



Speech by

**Liz Cunningham**

**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

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## **GLADSTONE AIRPORT**

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (8.58 pm): The Gladstone-Calliope Aerodrome Board has worked for many years to provide aerial services into and out of Gladstone Airport. At the moment the board is facing an extreme challenge in that the tarmac is showing some severe shortcomings in terms of its subsurface. Preliminary testing of the tarmac had indicated that it was sufficiently strong for Q400 aircraft. There had been Dash 8s and smaller aircraft into and out of the airport for many years.

However, more recent, additional tests have been undertaken because of some cracks and faults that have appeared in the tarmac. They have shown that there is an urgent need to upgrade, firstly, the taxiway and then that will become the main runway while the main runway is being repaired. This is a \$30.2 million project. The aerodrome board has committed \$10 million and it is calling on the state and federal governments to share the outstanding amount, which is approximately \$10 million each.

This region is a growing region. Many national and international businessmen and women fly in and out of the city for industrial development. It is also essential for workers who come into and out of the city as we have still a high number of people who work out of town and who come back on weekends and their days off. So this airport is an incredibly important arterial link to the rest of Australia. Probably a lot of the flights that come into and out of Gladstone Airport are from Brisbane and ports north.

There have been representations made to the Prime Minister, to the federal transport minister, Mark Vaile, and to Barnaby Joyce. There have been meetings organised with the Labor candidate for Flynn, Chris Trevor, and others. I know that there have also been representations made to the state government.

I call on the state government to commit the necessary funding to see the airport upgraded. Even if the commitment was made in the next couple of months, it is not expected that work could start until April next year because of the practicalities. If, as everybody is praying, we get a wet summer, there is going to be some real problems in terms of the ability of the airport to take the heavier planes, which means cutting back the size of the planes and therefore the capacity of the airport. We currently have only one carrier, Qantas. Ansett quit when Virgin went to Rockhampton.

It is critically important that that upgrade occur. It is critically important that all three entities share the cost—that is, the aerodrome board and the state and federal governments—because the region does contribute significantly to the economic prosperity of this state and this nation. It is vitally important that this transportation link continues in a sound manner.