

Submission on cost and reliability of regional airlines.

Thank you for this opportunity to convey my experiences of regional airlines – only Qantas Link at the moment if you want to fly to Sydney.

The fares for flights from Armidale to Sydney and return are very expensive. A single leg of a return flight to Sydney is the same as a return flight Sydney- Melbourne. A specially discounted flight Armidale Sydney is at best \$149 but these are offered only several times a year and have to be booked a long time ahead,.

If you have to book at short notice for some reason, as my husband experienced when he wanted to see his dying sister, a single leg of the Armidale Sydney run is extremely expensive. About 18 months ago he was charged over \$500 each way.

Qantas flights are so frequently cancelled or rebooked that my husband and I, and most people we know, now book a flight for the day before to be sure of being able to be in Sydney at a specific time eg to catch an international flight, attend a specialist appointment, meetings. This week a friend booked the 6:30 am flight to Sydney for Wednesday 18 February, returning 4:30 pm, to see his ill mother. The flight was cancelled in the morning although the plane was apparently on the tarmac in Armidale. Another friend was due to attend a conference but the flight was cancelled. He chose to drive to Sydney to be sure he would get there in time. These are merely the two examples that come to mind. There are usually no reasons given for the cancellations. We are used to flights not being able to land due to low cloud cover given the altitude of Armidale Regional Airport, but there are many cancellations that cannot be attributed to that reason.

In the past when low cloud cover prevented a landing, the plane would divert to Tamworth and passengers would be bussed to Armidale. Now the plane returns to Sydney, which often means that passengers have to find accommodation, reschedule family and work commitments in Armidale etc.

The service between Brisbane and Armidale offered by Link Airways is also expensive: prices range from \$269 to \$319 depending on the day of the week. There is only one flight a day so you cannot fly there and back in one day.