



Tasmanian Live Seafood Export Industry At Risk

The Tasmanian Freight Logistics Council today raised concerns at Virgin Blue's recent decision to reduce its number of flights in and out of Hobart and Launceston Airports for the coming Autumn and Winter months. Virgin Blue plans to downgrade its late afternoon daily Hobart – Melbourne flight to the smaller Embraer plane and to cancel its early afternoon daily Hobart – Melbourne flight altogether over the Autumn /Winter period. A late afternoon Launceston – Melbourne flight has also been cancelled.

The Council's CEO, Rob McGuire, responded to the decision by saying that it is bad news for Tasmania and one which would not be welcomed by Tasmanian businesses who rely on Virgin Blue to move their products to the mainland and the world. The decision will severely impact on exporters who rely on air travel to get their high-value perishable products – particularly live seafood - to interstate and overseas markets. Any reduction in capacity to provide reliable air freight services between Tasmania and Victoria that suit international flights immediately rings alarm bells for the Council.

"Live seafood such as abalone and lobster must be flown from Tasmania to arrive on the mainland as close as possible to international departures so that the fish survive the entire export journey." Mr. McGuire said. "Fewer flights will mean less freight capacity and will result in exporters having real concerns on their ability to maintain their market share and compete in a global market."

The Council understands that all these flights have high passenger numbers and are supplemented with large loadings of live seafood. This decision will be detrimental to the Tasmanian economy, Tasmanian exporters and also to passengers due to a lack of available seating.