

**Submission to the Productivity Commission
Inquiry: Determinants of Regional Airfares
Submitted by:**

Helen Hall
Karratha, Western Australia
Resident since 1995

Introduction

My name is Helen Hall. I have lived in Karratha since 1995 and have been an active member of the Pilbara community for nearly three decades.

I am the principal petitioner advocating for fairer regional airfares in the Pilbara, and for fairer fares across Western Australia.

My petition was endorsed by the Hon Neil Thomson MLC and tabled in Parliament, in Western Australia on the 18th February 2026, which had over 10,000 signatures.

I have organised and participated in several community rallies highlighting the impact that excessive airfare pricing has on regional residents.

For many residents across the Pilbara, aviation is not a luxury. It is essential infrastructure that enables families to remain connected, businesses to operate and communities to function.

The cost of flights between Karratha and Perth continues to place significant pressure on residents who rely on aviation as their primary link to the rest of Western Australia.

Personal Circumstances

I regularly travel between Karratha and Perth to support my family. This includes caring for my elderly Mother aged 80, my Mother-in-law aged 92 and assisting my son and grandchildren when required.

At 63 years of age, the alternative of driving the approximately 1,500-kilometre journey between Karratha and Perth alone presents significant safety concerns.

These roads involve long distances through remote areas where fatigue, wildlife collisions and mechanical breakdowns are common risks. In many locations there are also large stretches of highway without reliable mobile phone reception, meaning assistance may not be immediately available in an emergency.

Despite these risks, many residents feel forced to drive rather than fly due to the extremely high cost of regional airfares.

Limited Transport Alternatives

Driving is not always a practical option for many residents, particularly older travellers or those without access to reliable vehicles.

Bus travel is also not a realistic alternative. The journey between Karratha and Perth can take significantly longer than driving and can be physically exhausting for older travellers.

Passengers are also reliant on external operators and fixed timetables, leaving limited flexibility in emergency situations.

Cost of Regional Airfares

Flights between Karratha and Perth frequently cost well over one thousand dollars for a return journey, particularly when bookings are made close to departure.

Even when flights are booked several weeks in advance, prices remain significantly higher than flights between major Australian cities that involve much longer travel distances.

For many residents this means that simple activities such as visiting family, attending important events or accessing services in Perth can become financially difficult.

Community Impact

Through organising and participating in community rallies advocating for fair regional airfares, I have heard many similar experiences from residents across the Pilbara.

High airfare costs affect:

- Families wishing to visit relatives
- Residents travelling for medical appointments (services not covered by PATS)
- Community groups organising events and fundraisers
- Businesses needing to travel to Perth
- Residents wishing to take holidays within Western Australia

Many residents feel effectively isolated from the rest of the state due to the cost of aviation.

Regional Development and Liveability

The Western Australian Government continues to promote policies encouraging people to live and work in regional areas such as the Pilbara.

Lack of availability to fly to other towns without going via Perth at ridiculous prices and only being available only on designated days, such as three days a week, may restrict opportunities for tourism, work-related travel and impact the ability to maintain connections with family.

How ever the cost of regional aviation directly contradicts these goals.

If people are encouraged to relocate to regional communities, they must also be able to travel affordably to maintain family connections, access services and participate in economic opportunities.

The Pilbara Contribution to the Economy

The Pilbara is one of the most economically productive regions in Australia.

Industries operating in the region generate enormous national wealth through resource exports, yet residents living in the region often face some of the highest domestic airfares in the country simply to access their own capital city.

Many residents believe that communities contributing so significantly to the national economy should also have fair and reasonable access to transport infrastructure.

Conclusion

Affordable regional aviation is essential for the long-term sustainability of communities across the Pilbara.

Reducing the cost of regional airfares would improve accessibility, strengthen community connections and support economic development in regional Western Australia.

Addressing regional aviation pricing should therefore be considered an important step toward improving the quality of life for people living in remote and regional communities.

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