



**Flight Attendants' Association of Australia**

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**Submission by the Flight Attendants' Association of  
Australia (FAAA)**

**to the**

**National Aviation Policy Green Paper**

26 February 2009

Authorised by  
Steven Reed, President FAAA (International division)



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The Hon. Anthony Albanese, MP  
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport,  
Regional Development and Local Government

Dear Minister,

### **Overview**

The FAAA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Government's National Aviation Policy Green paper.

The FAAA represent all cabin crew, employed across the Qantas Group of companies, Virgin, Rex and all other carriers flying to domestic and international destinations.

In total, the Qantas Group employ more than 10,000 cabin crew in Australia and more broadly, the aviation sector supports nearly 50,000 jobs across Australia.

#### **1) Aviation Security: Cabin crew & professional career development as safety and security professionals.**

Cabin crew are primarily employed as safety professionals who undergo rigorous security, medical and emergency procedure training, on a continuous six month cycle of testing and training.

Evidence of the critical role filled by cabin crew, and the training undertaken, was demonstrated in the emergency ditching on the Hudson river of a US Airways Flight 1549, 15 January 2009 in which all 155 passengers and crew were successfully evacuated.

The combined efforts and skill of the pilots and cabin crew who managed this remarkable feat, contributed to this outcome.

The FAAA believe that government and industry must ensure that safety standards must not be compromised or eroded through an open skies agreement that leads to the dilution of industrial conditions for crew.

#### **2) Impact of globalised economy and competitive pressures on wages conditions and job security**

Whilst aviation activity has grown strongly over the last twenty years, the industry is experiencing a significant downturn due to the current global financial crisis.

Where the Green Paper identifies the correlation between the slowing of demand and industry losses – projected to exceed \$5.2 billion in 2008 – the forecast structural changes will most significantly impact upon the continued employment of Australian-based crew as financial

operating pressures compel airlines to consider alternative cost structures, including overseas based and employed crew.

These changes are the result of dynamic economic pressures, including pressure from macro-economic reforms and global competition. This pressure will most acutely be borne by cabin crew, where other costs such as fuel, taxes, maintenance and aircraft are tightly fixed.

The FAAA recognises that Australia's aviation industry is not insulated against the fundamental changes that are set to shape the industry over the next 20 years, particularly as airlines seek greater consolidation and cross-border investments – which in turn will lead to the shifting of employment off shore and the establishment of non-Australian based crew operating on lower wage conditions. Nonetheless, aviation policy should recognize the inherent structural problems facing the sector.

Federal government policy to pursue its 'open skies' policy goal further adds pressure on the working conditions of cabin crew, particularly when viewed through the prism of expanding freedom rights.

One such example is the development of seventh freedom rights and the emergence of hub carriers: Emirates, Etihad, Cathay Pacific and Singapore Airlines and they way such arrangements will impact on Australian-based industrial conditions.

### **3) Service industry & tourism**

As part of the broader service and tourism industry, cabin crew are the public face of airlines and are equally ambassadors to the tourism segment of the market.

Domestic tourism is fundamentally important to the Australian economy. The provision of quality tourism infrastructure and services is, in the view of the FAAA, an integral key to the development and enhancement of a thriving service-based economy.

Tourism contributes in excess of 3.9 per cent of GDP or \$37.6 billion to the national economy. Service industries, including aviation are key stakeholders in the sector, consequently skills development and training, and recognition of the working conditions is necessary to ensure the continued growth of this sector.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1 - Impact of globalised economy and competitive pressures on wages conditions, job security, airline and passenger safety.**

Appropriate regulation and policy deployed to ensure that the industrial conditions of Australian-based crew, including airline and passenger safety, are not eroded through an expansion of the open skies policy or freedom rights.

#### **Recommendation 2 - Service industry & tourism.**

Ongoing support for the continued growth of Australian-based crew through appropriate skills training to expand upon high quality service standards, skills and culture to underpin tourism and service industry.