



Speech by

Vaughan Johnson

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Hansard Tuesday, 17 April 2007

AIR SERVICES, WESTERN QUEENSLAND

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (9.40 pm): I want to make mention this evening of the deplorable situation of western air services in remote areas—from Brisbane to Quilpie, Windorah, Birdsville, Bedourie, Boulia and Mount Isa. Over the term of the last contract with the company that has operated those services, there seems to have been some hiccup with the services in question. Most times we have seen aircraft break down and delays in services. This is an absolutely deplorable situation when it comes to a contract that is tendered for and put in place by government under subsidy. All I can say is that we have air services to western Queensland that do not exist.

Last week I had two phone calls from constituents in relation to the service to Birdsville. People were trying to go from Brisbane to Birdsville. A couple of weeks back there was a funeral in Windorah and people were trying to get to that funeral. In the end the plane went the next day. But this is a common occurrence and it is totally unacceptable. I plead with the minister for transport this evening to make absolutely certain that when the next contract is put in place after the tender process come July this year we see an operation that is going to provide the remote areas of western Queensland with an updated, upmarket air service that is going to be on time like any other air service and a safe air service with aircraft that will not break down. We want aircraft that will measure up to the requirements of the tender process and we want a pressurised aircraft, which people in other parts of this country expect.

This is not a situation that I speak about readily tonight but at the same time the situation is out of hand. I know that CASA has now made some recommendations in relation to the metro aircraft. They could not put an alternative service in place last weekend and that has thrown a lot of people into chaos because of the Betoota Gymkhana and trying to get people out there for that event. Other people tried to get specialist people out to Birdsville on Monday just gone and even that was in jeopardy. I have to say that the Diamantina Shire Council, the Boulia Shire Council and Barcoo Shire Council have had an absolute gutful of this continued disjointed, dislocated service that is second rate. I would not even call it second rate. I appeal to the minister to make certain that whoever gets this contract, even if it is the same company, they measure up, with aircraft that are safe, on time and airworthy to provide the service in question.