

Air Service to Rotuma

DISAPPOINTMENT, sadness and frustration are few of the words we use to describe the recent experience we had with the Air Pacific/ Pacific Sun flight bound for Rotuma (Friday April 26) which again did not occur.

This was our first visit to Rotuma to see family and we were travelling from New Zealand with our 81-year-old uncle.

We arrived at Nadi airport at 5am (for a 7am flight) to a sign stating "Flight to Rotuma Island cancelled".

We queried the attendee but he didn't know the reason for the cancellation nor when the next flight was. We were told that his supervisor would answer our queries but the supervisor didn't know and we were told that his manager would know.

We waited for over four hours before the reason, "bad weather", was given but no one knew when the next flight to Rotuma would be.

Other passengers to Rotuma said they were from the previous Friday flight which was cancelled and rescheduled for Thursday (the day before our flight). Both were cancelled due to "bad weather". There was a backlog of passengers in Nadi and Rotuma who had booked and paid but weren't able to reach their destination.

The cancellation of our flight meant we would be stranded in Nadi for the next two weeks. We asked for accommodation and meal compensation but were told that because of "bad weather" Air Pacific would not pay for this.

We asked if there was anything they could do to at least support our elderly uncle while we organised alternative arrangements. They said they just couldn't help, not even coffee or water for our elderly uncle who had been waiting since 5am.

This was a gut-wrenching and bitterly disappointing event as our family in Rotuma had also hired vans and preparing for our mamasa, purchasing food and preparing accommodation.

A significant amount of money, time and emotion was invested into this trip. We were looking forward to meeting family for the first time, reunion of elderly siblings and the joy of experiencing our Rotuma heritage, but now we cannot experience this because of the unpredictable and unreliable service to Rotuma.

We have travelled to over 27 different countries and this has been our worst experience.

The service to Rotuma is utterly unreliable. We couldn't even plan for a rescheduled flight as no one knew when that flight would be. And we didn't want to take the chance of getting stuck in Rotuma and missing our connecting flight back to New Zealand for work.

Rotumans contribute significantly to the economic development of Fiji yet I feel we are second-class citizens when it comes to flights to Rotuma.

We pay premium fares over \$1200 per person return for an unreliable service. Rotuma deserves better service and so does all your paying passengers, overseas and local.

F and L STOWERS
New Zealand