



Speech by

## Vaughan Johnson

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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### WESTERN QUEENSLAND, TRANSPORT SERVICES

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (6.35 pm): I want to speak this evening about a very contentious and important issue for the people of western Queensland. As many people are aware, the western aerial services to the far west, central west and south west are subsidised by the Queensland government to the tune of some \$7 million to \$9 million a year—that is for air and bus travel. Those contracts are coming up for tender again, and those airways in question will once again have to tender for those contracts. These aerial services are important to western Queensland.

The one area I want to elaborate on is the service from Brisbane to St George and out to Cunnamulla and Thargomindah and through Quilpie to Windorah, Birdsville, Bedourie, Boulia and back to Mount Isa. That last service I referred to—from Mount Isa back through Boulia, Bedourie, Birdsville and Brisbane—is very important and a very integral part of the links for remote outback Queensland.

I appeal to Queensland Transport and the honourable minister to make absolutely certain we get the right tender and the right aircraft to service this area. That service did not take place again this morning because of a failure of the aircraft before it took off from Brisbane. This is a regular occurrence for some of these aircraft. I know this company also provides services to the fly-in fly-out mining operations in the north-west mineral province, but it is very important that the people of the far west are not penalised. We need aerial services that are adequate and safe for this region.

The other thing I want to mention is that the department of transport needs to look very closely at trying to reduce the fares there. A lot of times when those planes leave they are not full, and management would have a fair idea the day before that this would probably be the case. Sometimes they fly with only 20 people, so that is not full capacity. Maybe in those circumstances they could advertise those fares and say, 'We've got 10 seats available,' and then they could average the price out, fill those planes and get more people on them. I think if we could get a reduced fare across the board, we might find ourselves filling the planes and getting a cheaper price as it averages out in real terms.

This is a very sacred service to that part of Queensland, and it is the same with the subsidised coach runs from Brisbane to Charleville and up through the central west to Mount Isa. That is a very important link that has serviced the region for many years now. I trust that we will see a continuation of that service. I also trust we see the full and proper subsidisation of both the coach service and the aerial services. I hope the best tenderers win.