

Media Release

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Safer airstrips in remote areas will help save lives

Airstrips used for medical emergencies in remote parts of Australia will be made safer following the announcement of \$11.6 million for runway upgrades.

Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss today announced fifty-two grants, ranging from \$2,973 for purchase of portable lighting flares at Yalda Downs airstrip in NSW through to \$1.5 million for apron extension at the Norseman airstrip in Western Australia.

Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia CEO Martin Lavery said “The \$11.6 million in Remote Airstrip Upgrade Grants will improve access to emergency and scheduled aeromedical services for residents of remote Australia.

“City residents can take easy access to health care for granted. Remote Australian’s depend on the Royal Flying Doctor Service for emergency and planned medical and nursing care.

“It’s common for the Flying Doctor to encounter hazards when seeking to land aircraft in remote parts of Australia. Animals are regularly on unfenced airstrips, causing airstrip damage and creating risk of collision.

“Kangaroos and emus have a place on the Australian coat of arms. They have no place on an airstrip in a medical emergency. The \$11.6 million in airstrip upgrade funds will provide roo-fences and other safety measures to improve patient safety.”

Mr Lavery said the Royal Flying Doctor Service transports 177 patients by air each day, or 65,000 each year. The Service last year provided patient care to 292,000 people. Safe airstrips are essential to delivery of health care services in country Australia.

“Deputy Prime Minister Truss has today announced very practical measures to repair and upgrade country aviation infrastructure. Airstrips used regularly by the Flying Doctor will be made safer as a result of today’s grant announcements.

“Emergency air services sustain country populations. Today’s \$11.6 million, plus a further \$22 million earmarked to fund future airstrip upgrades is a tangible demonstration of the Turnbull-Truss Government’s commitment to country Australia,” Mr Lavery said.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service operates sixty-six aircraft from twenty-three aero bases. It was named by the AMR Charity Reputation Index as Australia’s most reputable charity in each of the last four years.

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