved from Queensland to Armidale, NSW, 28 months ago.

One of the top three criteria on our shortlist was the fact there was a regional airport.

As self-funded retirees, we travel frequently for visits to our grandchildren, medical specialist appointments, hospital admissions, and to attend meetings and conferences in relation to our volunteer role with a national organisation.

QantasLink is the sole air service provider in Armidale.

Little did we know how unreliable and expensive the QantasLink services were going to be nor what distress and anxiety we would suffer over cancelled and grossly delayed flights (four out of five in 2025).

Last year, we met with our Federal Member who has advocated several times on our behalf to Minister Catherine King.

We also met with the Armidale Mayor who assured us the council had been striving to the utmost to get Qantas to improve the reliability and cost of its services to Armidale – a crucial factor for the region's economic prosperity and social cohesion.

He identified the problem. Qantas is a monolithic monopoly and can do whatever it likes.

This is the heart of the problem. People see regional air services are essential services. But that is not Qantas' primary mission. It exists to make a profit for shareholders.

Last year, Qantas made more than \$2.5 billion profit, primarily from their domestic business.

And it has not had to repay the \$2 billion+ of taxpayers' money gifted by the Federal Government during COVID.

Yet its regional customers are gouged.

It costs us a whopping \$1,1150 (return) to fly our two grandsons from Brisbane to Armidale.

Once, instead, we spent just \$300 (return) to fly them from Brisbane to Newcastle.

Every time we have an appointment in Sydney, we book our flight one day earlier as “crisis management” in anticipation the flight will be cancelled or grossly delayed.

We incur the additional expense of around \$700 for taxis, hotel room, dinner and breakfast.

Last year, we had five trips to Sydney. That’s \$3,500 out of pocket.

Most people we know in Armidale do the same.

If you ever need an ice-breaker to get a conversation started in Armidale all you have to do is mention Qantas.

We have spoken to people who have missed funerals, weddings, job interviews, kids’ specialist appointments, conferences, important meetings, concerts, and international flight connections.

And it is not just Armidale. It is most of regional Australia.

The Qantas monopoly allows people in the regions to be treated as second-class citizens. It stifles regional development. It creates distress. It is not fair. It is not right.