

7 January 2025

Ms Jasmina Ackar
Director
International Air Services Commission
By email: contact@iasc.gov.au

Dear Ms Ackar

Submission on Virgin Australia's application to operate passenger services on the Qatar route

Canberra Airport welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the International Air Services Commission (the Commission) in relation to Virgin Australia's (Virgin) request for an allocation of 28 frequencies per week between Australia and Doha. Canberra Airport notes that this application relates to daily passenger services between Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Melbourne and Doha under a wet lease arrangement with Qatar Airways (Qatar).

This request complements the recent announcement by Qatar that daily flights between Doha and Canberra will recommence by December 2025 following the cancellation of the service during the COVID-19 pandemic. The route will boost visitation and economic opportunities across the ACT and southern NSW, while providing a seamless travelling experience for leisure and business passengers to access the vast network of destinations offered by Qatar.

With this service not expected to commence until late 2025, Virgin's request for capacity between Australia and Doha will increase international connectivity for travellers from Canberra Airport in the meantime.

This is because Virgin currently accounts for between 30 and 36 per cent of all passengers transiting through Canberra Airport. Providing more than 120 flights per week to five domestic destinations, including three of the gateway airports, Virgin is fundamental to connecting the ACT and southern NSW to the rest of Australia and on to international destinations.

Greater choice and direct connections, particularly for long-haul flights, are attractive for leisure and business travellers. The aviation industry has not recovered from the pandemic as rapidly as hoped. These additional frequencies will stimulate demand, particularly from

passengers based in the ACT and southern NSW, through improved flight schedules and the option to connect with international destinations from the convenience of Canberra Airport.

If this request is granted, the interline connectivity on domestic Virgin flights to the gateway airports will deliver a more seamless travelling experience for passengers. This includes improved convenience by eliminating the need to collect and re-check baggage mid-journey, as well as time savings associated with through-check.

Canberra Airport supports this request by Virgin as it will increase competition, improve connections and offer more seamless travel, particularly for travellers from the ACT and southern NSW during the 2025 Northern Summer. Importantly, it will also provide the foundations for the recommencement of Qatar's daily service between Doha and Canberra by the end of 2025.

It is hoped our perspective can assist the Commission to make a decision. Should you require any further information, please contact our Government Relations and Policy Advisor, Jordan Fallon, by emailing j.fallon@canberraairport.com.au or phoning 6175 3384.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Thomson', written in a cursive style.

Michael Thomson
Head of Aviation