



Speech by

Hon. STEVE BREDHAUER

MEMBER FOR COOK

Hansard 21 June 2001

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Flight West Airlines

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (10.00 a.m.), by leave: I rise this morning to update honourable members on air services as a result of the liquidation on Monday of Flight West Airlines. I can report to the House that significant progress has been made in relation to finding both an immediate solution for stranded passengers and also a longer-term solution. In the short term, Queensland Transport has been able to negotiate with operators to ensure that as many ticketed Flight West passengers as possible are provided with a service.

Eastland Air will immediately take up services between Brisbane, Toowoomba, St George, Cunnamulla and Thargomindah, and Brisbane, Charleville, Quilpie, Windorah, Birdsville, Bedourie, Boulia and Mount Isa. Sunstate has offered to take up routes between Brisbane, Roma and Charleville and Brisbane, Barcaldine, Blackall and Longreach. Queensland Transport and Sunstate are negotiating with CASA to approve Sunstate operating the additional ports of Blackall and Barcaldine on this run. This morning Macair confirmed with Queensland Transport that it will commence intermediate services between Townsville, Winton and Longreach tomorrow and between Townsville, Hughenden, Richmond, Julia Creek, Cloncurry and Mount Isa on Saturday.

Services between the northern peninsula area and Cairns will be reinstated on Friday—tomorrow—with Regional Pacific running a twin otter between Bamaga and Horn Island to link with the Sunstate Cairns-Horn Island services. All Flight West tickets along these routes will be honoured by these airlines. It is intended that these arrangements will continue until a permanent operator or operators are finalised. Schoolchildren trying to get home for the holidays have also been given a high priority. Most ticket holders will have seats on these interim services, and additional services have been added by Sunstate to Longreach. We will continue to monitor and provide assistance to these passengers as required.

As the Premier reported to the House yesterday, Queensland Transport has written to all interested operators requesting that they submit bids for contracted areas. Discussions have commenced with these companies and a new operator or operators are intended to be in place next week. Contrary to untrue claims made in the press yesterday, subsidies paid to Flight West to provide services have been reviewed annually. Since 1996-97 the subsidies have grown by almost \$425,000, or 12 per cent. Queensland Transport has also been negotiating with Australia Post to ensure that regional Queensland continues to receive essential mail services. Whilst mail deliveries are the responsibility of Australia Post, I have been told that additional road transport has been arranged where appropriate, and we are working with it to ensure that the interim operators pick up any outstanding mail. Australia Post will use the services which Queensland Transport is negotiating for a medium-term operator to deliver the mail over the next 12 months.

I congratulate and thank all those airlines that have picked up the additional services as a result of Flight West's demise. I also thank the officers of Queensland Transport, especially Allan Parsons and Gordon Buchanan, for their efforts. We will continue to work with these airlines to minimise disruption to the travelling public and associated services and to deliver certainty to operators and the community.
