

Published name

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Short comment

Deal with:

- (1) Slot hoarding by QANTAS and Virgin;
- (2) Compensation (a la European Union) when flights are 3 or more hours late;
- (3) The perception that QANTAS and Virgin are too close to Government, and use the Chairman's Lounge to influence MPs and Senators, to the detriment of the travelling public;
- (4) Problems with insufficient customs and immigration staff (or inefficient processes) both in Perth and Sydney, along with automated processes that often do not work, or are difficult for people to use.

Submission on the Australian Government's "Aviation Green Paper – Towards 2050"

In general, the green paper seems to be insufficiently "customer-focussed", and is far too dominated by arguments protecting the incumbent airlines, to the detriment of the paying public.

My suggestions are as follows:

1. Deal with "slot-hoarding" at the Sydney Airport by QANTAS and Virgin. i.e. raise the threshold from 80% to 95%. This should give a better chance for REX and Bonza, or other possible future market entrants, as well imposing better discipline on QANTAS and Virgin.
2. Legislate to institute automatic compensation when flights are delayed by 3 hours or more, as in the European Union – see https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/travel/passenger-rights/air/faq/index_en.htm#:~:text=If%20your%20flight%20is%20delayed,be%20entitled%20to%20financial%20compensation *"If your flight is delayed for two hours or more at departure, the airline must offer you care (meals and refreshments and, if necessary accommodation). If this delay means that, you arrive at your final destination with a delay of more than 3 hours you may also be entitled to financial compensation."*
3. Separate QANTAS from Jetstar, so that they are 2 completely independent companies. Jetstar will then be free to operate more like SouthWest (in the USA) or Ryan Air (in Europe), providing better competition in the domestic market.
4. Get on top of influence peddling (by both QANTAS and Virgin) through schemes like the Chairman's Club, especially through giving out free memberships to politicians, their families and public servants. It smacks of political corruption to me, to the detriment of the travelling public.
5. If airlines cancel flights, mandate refunds within 7 days. QANTAS systematically takes 8 weeks, even though they take your money instantaneously. Ideally, this option should be available through the exactly same mechanism through which the booking was made (e.g. their website), rather than having to wait for 3 hours in a phone queue and then have to insist on one's rights.
 - a. VIRGIN are no better – our family's last 5 flights have all been cancelled by Virgin, for no apparent reason! There has to be some sanction against this sort of unnecessary behaviour.
6. Sort out the problems in both immigration and customs. This is a direct Commonwealth responsibility.
 - a. For instance, on Tuesday 26th September, we arrived from the USA and the Sydney Airport was complete bedlam with lines hundreds of metres long, to get through both immigration and customs. Surely the Commonwealth can do much better.
 - b. Late last year, I also flew into Perth from South Africa and missed my connection to Sydney, simply because my bag took forever to come out and then there was a huge line to go through customs check, even though I had paid for a full-price business-class ticket and was the first person off the plane. As a result, I arrived in Sydney a day late and received no compensation or apology from QANTAS. To make matters worse, QANTAS aircrew had been allowed to queue-jump and push in front of those of us who were waiting patiently in line.
 - c. The automatic passport readers do not always work – I had trouble exiting Australia 6 weeks ago, and had to line up to do it manually, even though my passport was brand new. But, to my amazement, it all worked when we returned! With my old passport, for many years, the automatic passport readers never worked in Sydney, even though they did at other overseas airports with exactly the same passport – go

figure! Our system seems to be inferior to those in other countries (like New Zealand or the UK). And if you say anything to the immigration personnel, they often resort to “blaming the customer”!

7. Some of these issues would be ameliorated if there were better train services to/from our airports, and from the regions to cities with airports, so the travelling public have more options completely to avoid the thoroughly unpleasant experience of flying.
 - a. All major airports should have direct rail connections, including Melbourne and Canberra. This is now completely normal in Europe.
 - b. Improve the Sydney-Canberra rail service, by electrifying the line, building proper stations under the Canberra Airport and in the city centre. It doesn't necessarily have to be high-speed rail. Run trains no less frequently than every 2 hours. Look at running trains directly from Canberra to Wollongong, Sutherland and the Sydney Airport, and maybe on to Newcastle. Think of it as an integrated transport system. There is no rational reason why the Sydney – Canberra corridor should be dominated by air travel, nor why people should not be able to get long-distance trains directly to and from the Sydney Airport, as opposed to having to change onto a commuter train (with insufficient luggage space) at Wolli Creek or Central.