

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, 10 February 2017

RFDS welcomes new airstrip upgrade funding

RFDS Central Operations welcomes plans to upgrade 30 rural and remote airstrips in South Australia and the Northern Territory announced by the Federal Government today.

The government will spend \$11.8 million on upgrades to 91 isolated airstrips around Australia including 16 airstrips in the NT and 14 in SA under Round 4 of the *Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program*.

RFDS Central Operations Chief Operating Officer, Tony Vaughan, says the upgrades include resealing, widening and general maintenance to safety features like solar lighting, and will affect many airstrips frequently used by the RFDS.

"We welcome any decision to improve the accessibility to and safety of remote airstrips, particularly those the RFDS uses regularly," Mr Vaughan says.

"The majority of RFDS' landings are on rural and remote airstrips and it is important that local communities have reliable and consistent access to services such as the RFDS."

RFDS Central Operations supported the funding application to upgrade the Yorketown airstrip on SA's Yorke Peninsula, where the RFDS lands, on average, three times a week.

Under the funding program, Yorketown airstrip will receive funding for work to widen and reshape the airstrip. RFDS also welcomes upgrades in lighting and backup generators for airstrips in Streaky Bay and Wudinna to allow for more reliable access at night.

In the NT, the RFDS welcomes the decision to fund the reseal of the airstrip in Nyirripi, more than 400 kilometres north-west of Alice Springs, which is expected to improve its usability during wet weather. RFDS landed at Nyirripi 50 times during 2015/16.

"These upgrades will greatly improve the safe operation of RFDS aircraft by repairing and upgrading airstrip surfaces, in other cases adding and improving safety features including solar lights, or adding fencing to keep wildlife from roaming onto the airstrip," Mr Vaughan says.

"The continual improvement of remote airstrips is vital to the safety and efficiency of RFDS operations including our aeromedical service which assists more than 48,000 people in SA and the NT each year."

See the full list of airstrips to be upgraded here:

http://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/chester/releases/2017/february/dc021_2017.aspx

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