




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Western Queensland, Airfares

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (2.45 pm): I rise this afternoon to highlight an ongoing concern about the regulated air route between Longreach and Brisbane. I have raised this issue in this House before and I am here today raising it again. I say this because the people of Western Queensland continue to pay almost \$500 to travel one way from Longreach to Brisbane. This is highway robbery! For almost a year I have been passionately advocating for a fairer price structure for passengers on this route. I have made a number of representations to the minister and to Qantas, but unfortunately they have largely fallen on deaf ears.

Last Friday Qantas announced plans to trial a 30 per cent discount on base fares from Mount Isa to Cloncurry to Brisbane. I acknowledge that that is a good thing for people in Mount Isa and Cloncurry—and I welcome that, because they have also been paying exorbitant fares—but why is it that Qantas can run a 12-month trial to give passengers in north-west Queensland some price relief, yet Longreach residents are expected to continue to max out our credit cards and take out personal loans so that we can afford to fly from Longreach to Brisbane. Qantas continues to treat Longreach, Barcaldine and Blackall residents with contempt. The Palaszczuk Labor government is again proving that they are a government for Brisbane, not a government for Queensland, and Qantas is ripping off the home of Qantas: Longreach. It is disgraceful!

I am calling on the Palaszczuk Labor government and Qantas to give western Queenslanders a fair go. Showing compassion for the residents of Mount Isa and Cloncurry is good. They deserve to have cheaper airfares as well, but so do Longreach, Barcaldine and Blackall. We are talking about people who use this flight not for luxury—they are not wearing hibiscus shirts and board shorts to go on holidays—but to do business down here in Brisbane or to go and see a medical specialist. They need to have affordable flights. I have continued to argue this. I continue to call on this government to help me pull Qantas into line and tell Qantas that they have to provide more residents' fares. If they are going to provide a discount for Mount Isa and Cloncurry—which again I welcome—they can do the same for Longreach, Barcaldine and Blackall. Western Queensland residents deserve a fair go when it comes to travel. Maxing out the credit or the overdraft just to fly to Brisbane to see a cardiologist or the accountant on business matters is not good enough. We have an opportunity to make sure that we pull Qantas into line to provide affordable fares for Western Queensland. I call on the minister and the Palaszczuk government to help me pull Qantas into line to make sure that we have cheaper fares for Western Queensland.