Australian Government

International Air Services Commission

Determination:	**[2026] IASC 117**
The Route:	**Samoa**
The Applicant:	**Qantas Airways Limited (ABN 16 009 661 901)**
Public Register File:	**IASC/APP/202628**

The Commission makes a determination allocating to Qantas 132 seats of capacity per week to operate passenger services in each direction on the Samoa route. The determination is valid for five years from 12 November 2026.

1. The application

1.1 On 12 October 2026, Qantas Airways Limited (Qantas) applied to the International Air Services Commission (the Commission) for an allocation of 132 seats per week on the Samoa route. From 19 December 2026, Qantas plans to operate one additional weekly return Sydney-Auckland-Apia service using Boeing 737-800 aircraft configured with 168 seats.

1.2 Qantas has requested the capacity allocation on the following basis:

- the allocation is requested for a period of five years from the date of the determination; and
- the capacity will be fully utilised by 31 December 2026.

1.3 In accordance with section 12 of the *International Air Services Commission Act 1992* (the Act), the Commission published Qantas' application on the Commission's website on 14 October 2026 inviting other applications for capacity on the Samoa route. No other applications were received.

1.4 On 11 November 2026, Qantas clarified that the proposed additional frequency is planned to be operated until 31 January 2027.

1.5 All non-confidential material supplied by the applicant is available on the Commission's website (www.iasc.gov.au).

2. Air services arrangements

2.1 According to the Register of Available Capacity, 956 seats of passenger capacity per week remain available for allocation to Australian designated airlines to operate passenger services between Australia and Samoa.

3. Commission's consideration

3.1 Paragraph 7(2)(aa) of the Act provides that the Commission must not allocate available capacity contrary to any restrictions on capacity contained in a bilateral arrangement(s).

3.2 Subsection 12(3) of the Act allows any person to apply to the Commission for a determination allocating capacity to enable an Australian carrier to operate international air services. Qantas is seeking the allocation of 132 seats of capacity per week in each direction on the Samoa route to operate one additional weekly return Sydney-Auckland-Apia service from 19 December 2026. Currently, Qantas has a total capacity allocation of 1,044 seats of capacity on the Samoa route.

3.3 Subsection 7(1) of the Act empowers the Commission to make a determination allocating available capacity. Subsection 7(2) requires, in part, that the Commission's determination must not allocate capacity unless the Commission is satisfied that the allocation would be of benefit to the public and would not be contrary to any restrictions on capacity contained in bilateral arrangements, or combination of bilateral arrangements.

3.4 Further, subsection 7(3) of the Act provides that in assessing the benefit to the public of an allocation of capacity, the Commission must apply the criteria set out in the policy statements made by the Minister pursuant to section 11 of the Act.

3.5 Pursuant to section 11 of the Act, the Minister issued the International Air Services Commission Policy Statement 2018 (the Policy Statement) which came into effect on 28 March 2018. The Policy Statement sets out the criteria which the Commission is required to apply in assessing the benefit to the public of allocations of capacity.

3.6 The Commission notes that there are no other applicants seeking capacity on the route and no opposition to the application.

3.7 Section 12 of the Policy Statement provides, in part, that in circumstances where there is only one applicant for allocation of capacity on a route, and there is no opposition to the application, the Commission is to have regard to the 'reasonable capability criterion' in section 8 of the Policy Statement and need not have regard to any other matter.

3.8 Under the reasonable capability criterion in section 8 of the Policy Statement, the Commission is required to assess the extent to which all Australian carriers that are, or would be permitted to use the capacity allocated under a determination are reasonably capable of:

a) obtaining any licences, permits or other approvals required to operate on and service the route to which the determination relates; and

b) using the capacity allocated under the determination.

3.9 The Commission notes that Qantas is an established international carrier which currently operates up to six weekly services between Australia and Samoa (Sydney-Auckland-Apia vv and Brisbane-Apia vv). Qantas has demonstrated its capability through its continued operation of services on the route, utilising its existing capacity allocations issued through Determinations [2022] IASC 125 and [2024] IASC 104[1]. The Commission therefore finds that the carrier is reasonably capable of obtaining the necessary regulatory approvals to operate on and service the Samoa route and of using the capacity allocated under the determination.

3.10 Accordingly, the Commission has concluded that Qantas satisfies the criteria under section 8. The Commission, therefore, has decided to allocate the capacity as requested by Qantas.

3.11 Paragraph 15(2)(a) of the Act requires a determination to specify the period during which it is to be in force. Subsection 15(3) of the Act effectively provides that if the Minister's Policy Statement sets out how the period of validity of the determination is to be fixed, then the period of validity is as so fixed. In any other case, an interim determination is to be in force for 3 years while a determination that is not an interim determination is to be in force for 5 years.

3.12 Section 20 of the Policy Statement sets out how the Commission is to fix the period during which a determination is to be in force. The Commission considers that this application is within the scope of subsection 20(4) and has decided that this determination is to be in force for a period of 5 years.

4. Determination allocating capacity on the Samoa route to Qantas Airways Limited ([2026] IASC 117)

4.1 In accordance with section 7 of the Act, the Commission makes a determination in favour of Qantas Airways Limited, allocating 132 seats per week in each direction on the Samoa route, in accordance with the Australia-Samoa air services arrangements.

4.2 The determination is valid for 5 years from 12 November 2026.

4.3 The determination is subject to the following conditions:

a) Qantas Airways Limited is required to fully utilise the capacity no later than 31 December 2026.

b) Only Qantas Airways Limited is permitted to utilise the capacity.

c) Changes in relation to the ownership and control of Qantas Airways Limited are permitted except to the extent that any change:

- results in the designation of the airline as an Australian carrier under the Australia-Samoa air services arrangements being withdrawn; or

[1] See Samoa entry, Qantas ns26-tt-summary.pdf

- has the effect that another Australian carrier, or a person (or group of persons) having substantial ownership or effective control of another Australian carrier, would take substantial ownership of Qantas Airways Limited or be in a position to exercise effective control of Qantas Airways Limited without the prior consent of the Commission.

Dated: 12 November 2026





Jane McKeon
Chairperson

Timothy Grimwade
Commissioner