

MEDIA RELEASE



30 March 2019

New funding to help keep regional airports open

The Australian Airports Association (AAA) has welcomed the Federal Government's regional airport funding announcement today following the AAA's campaign to Protect Regional Airports.

AAA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the investment of up to \$100 million was wonderful news for people living and working in the regions and would support a sustainable regional aviation network for years to come.

"When we launched the Protect Regional Airports campaign, our regions were already facing significant challenges and airport costs were continuing to rise," Ms Wilkie said.

"The AAA report into regional airports in 2016 found that airports provide essential links for communities, but that many operate at a loss and have reduced capacity for essential capital works.

"This funding will start to address this funding shortfall and assist this essential infrastructure to continue servicing communities into the future.

"This will help keep regional airports safe and compliant, and save some from risk of closure.

"We welcome this commitment to keeping our regions strong and ensuring communities can continue to rely on their airports to connect to loved ones and access essential services and trade."

Projects ranging from runway and taxiway works to animal fencing and safety equipment will be eligible, with the application process to be released later this year and funds available from 1 July.

It will help address the \$170 million aeronautical infrastructure deficit that exists in the regions, with 40 per cent of regional airports facing persistent budget deficits over the next 10 years.

Regional airports are critical to their communities, facilitating 6000 emergency evacuations each year and housing 500 aircraft used for firefighting purposes.

The AAA launched the Protect Regional Airports campaign in 2017 to recognise the important role regional airports play and campaign for sustainable funding.

The campaign called for an extension of the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Programme (RAUP) and the creation of a \$100 million regional airport infrastructure fund for regional airports not classified as remote. The RAUP was extended for four years as part of the 2018-19 Federal budget.

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Protect Regional Airports was also supported by the Regional Aviation Association of Australia, Australian Local Government Association and Australian Logistics Council. Regional Capitals Australia has also supported the need for regional airport funding.

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