



Speech By  
**Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe**


**MEMBER FOR SANDGATE**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2016

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

### **Far North Queensland, Air Travel Subsidy**

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games) (2.23 pm): The Palaszczuk government is committed to connecting communities across Queensland. Under those opposite, I must say though, the Local Fare Scheme for subsidised air travel for communities in Far North Queensland was scrapped. As promised, this government has delivered on its commitment to reinstate this much needed service. Without the Local Fare Scheme commercial airfares in Far North Queensland had almost reached a level where lower income families would have struggled to access vital health, education and employment services. Since this government reinstated the scheme as a 12-month trial in July 2015, it has proved to be a huge success with air travel now more affordable, particularly for those residents in remote communities.

This government saw the effect on Far North Queensland communities when the scheme was cut in 2012 and we were committed to helping local residents move around more frequently to be able to enjoy greater social and recreational benefits and boost the local economy. I am pleased that the scheme, which is only eight months into its trial, has already helped so many people fly throughout Far North Queensland.

The reinstatement of the scheme has received widespread support from the people of the region. I have received letters of support, including one from Joseph Elu, chairperson of the Torres Strait Regional Authority. In his letter Mr Elu states that the Local Fare Scheme has added significant value to eligible residents of the Torres Strait.

Not only have we reinstated this vital service, we have hit a significant milestone with the 2,500th passenger flight taken under the Local Fare Scheme. This milestone is a celebration of its success and a lucky passenger from Murray Island in Far North Queensland in the Torres Strait has won a free return flight within the Cape York and Torres Strait region. This passenger has used the scheme and will now be able to enjoy a free flight to access any of the Torres Strait's 12 airports or seven Cape York airports.

I am delighted to be sharing with you the huge success of this scheme which has reopened easy access to essential services and, importantly, closed the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous health care.