

# MEDIA RELEASE



2 July 2018

## Regional airports crucial to Northern Australia tourism growth

The Australian Airports Association (AAA) has welcomed a joint standing committee report recognising the importance of regional airports in supporting Northern Australia tourism growth.

*Northern Horizons – Unleashing Our Tourism Potential*, released by the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia last week, recommended funding be provided to a number of regional airports as a matter of urgency to support tourism efforts in northern Australia.

AAA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the report highlighted the importance of ensuring easy air access to the regions to promote tourism and ensure visitor expenditure was further dispersed across the country.

“We’ve seen significant international passenger growth across Australia in recent years and it is essential all levels of government work together with airports to make sure those benefits are enjoyed beyond our capital cities,” Ms Wilkie said.

“New funding to ensure key regional airports can safely and securely facilitate the services required to promote their local tourism markets will deliver lasting benefits to these communities.

“With many regional airports doing it tough, this funding is vital to support the growth of tourism and celebrate some of our country’s most spectacular natural attractions.”

Ms Wilkie also welcomed the committee’s recommendation that the Australian Government work with state and territory governments to implement measures to reduce security costs at regional airports.

“We were pleased to see funding in the recent Federal Budget to support regional airports as they implement new security requirements,” Ms Wilkie.

“This must be an ongoing focus to support local tourism efforts in the regions.”

Most regional airports are owned and operated by local councils, and about 60 per cent lose money simply trying to maintain what is mostly WWII era infrastructure.

The AAA launched its Protect Regional Airports campaign in 2017 and continues to seek government funding for infrastructure upgrades and maintenance at regional airports that do not qualify for the existing Remote Airstrip Upgrade Programme.

ENDS

## **Regional airports identified by the Joint Standing Committee report**

*Northern Horizons – Unleashing Our Tourism Potential* is the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia's Report on the Inquiry into Opportunities and Methods for Stimulating the Tourism Industry in Northern Australia.

In the report, recommendation eight relates to regional airport funding. It states:

*The Committee recommends the Australian Government as a matter of urgency, in partnership with the relevant state or territory government, provide funding to expeditiously upgrade the:*

- *Jabiru and Coinda Airports in Kakadu*
- *Townsville Airport*
- *Connellan (Ayers Rock) Airport*
- *Cooktown Airport*
- *Rockhampton Regional Airport*
- *Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands Airports*
- *Monkey Mia Runway*