



Speech By  
**Julianne Gilbert**


**MEMBER FOR MACKAY**

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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Mackay, Aviation Industry**

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (2.59 pm): I am calling on those opposite to support regional Queensland. We need a second reliable airline with a jet service. COVID-19 has worked its way into every aspect of our lives and it would have been inconceivable months ago that Mackay and regional Queensland would be reduced to one functioning airline. Mackay Airport still gets a Dash 8 service once a day plus a Virgin service once a day. Regional Queensland is being hurt by the games being played by the opposition backing Peter Dutton instead of getting behind regional Queensland. Mackay, Isaac and the Whitsundays deserve better. The current airline arrangements are not sufficient to keep our economy functioning and thriving. Central Queensland is the powerhouse of the Queensland economy, especially during these unprecedented times. If the mining industry and the METS sector shut down, the hit to the Queensland economy would be devastating.

The CEO of Mackay Airport, Garry Porter, tells me that mining companies are chartering at great expense 13 Fokker 100 flights a week. This is a huge expense to business. The flow-on effect for the economy is that the charter flights do not carry freight and are not open to the public to be able to book a flight. Dash 8s do not carry any freight. The limited flight capacity is barely enough for businesses not tied to mining to be able to book the flights that they need. The Mackay community is more than mining though. We have vibrant businesses that have the capacity to keep on growing. They need a reliable and accessible transport supply chain. Businesses with freight with a short life span need the capacity to get their freight out on a daily basis. For instance, we have a company that grows coral. They need a 48-hour guaranteed turnaround.

Some businesses need to fly in staff and visiting experts to Mackay. If you are a member of the general public and you have emergent need to fly, it is nearly impossible to get a flight. The CEO of the Mackay HHS reported that it is struggling to get flights for specialist practitioners and flights for essential medical supplies. The mining industry has the ability to charter flights, but we do not all have this luxury. Queensland needs to have a second reliable air service and the member for Everton needs to realise that regional Queensland deserves the same services as the south-east corner. Regional Queensland can and does contribute to the Queensland economy. Regional Queensland can deliver jobs. We just need a reliable jet service. It is only Queensland Labor that supports regional Queensland.