

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Canberra Airport renews call for Federal Government to investigate flight cancellations.**

Canberra Airport Managing Director Stephen Byron is renewing a call on the Federal Government to step in when airlines have higher than average flight cancellation rates, disrupting the plans of passengers who pay premium fares.

In the February to April period, cancellations on the Canberra to Sydney route have been in the top three cancelled routes in the nation at an average of 9.3 per cent – far higher than the national long-term cancellation rate of 3.5 per cent.

Qantas Link is cancelling an average of 52 flights from Canberra to Sydney per month, affecting up to XXXX people travelling on the route. Conversely, Virgin Australia has only cancelled 2.5 per cent of flights in the same sector, so Qantas' claim that air traffic control shortage was behind its cancellations doesn't stand up.

"This is not new behaviour for Qantas, the same issues of cancellations on the Sydney service occurred in 2017 and again in 2018. Again, we are seeing anti-competitive behaviour by booking take-off and landing slots in Sydney with no intention of using them.

"Air travel is about travelling fast, and getting to a destination on time," Mr Byron said.

"There are people trying to get to business meetings and family functions, weddings, funerals, sporting events and concerts. And they all need to get there on time. They do not need to have their flight cancelled.

"It is unacceptable that Canberrans are paying a premium price to choose air travel and their plans are being messed up because they are receiving an unreliable service."

While on time flight statistics are published by the Federal Government, Mr Byron says airlines are not accountable for poor performance.

"There does need to be a national standard, at which the Federal Government, as both the regulator of the aviation industry and as the protector of consumers steps in," he said.

"In my view a monthly cancellation rate of more than five per cent warrants intervention by the Federal Government, and a demand for both an explanation and an improvement."

Mr Byron has called on the Federal Government to establish a Taskforce to investigate systemic problems and the introduction of a European-style compensation scheme for travellers.

"Task force members could include representatives from Canberra Airport, Sydney Airport, Qantas, Virgin, the Sydney Airport Slot Manager and Airservices Australia," he said.

"Passengers deserve to be compensated with cash compensation, not with flight credits but with cash compensation."

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[Source: Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development \(BITRE\)](#)