



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts



Community Bulletin

INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES

Number: D14/25

Date: 15 August 2025

Relevant: Indian Ocean Territories residents and visitors

Topic: Air services tender outcome

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (the department) is pleased to announce that Qantas Airways Limited (Qantas) has been selected as the new long-term air services delivery partner for the Indian Ocean Territories (IOT).

This follows the competitive tender process which has been under way since 2024, with the Department required to re-tender for air services at the completion of the existing contract. An initial five-year contract for air passenger and freight transport service delivery to Christmas Island (CI) and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands (CKI) is now being finalised.

The tender process was informed by community feedback provided through the comprehensive air services survey conducted in the second half of 2023, which identified price, seat availability, and reliability of services amongst key community priorities. Qantas' proposal represented best value-for-money, while also aligning with community preferences.

The new arrangements will see regular passenger flights to and from the IOT each Monday and Friday and a new monthly Perth to CI return service (Saturday). The freighter will run to CI and CKI every two weeks on a Saturday. The new arrangements are expected to deliver more than 5,000 additional seats on the IOT route each year, and more than 200 tonnes of extra air freight capacity to the IOT, per annum.

There will be a number of changes to the current passenger and air freight arrangements as a result of this change in service provider and operational considerations. While there may be some disruption in the short-term during the transition, this partnership is expected to provide significant benefits and improved services to the IOT over the long term.

The Australian Government thanks Virgin Australia, which has been a dedicated and committed service delivery partner, providing passenger and air freight services in a challenging operating environment. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the pivotal role Virgin Australia played in keeping CI and CKI connected through COVID-19, including supporting the resumption of tourism and business activities once restrictions were lifted.

There will now be a transition period until Qantas services commence from 3 November 2025, with the focus for all parties on minimising disruptions to allow for a smooth changeover. Detailed transition planning is being progressed following this announcement.

People with future bookings on Virgin Australia flights after 31 October will receive further direct information from the airlines on their flight arrangements in coming weeks. Qantas will also provide details on new ticket sales. Further information on freight arrangements will be released shortly.

IOT passenger and air freight air services are underwritten by the Australian Government, which provides significant investment in air services to CI and CKI, supporting community connectivity, economic activities and efficient and regular supply chains to the remote region.

More detail is provided in the attached FAQ and Qantas will also be circulating further information. These documents will be regularly updated as transition planning is finalised.

Kim Forbes, First Assistant Secretary, Territories Division