

Dear Sir,

As an Airbus Captain based in [REDACTED] for [REDACTED] I have on occasion been excessively restricted by the curfew in its current form. I fully understand the need for the curfew and respect its intent. However, on some rare circumstances it has placed unnecessary requirements affecting safety and of course the new elephant in the room “carbon emissions”

A recent example was my flight from Darwin to Adelaide where my ETA ADL was 2215. The weather required 60mins holding due thunderstorms so potentially landing after curfew. This now required me to nominate Melbourne as an alternate, an additional 3 tonnes of fuel. Darwin’s runway was undergoing works with only 2000m available. Due to performance limitations I have to offload passengers! (Subsequently I arrived in Adelaide and landed at 2230 so my explanation to the passengers for curfew looked poor.)

Aside from the inconvenience, reputational damage and cost to my company there are also safety and environmental concerns. Loading additional fuel/weight on our aircraft erodes safety margins putting as at the limitations of performance for our aircraft. In particular during the takeoff/reject phase on the runway or a return to land overweight due to a critical failure.

The extra weight requires a higher fuel burn, operating at lower less efficient flight levels. Increasing our carbon emissions at a time when governments are mandating reduction targets on business. Additionally, if we then have to divert we will burn an additional 3 tonnes of fuel and fly the displaced aircraft and passengers back the next day so resulting in a further 3 tonnes!! And we are only one of about 7 on average that arrive at that time of night. Furthermore from a safety perspective we will be approaching fatigue limits from a very long duty.

My suggestion is that we have a mechanism in the act/dispensation whereby if we know we will arrive prior to curfew then we can expect to land regardless if weather delays force us to hold beyond. An option would be to apply a similar option as for departure where once cleared to taxi before curfew takeoff can occur after. For example, if we arrive pre curfew we are given a “provisional clearance” to land subject to weather conditions at the field. This would allow us to hold and land at our destination.

These events are not so common and would surely be acceptable to all stakeholders in the interests of safety and environmental impacts.

This concern is from my personal experiences and I am certainly not acting as a spokesperson for [REDACTED]. I do hope that all parties will get involved and look forward to a positive resolution.

Kind regards,
Sean Jamieson