

Businessmen opt to go lower class

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Aviation Editor

AYERS ROCK: A majority of Australia's high-flying businessmen, including company chief executives, have abandoned the luxury of first class air travel and taken enthusiastically to discount air fares, according to a new survey.

In the face of continuing recession, the survey shows that a staggering 75 per cent of companies have used cheap air tickets since aviation deregulation arrived in November last year.

While 68 per cent of senior executives and 71 per cent of non-award employees have moved up the back of the plane, perhaps more surprising is the 57 per cent of company chief executives who have foregone wide seats, five food and wine to travel economy.

Airlines have admitted they are doing badly in the crucial high-yield business market — the heart and of the aircraft is where they make most of their profits — and the news that the country's business leaders have ditched high-cost airline tickets in droves is a bad omen.

The major domestic carriers, Ansett and Australian, have spent millions of dollars in the past 12 months on wider seats, better service and facilities, and frequent flyer schemes to lure businessmen back.

Business travel fell off dramatically in the wake of the disastrous domestic pilots' dispute, and has never fully recovered.

The wide-ranging survey was

undertaken by the highly respected PA Consulting Group as part of a regular survey on salary levels and trends.

It was carried out in September and covered a wide range of companies around Australia in the manufacturing, finance, general business services and non-manufacturing sectors.

PA Consulting Group's manager of salary surveys, Mr Ron Reynolds, said it had been decided to include questions about air travel for the first time because of deregulation, the availability of discounts and the opportunity for businessmen to use them to cut costs in difficult trading times.

The results showed that since deregulation arrived, 25 per cent of companies have actually changed their travel policies, with 18 per cent downgrading them.

More than half of chief executives and two-thirds of senior executives were reported as flying economy on domestic journeys of less than three hours.

Nine per cent of chief executives and two per cent of senior executives flew first class, while 37 and 25 per cent respectively used business class.

There were only marginal changes in seating preferences on longer domestic journeys, which would mainly apply to the lengthy trans-continental flights between Australia's east coast and Perth.

The survey also showed that class substitution is allowed by many companies. This is a practice which allows travellers

to fly in a less expensive class than company policy normally allows and use the difference for further personal, spouse or family travel.

Class substitution was permitted for 41 per cent of chief executives, 34 per cent of senior executives, 18 per cent of non-award employees and nine per cent of award employees.

Many of the companies surveyed provided air travel assistance for spouses joining staff on business trips, conferences or seminars.

The most common form of assistance was the paying of full fares outside of the employee's remuneration package, followed by travel class substitution.

On international flights longer than eight hours, 21 per cent of chief executives flew first class, and 64 per cent in business class. Of other senior executives, five per cent flew first class and 73 per cent business class.

● The round of domestic discounting sparked last Friday by Compass, with \$100 return fares between Sydney and Melbourne and Sydney and Brisbane, heightened at the weekend with major competitors Ansett and Australian matching the fares.

The record low levels are unlikely to mark the onset of a new round of low fares. The offers are for a very short duration, with travel having to be completed by December 1. They were introduced by Compass only as a "birthday celebration" offer to mark the airline's first year of flying.

War crimes trial attacked as a 'costly folly'

ADELAIDE: A former South Australian lieutenant-governor has supported protests by a right-wing group against Australia's first Nazi war crimes case.

Sir Walter Crocker, 90, said yesterday the case was being driven by revenge, not justice. He said he would join members of the League of Rights group in a planned demonstration outside an Adelaide magistrate's court when

committal proceedings against Ukrainian-born Ivan Polukhovitch resumed today.

Polukhovitch, 75, now a pensioner and Australian citizen, is accused of killing 24 Jews and being involved in the mass murder of up to 850 more in the German-occupied Ukraine in 1942 and 1943.

The case has gone ahead after a long legal challenge, which included a ruling in the High Court.

Sir Walter, a former Australian ambassador who served as SA lieutenant-governor from 1973 to 1982, said he would "prefer the peace of my garden and my books to public demonstrations in the street", but he wanted to draw the public's attention to the case.

While he was not associated with the League of Rights, which staged a small and quiet vigil when the committal hearing began last

month, he admired its "initiative and courage".

Sir Walter fought as a lieutenant-colonel in the British Army in World War II and said he was not condoning Nazi war crimes. But he believed the Polukhovitch case, and others being brought under the Federal Government's controversial War Crimes Amendment Act, should not proceed.

Apart from the trials being driven by hatred and revenge, not justice,

he said the events took place half a century ago and the evidence available was dubious. Also, the accused had committed no crimes in Australia or against Australians anywhere, and the cost of the trials to Australian taxpayers had already run into millions of dollars.

Australia had no reason whatever for getting mixed up in "this costly folly", but every reason for keeping out of it, he said.

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A crop-duster sprays the Darling River to kill toxic algae.

Picture by RICK STEVENS

100km is too far to drive for the evening shower

Drought and flood they can live with along the Darling; it comes with the lifestyle. But not being able to wash the body for a fortnight. Phew! That's too much.

On Saturday, a crop-duster sprayed 600 litres of the algicide Control to try to kill an outbreak of blue-green algae which has poisoned a 40-kilometre stretch of the Darling River near Louth, 100 kilometres south-west of Bourke.



will work out cheaper than driving 100 kilometres every night for a shower. A tanker-load of water costs \$300, of which \$150 can be claimed under drought relief.

If anyone knows the lethality of blue-green algae it's Brett Raitt, whose company at Glenorie manufactures the algae killer Control, which he says is safe to use in drinking water.

"If I had a choice to shower in the shower or to drive 100 km to the shower, I'd choose the shower."