



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE
Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program
QUESTION

Wednesday, 22 March 2017

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

QUESTION

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Questioner Littleproud, David, MP
Speaker

Source House
Proof No
Responder Chester, Darren, MP
Question No.

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Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa) (15:07): My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. Will the minister update the House on the government's Remote Airstrip Upgrade program? How will these upgrades benefit my electorate of Maranoa?

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (15:07): I thank the member for Maranoa for his question and acknowledge that he represents a vast electorate in the order of 731,000 square kilometres, which is three times the size of Victoria, as he is prone to telling me. He understands that in representing such a vast electorate there is a need to invest in our rural and remote communities. He understands connectivity in all its forms. Whether it is road connectivity, rail connectivity, telecommunications or airport connectivity, it is critical to having a prosperous life in rural and remote Australia.

The Turnbull-Joyce government is delivering. We are delivering a safer and stronger regional Australia where everyone has the opportunity to get ahead. We are delivering on our \$50 billion Infrastructure Investment program right around Australia. We recognise that, when you invest in good infrastructure, you can change lives and you can save lives. The difference between living in rural and remote Australia and moving to the cities comes through programs like the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program.

We have funded 91 projects under the latest round. We are getting on with the job of delivering right across Australia. An amount of \$645,000 was allocated to the member for Maranoa's electorate with 11 upgrades to remote airstrips across his community. These upgrades will improve access to fresh food and medical services and provide work and educational opportunities for people throughout that vast part of Queensland. The upgrades include levelling of airstrips, installation of animal-proof fencing and installation of navigational lighting and other facilities.

I am sure that those opposite would agree and acknowledge that the Royal Flying Doctor Service has been an important recipient and beneficiary of this program for the work it does right across Maranoa and the rest of Australia. On average there are 100 Royal Flying Doctor Service landings every day in rural and remote Australia. The ability to put an aircraft down in the most remote parts of our nation is critical in saving lives throughout Australia. The funding of these rural airstrips is vital and allows the Royal Flying Doctor Service to provide the 24/7 medical emergency care for people who live in communities where you simply cannot ring the local GP or drop into the local hospital, which may be hundreds of kilometres away. The RFDS chief executive Martin Laverty said that through this Commonwealth funding

...means the flying doctor will be better able to deliver emergency medical care to injured or ill Australians across 91 frequently used airstrips.

So the remote program is good news right throughout regional Australia—through the electorates of Parkes, Farrer, Flynn, Grey, Leichhardt, Bass, Braddon, Durack, O'Connor, Lingiari and Kennedy. This funding is helping to connect regional communities like Maranoa and it is just another example of this government getting on with the job of delivering infrastructure that Australia needs. We are building for our nation's future and we are making sure that regional communities have the benefits of decentralisation. We are supporting job opportunities right across Maranoa and regional Australia.