



Speech by

Andrew McNamara

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

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HERVEY BAY, DIRECT JET FLIGHTS

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (3.24 pm): Two Fridays ago Hervey Bay joined the jet age. The commencement of direct jet flights from Sydney and Brisbane by Virgin Blue and Jetstar begins the next stage of the tourism boom on the Fraser Coast that started with the development of the whale-watching industry just 17 years ago. I was delighted that the Premier was able to come to Hervey Bay to welcome the first jets to land. The Beattie government put \$1.3 million into the airport expansion out of a total project cost of \$13 million. Air visitor numbers are expected to go from 30,000 per annum currently to 100,000 per annum next year.

I want to pay credit to the Hervey Bay City Council for having the vision to commit to this project and, in particular, I would like to mention the critical role of the Hervey Bay City Council CEO, Leigh Bennett. It is impossible to overstate Mr Bennett's influence in the planning, financing and completion of this project. Regrettably, I understand that Leigh yesterday announced his intention to retire from the council towards the end of this year. While his loss will be keenly felt, the new Hervey Bay Airport will be his legacy from his time as CEO.

It has been said that the tourism industry is really an amalgam of three distinct parts—the transport industry, the accommodation sector and then attractions, be they natural or built. Hervey Bay has exceptional attractions in Fraser Island, the bay itself and the whales. Our accommodation sector has also grown and improved enormously in recent years and now our transport options have just gone sky high.

The Beattie's government's focus on growing the aviation industry by encouraging the arrival of new players such as Virgin air has now paid a huge dividend for Hervey Bay. I have no doubt that the arrival of those first jets a week and a bit ago will be looked on in years to come as the starting point of Hervey Bay's inevitable transformation—not just of one of Australia's icon tourism destinations but also of one of the Pacific Rim's boom cities.