



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

s 47E(d)

The Hon Tim Watts MP

Call with Her Excellency Lolwah Rashid AL-KHATER, Minister of State for International Cooperation of Qatar

17.30pm, Wednesday, 2 August 2023

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Trade and investment

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

If raised: Expansion of the Bilateral Air Services Agreement (ASA)

- Value the crucial role Qatar Airways plays in keeping Australia's passengers and exporters connected to the world.
- Understand our relevant aviation agency (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts - DITRDCA) has informed the Qatar Civil Aviation

Prepared by: s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Cleared by Gemma Huggins FAS, SGG | MAD

Date cleared: 01 August 2023

Consultation: Doha post; ACD; LGD

[REDACTED]

s 47E(d)

Authority (QCAA) that at this time the Australian Government is not able to agree to an increase of capacity entitlements under our bilateral arrangements

- The Australian Government will continue to monitor market developments and explore opportunities to build bilateral trade and investment.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 33(a)(iii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

[REDACTED]



s 47E(d)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sensitivities

Air services

The 2020 Hamad Airport incident s 33(a)(iii)

Following the incident, Qatari Foreign Minister Al Thani released a joint statement with former Foreign Minister Payne, committing to providing access to investigation reports, and updates on legal proceedings and outcomes. s 33(a)(iii)

Qatar Airways operates daily direct flights from Doha to Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, and Adelaide.s 33(a)(iii)

The DITRDCA wrote to the QCAA on 14 July to inform them that their request would not be considered further at this time (**Attachment A**). This decision was also communicated by Minister King to Marque Lawyers, who are representing some of the Hamad Airport incident victims (**Attachment B**). On 25 July in London, Minister King said publicly she would not link the decision on additional capacity to the Hamad Airport incident when asked by the media.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)



[REDACTED]

s 22(1)(a)(ii) - this section and pages (4-6) are irrelevant and have been removed s 47E(d)

[REDACTED]



The Hon Catherine King MP

Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
Member for Ballarat

DHI22, DHJ22, DHK22, DHL22, and DHM22
C/O Marque Lawyers
Level 4,
343 George Street,
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear DHI22, DHJ22, DHK22, DHL22, and DHM22,

Thank you for your letter of 28 June 2023 regarding the treatment you received as passengers on a Qatar Airways flight to Sydney, and reports that Australia will be granting additional landing rights to Qatar-based airlines.

As most Australians were, I was shocked by what happened to you at Hamad International Airport. The treatment that you received was disgraceful. All travellers deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

Your experience remains in my thoughts, as well as those of my colleagues.

The Australian Government is not considering additional bilateral air rights with Qatar.

Thank you for writing to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Catherine King MP

10 / 7 / 2023

OFF [REDACTED] tive



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

s 47E(d)

The Hon Tim Watts MP

Her Excellency Lolwah Rashid AL-KHATER, Qatar Minister for State for International Cooperation

17.00 (AEDT) Thursday, 19 October 2023

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Prepared by: IIS/LVS | MAD

Cleared by Last clearing officer: A/g AS James
Bryan ISG | MAD | Middle East Branch

Date cleared: 19 October 2023
19 Oct 2023

OFF [REDACTED] tive

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s 47E(d)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 33(a)(iii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s 47E(d)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Qatar-Australian relationship

Qatar is a valued and reliable partner. It uplifted 405 Australians and Afghans for us after the fall of Kabul, negotiated departures directly with the Taliban at our request, ensured the safe passage of our people and accommodated evacuees in Doha. s 33(a)(iii) Qatar has also hosted Australia's Interim Mission on Afghanistan since September 2021.

Qatar is our third largest trading partner for Australia in the Middle East. The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) has invested around A\$4 billion in Australia.

On 14 July, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts wrote to the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority to advise that their request for an increase of air service capacity entitlements had been rejected. The Senate Committee Report (released 9 October) called for an immediate review of the decision to reject the request. s 33(a)(iii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s 22(1)(a)(ii) - this section and page (13) is irrelevant and have been removed

s 47E(d)

OFFICIAL: Sensitive



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

BRIEF FOR ASSISTANT FOREIGN MINISTER WATTS

s 20(3)(c) - copyright

VISIT TO QATAR

Doha 9-11 December 2023



Front cover photo: *The Pearl district, Doha, Qatar*

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

VISIT OVERVIEW

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Your visit follows the **Australian Government's decision to decline a request by Qatar Airways** to increase the number of flights per week. This was widely reported in Qatar. Former Qatar Airways CEO, Akbar Al-

Baker said the decision was 'very unfair', noting the airline had assisted Australians during the pandemic. Qatar Airways appeared before the Senate Select Committee inquiry into the decision on 27 September 2023. This decision has been linked to the **Hamad International Airport incident** in October 2020 (non-consensual physical searches of female passengers, including Australians) in the media and in comments made by the Minister for Transport, the Hon Catherine King MP. ^{s 33(a)(iii)}

s 22(1)(a)(ii) - this section and pages (20-25) are irrelevant and have been removed

BILATERAL BRIEFS

QATAR: HER EXCELLENCY LOLWAH RASHID AL-KHATER

MINISTER FOR STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 33(a)(iii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Bilateral Air Services agreement

On 14 July, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA) wrote to the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) to advise that their request for an increase of air service capacity entitlements had been rejected. The Senate Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements Report (released 9 October) called for an immediate review of the decision to reject the request. s 33(a)(iii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii) - this section and pages (31-32) are irrelevant and have been removed

QATAR: MR MANSOUR BIN EBRAHIM AL-MAHMOUD

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER – QATAR INVESTMENT AUTHORITY

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

If raised: Qatar Airways

- Assure you that Qatar Airways is a highly valued partner for Australia's passenger and air freight interests
 - thank Qatar Airways for assisting Australians and their family members in the recent conflict
 - this builds on excellent cooperation throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and to support those departing Afghanistan during the fall of Kabul.
- The decision not to approve additional services by Qatar Airways to Australia earlier this year was based on national interest considerations.
- Since the decision, respective aviation officials held formal consultations and agreed to maintain dialogue on issues related to the air services agreement.

s 22(1)(a)(ii) - this section and pages (35-75) are irrelevant and have been removed

QATAR BILATERAL AIR SERVICES AND 2020 HAMAD AIRPORT INCIDENT

Key points

- Australia values our positive and constructive relationship with Qatar
 - the relationship is broader than a single bilateral air services agreement.
- The decision not to approve additional services by Qatar Airways to Australia earlier this year (July) was based on national interest considerations.

s 33(a)(iii)

- Value the role Qatar Airways plays in international aviation through the operation of 42 services a week to Australia.
- Grateful for the support from Qatar Airways, and its partner Virgin Australia, with our assisted flights out of Israel in October
 - the Qatar Airways assisted flight from Dubai to Sydney was the first to land back in Australia and helped 222 Australians and members of our Pacific family to get home.
- Appreciate Qatar's commitment to seek justice for the 2020 Hamad Airport incident
 - including to prosecute the officer responsible, issue an official apology and share the investigative reports with us.

Background

Air Services Request

On 16 August 2022, the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) wrote to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA) to request increased capacity entitlements under the bilateral Australia-Qatar air services agreement, i.e. an additional 28 services a week into Australia's four major gateways – Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. Under current arrangements, Qatar Airways is operating 42 services a week to Australia from Doha.

DITRDCA replied to the QCAA on 14 July 2023, informing them that the Australian Government was not able to agree to an increase in capacity entitlements at this time. This decision was also communicated by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, the Hon Catherine King MP, in a reply letter to Marque Lawyers (17 July 2023), who are representing five of the Hamad Airport incident victims in a compensation case against both Qatar Airways and the QCAA. Matar, a subsidiary of Qatar Airways, responsible for airport operation and management, was later added to the law suit.

s 33(a)(iii)

On 17 September 2023, Australian media reported Qatar Airways CEO Akbar al-Baker said that the decision was 'very unfair' and he was surprised by the rejection as the airline was 'so supportive of Australia' during the pandemic.

The decision has attracted significant media attention. Most articles focused on reasons behind the decision and possible links to protecting Qantas' market share. On 25 August 2023, the Guardian and AFR reported that Opposition Leader Peter Dutton accused the Government of 'running a protection racket for Qantas'. In this article, Treasurer Jim Chalmers responded by saying that Cathay Pacific, Singapore

Airlines and China Southern were adding extra capacity. In the Sydney Morning Herald on 10 September 2023, farmers from the lamb and sheep meat industry linked the Government's decision to end live sheep exports to the Qatar Airways decision saying it will affect their ability to export chilled meat to Middle Eastern markets.

On 5 September 2023, the Senate established a Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements. Hearings were held over six days between 19-28 September 2023 across capital cities. The committee published its report on 9 October 2023. It contained 10 recommendations, including that the "the Australian Government immediately review its decision not to increase capacity under Australia's bilateral air services agreement with Qatar". None of the recommendations pertained to DFAT. On 18 October 2023, a motion to extend the Select Committee's inquiry to hear from additional witnesses was defeated.

On 22 August 2023, the Embassy of Qatar in Canberra, on behalf of the QCAA, submitted a request to DITRDCA for consultation under Article 16 of the Air Services Agreement. On 6 October 2023, the DITRDCA accepted the request for consultations. On 24-25 October 2023, DITRDCA held consultations with the QCAA and Qatar Airways in Canberra. **s 33(a)(iii)**

The Hamad Airport Incident

On 2 October 2020, female passengers (including 13 Australians) on board Qatar Airways flight QA908 departing Doha for Sydney, were removed from the flight and subjected to intrusive physical examination without their consent in Doha. The searches followed a newborn infant being found abandoned in the departure terminal.

The Qatari Government considers its involvement in the matter concluded, having delivered Australia's original demands: a PM-level apology, a review into and report on airport procedures, and a successful criminal prosecution of the ranking airport police officer. **s 33(a)(iii)**

Unlike Qatar Airways, QCAA has claimed foreign state immunity in the case.

s 33(a)(iii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii) - this section and pages (79-90) are irrelevant and have been removed

**Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs – the Hon Tim Watts MP
MEDIA BRIEF**

Event	MEDIA BRIEF QATAR VISIT
Date	9 – 11 December 2023
Version Date	6 December 2023
Adviser	s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

5. QATAR BILATERAL AIR SERVICES AGREEMENT..... 11

6. HAMAD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT INCIDENT OCTOBER 2020 12

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii) - this section and pages (93-100) are irrelevant and have been removed

5. QATAR BILATERAL AIR SERVICES AGREEMENT

- I understand Qatar's disappointment at the decision to not approve the request for increased capacity entitlements under the bilateral air services agreement.
- The Government's decision was based on national interest considerations.

s 33(a)(iii)

- The Government values highly the role Qatar Airways plays in international aviation through the operation of 42 services a week to Australia.
- Australia is grateful for support from Qatar Airways, and its Australian partner Virgin Australia, for our assisted flights out of Israel
 - a Qatar Airways assisted flight from Dubai to Sydney was the first to land back in Australia with 222 Australians on board.

If raised: Has the bilateral relationship with Qatar been affected by the decision?

- No. Australia continues to have a positive and constructive relationship with Qatar.
- Qatar remains a valued and reliable bilateral partner
 - aviation has, and will continue to be, just one element of our political and economic relationship with Qatar.

6. HAMAD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT INCIDENT OCTOBER 2020

- The mistreatment of female passengers in October 2020 was a terrible incident
 - Australians were shocked by this event.
- The Australian Government has acknowledged, and continues to acknowledge, the range of actions the Qatari Government has taken in response to the incident.
- Australia appreciates the State of Qatar's efforts to investigate, apologise and ensure it is never repeated
 - including establishing a task force to review airport procedures and protocols.
- We continue to speak to Qatar regularly and seek updates on the implementation of the taskforce's recommendations.
- I would note also that some of the victims have initiated legal proceedings against Qatar Airways and the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority in Australia (QCAA) - as such, I won't comment further.

If raised: Is the legal action being taken by some of the affected women, against both Qatar Airways and the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority, related to the Government's rejection of additional flights?

- The Government's decision to not approve QCAA's request for additional services was based on national interest considerations.
- The Government cannot comment on private legal proceedings.

s 22(1)(a)(ii) - this section and pages (104-122) are irrelevant and have been removed

Middle East FTAs (UAE, GCC, Israel)

Middle East FTAs (UAE, GCC, Israel)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Contact: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Contact No: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Division: FSD
Date Updated: 25/07/2023

Cleared by: Richard Emerson-Elliott
Contact No: (02) 6261 1066
Cleared by Adviser:
PDR Number: s 47E(d)

Middle East FTAs (UAE, GCC, Israel)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

If raised: Will the decision to refuse Qatar Airways' additional access requests under its air services agreement with Australia affect our trading relationship?

- Qatar is a valued and reliable bilateral partner for Australia

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Middle East FTAs (UAE, GCC, Israel)

- of our close economic and trade ties [Qatar is our third largest trading partner in the Middle East, \$2.8 billion in 2021-22], aviation has been and will continue to be an important element
- we also have substantial Qatari investment in goods and services, such as infrastructure, agriculture, food manufacturing and energy [currently \$4 billion].
- The Government will continue to monitor market developments and explore opportunities to expand our bilateral trade and investment with Qatar.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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s 22(1)(a)(ii) - this section and the next page (128) is irrelevant and have been removed

Contact: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Contact No: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Division: FSD
Date Updated: 11/09/2023

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- Qatar is a valued and reliable bilateral partner for Australia
 - of our close economic and trade ties [Qatar is our third largest trading partner in the Middle East, \$2.8 billion in 2021-22], aviation has been and will continue to be an important element
 - we also have substantial Qatari investment in goods and services, such as infrastructure, agriculture, food manufacturing and energy [currently \$4 billion].
- The Government will continue to monitor market developments and explore opportunities to expand our bilateral trade and investment with Qatar.

If raised: Will the Qatar Airways decision affect the ability of farmers to export?

- The decision has not reduced the ability of farmers to export produce to Qatar and the Middle East region.
 - Qatar has not suggested it would reduce capacity of its air freight as a result of this decision – capacity remains as it was.
 - Our high quality produce remains available in the Middle East and we continue to look for ways to increase opportunities, including in potential FTAs with the UAE and the GCC.

Contact: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
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Division: FSD
Date Updated: 11/09/2023

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Middle East FTAs (UAE, GCC, Israel)

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Middle East FTAs (UAE, GCC, Israel)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Qatar

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

- On September 10 2023 the Sydney Morning Herald reported on the decision not to grant additional air rights to Qatar Airways, noting these flights would enable sheep producers to access additional cargo capacity and expand market access.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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 Division: FSD
 Date Updated: 11/09/2023

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 PDR Number: s 47E(d)

Middle East FTAs (UAE, GCC, Israel)

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s 22(1)(a)(ii) - this section and the next page (133) is irrelevant and have been removed

Contact: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Contact No: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Division: FSD
Date Updated: 24/11/23

Cleared by: Richard Emerson-Elliot
Contact No: (02) 6261 1066
Cleared by Adviser:
PDR Number: s 47E(d)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

If raised: Will the decision to refuse Qatar Airways' additional access requests under its air services agreement with Australia affect our trading relationship?

- Qatar is a valued and reliable bilateral partner for Australia

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Middle East FTAs (UAE, GCC, Israel)

- of our close economic and trade ties [Qatar is our third largest trading partner in the Middle East, **\$3.1 billion in 2022**], aviation has been and will continue to be an important element
- we also have substantial Qatari investment in goods and services, such as infrastructure, agriculture, food manufacturing and energy.
- The Government will continue to monitor market developments and explore opportunities to expand our bilateral trade and investment with Qatar.

If raised: Will the Qatar Airways decision affect the ability of farmers to export?

- The decision has not reduced the ability of farmers to export produce to Qatar and the Middle East region.
 - Qatar has not suggested it would reduce capacity of its air freight as a result of this decision – capacity remains as it was.
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Middle East FTAs (UAE, GCC, Israel)

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Qatar

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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