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Administrator of Christmas Island
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Community Bulletin

Indian Ocean Territories Air Services:

Proposal to change the Virgin Australia flight schedules

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Following recent feedback from the local community about air services, I asked the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities to commence discussions with Virgin Australia Regional Airlines (VARA) about options to change the days of the week for these flights (that is, whether they could move the Saturday flight to Friday and/or the Tuesday flight to Monday).

I have undertaken early and targeted discussions with some entities, including agencies who staff the airports and our local IOT tourism associations. I am now writing to you to invite wider community views on the options. Please note that no decisions have been taken on this and we are interested in the community's views and advice on the options.

The three proposed options are:

- **Option 1 – No changes**
- **Option 2 – Change Schedule: Saturday to Friday only; maintain Tuesday**
- **Option 3 – Change Schedule: Saturday to Friday; and Tuesday to Monday**

Note: A fourth option of moving the Tuesday flight to Monday (only) has been determined to be unfeasible because the weekly travel dates would be too close together (that is, only two days apart).

The proposed flights would operate in the same directions as the current flights.

Saturday flight - If changed to Friday, would retain the following times and direction:

Flight Number	Departure Time (local)	Arrival time (local)
VA1913	PER: 08:00	LEA: 09:50
VA1913*	LEA: 10:40	CCK: 12:10
VA1917	CCK: 12:55	XCH: 15:00
VA1912	XCH: 15:45	PER: 20:20

* Expected fuel stop in Learmonth



Tuesday flight - If changed to Monday, would retain the following times and direction:

Flight Number	Departure Time (local)	Arrival time (local)
VA1909	PER: 13:00	XCH: 15:50
VA1918	XCH: 16:35	CCK: 17:40
VA1916	CCK: 18:25	PER: 00:20

VARA have confirmed that they would be able to implement any of the Options, provided a start date is not set too far ahead.

I believe these changes will deliver a number of benefits, for example:

- Visitors to the IOT will not need to travel on a Saturday and can spend the weekend on either Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, or in Perth;
- It will improve connections for Cocos (Keeling) Islands passengers travelling on the Saturday Garuda service to Jakarta; and
- With weekday only flights, VARA can improve:
 - access to the VAA Meteorological team;
 - staffing of VAA flight and grounds teams;
 - access to key VAA management staff, if required; and
 - recovery options in the event of aircraft technical issues.

I welcome all views in writing, and addressed to the Department's air services consultation e-mail address: iotairservices@infrastructure.gov.au

Once all views have been weighed up, the Department will consult further with VARA and make a decision about changing the schedule, and then advise the community. If either of the change Options go ahead, the start date being considered is 15 October 2018 – after the 60th anniversary celebrations on Christmas Island and October school holidays. I welcome your views on this start date also.

I ask that you provide your views by Friday 16 March 2017.


Natasha Griggs
Administrator

Territories of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands