

FAIRER AIRFARES

Revisited

March 2026

In 2024, Central Highlands Development Corporation (CHDC) released the *Fairer Airfares* position paper as part of its Workforce Development and Accommodation Strategy (WDAS). Since then, progress has been made, most notably through the introduction of the Embraer 190 (E190) service.

Since the release of the position paper:



The average return fare decreased from \$1,304 in 2024 to \$1,201 in 2025. However, airfares remain significantly high for a regional centre.



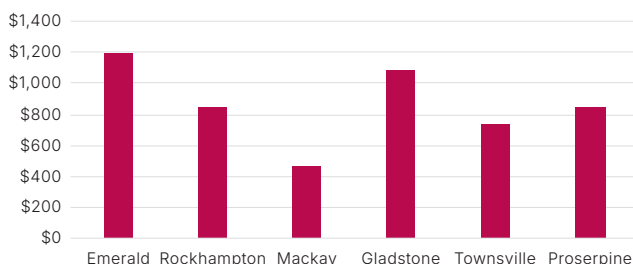
The E190 was introduced on 14 May 2024, increasing seat capacity, and now operates daily. Seat capacity increased from 10,674 in March 2024 to 13,378 in March 2026, an additional 2,704 seats (25% increase).



Prices have slightly decreased on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays due to increased seat availability. Thursdays and Fridays remain unchanged (inbound and outbound), while Sundays have seen higher capacity utilisation.



AVERAGE RETURN AIRFARES BNE TO REGIONAL CENTRES, 2025



Emerald AIRPORT

- Average of 151 flights per month
- Average of 18,200 passengers per month in 2025, the highest since FY2014–15
- Peak travel day is Monday (7 flights), followed by Tuesday, Thursday and Friday (6 flights)
- 82% of flights are serviced by Qantas
- Average capacity remains at 63% across all flights, unchanged from 2024, while overall capacity has increased with the introduction of the E190
- Still ranked 14th among Brisbane Airport destinations, ahead of Darwin, Roma, Hervey Bay, Hobart, Mount Isa and Moranbah
- Three aircraft used:
 - Dash 8 (74 seats)
 - Fokker 70 (80 seats)
 - Embraer 190 (96 seats), commenced 14 May 2024.
- 655km route (BNE – EMD), approximately 1 hr 25 min flight time on the E190

Ongoing IMPACTS

Airfare pricing continues to have broad impacts across the region, including:

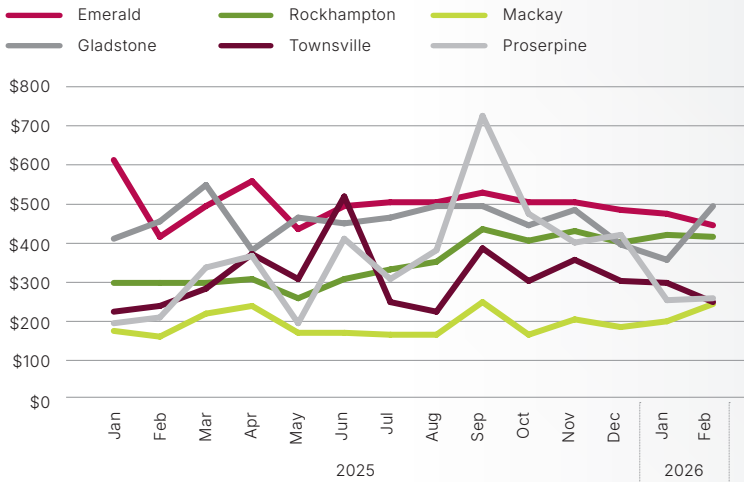
- Challenges in attracting and retaining permanent workforce and residents
- Added financial strain in an already high-cost environment
- Disrupted connections with family and friends, particularly in times of emergency
- Hindered access to critical medical care
- Limited access to personal development and employment training
- Missed or restricted business opportunities
- Confusion around the availability of discounted fares or sales for residents
- Increased reliance on expensive air travel during natural disasters and road closures
- Reduced tourism potential, including the attraction of major events and conferences
- Difficulties for families with children attending boarding school
- Fewer opportunities to participate in sport and social activities



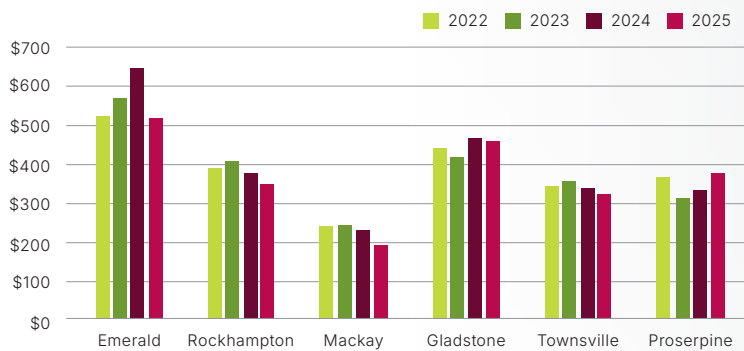
OUR RESEARCH



AVERAGE AIRFARE BY MONTH BNE TO REGIONAL CENTRES



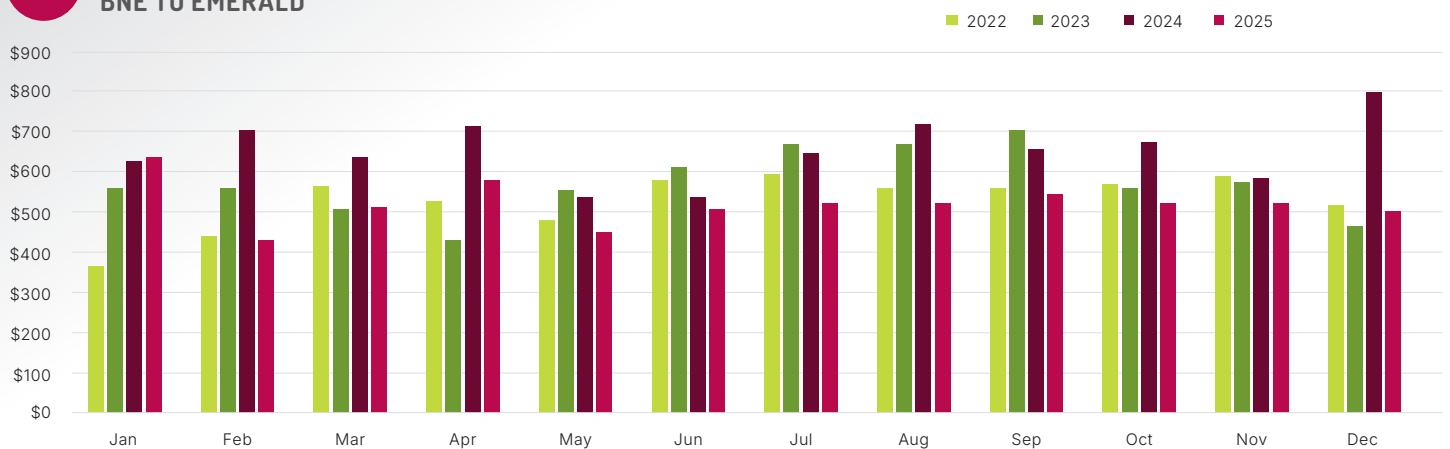
AVERAGE AIRFARE BY YEAR BNE TO REGIONAL CENTRES



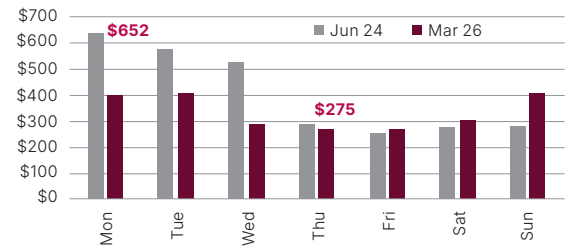
These graphs have been prepared using a range of sources, including airline websites, Skyscanner, and passenger data provided by Emerald Airport. They are accurate at a point in time and may not reflect future pricing.



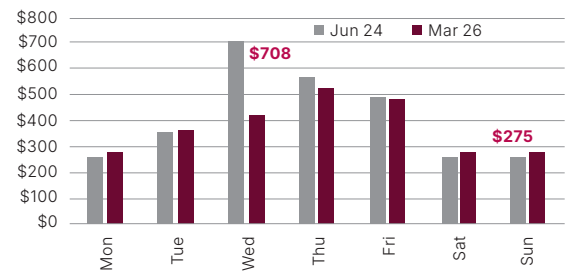
AVERAGE AIRFARE BY MONTH AND YEAR BNE TO EMERALD



AVERAGE AIRFARE BNE TO EMD



AVERAGE AIRFARE EMD TO BNE



AVERAGE CAPACITY MAY 2024 VS OCTOBER 2025

