

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Guyula to the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics:

Transport

- 1. What is being done to improve regional air travel to prevent disruptions, delays and cancellation to regional services such as Darwin - Gove – Cairns which cause huge disruptions for remote businesses, health appointments and community members?**

The NT Government contributes funding for the maintenance and capital upgrade of 70 remote aerodromes throughout the Northern Territory, and assists with funding the Aerodrome Reporting Officer at 18 aerodromes. Where capital upgrades are undertaken, this is funded on a 50/50 basis with the Australian Government. In 2018-19, \$16.7 million was spent on remote aerodromes.

In relation to air travel, a number of airlines operate scheduled and charter air services in the Northern Territory and these services are generally operated on a commercial basis.

Territory based airlines have advised that they have been experiencing ongoing pilot shortages which has caused disruption to their services, including to Arnhem Land destinations. The pilot shortage being experienced by local airlines is a national issue which is impacting on regional air services throughout Australia. Local airlines advise that they are endeavoring to minimise the impact of this shortage by making changes to its schedule while trying to maintain as many services as possible, and is keeping in contact with stakeholders where flights need to be rescheduled. Airnorth in particular, has advised that it is undertaking an ongoing pilot training and recruitment program with an aim to restore its normal flying program.

- 2. What is happening in relation to investigations into alleged improper conduct by taxi drivers in the Nhulunbuy region?**

In September 2018, Commercial Passenger Vehicle (CPV) Compliance Officers from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics participated in a joint operation with the Nhulunbuy Police to address the concerns raised with alleged taxi driver misconduct.

Since participating in this joint operation, NT Police have advised that CPV drivers in Nhulunbuy have been more compliant with CPV legislation.

Early in 2019 the Department became aware of an allegation that some Nhulunbuy CPV drivers were not transporting members of the Transport Subsidy Scheme, aimed at supporting people with disability, in accordance with the requirement of the scheme. The Department reminded Communications and Dispatch Networks of their obligations to ensure that drivers are aware of their obligations under the Transport Subsidy Scheme. The Department is not aware of any additional allegations of improper conduct by CPV drivers in Nhulunbuy.

Compliance Officers from the Department will continue to travel to Nhulunbuy on an ad-hoc basis throughout the year to carry out on road audits of CPVs and drivers.

In addition, the Department contacted the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Coordinator, Laynhapuy Health and Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation recommending they report any alleged driver misconduct to the Department at the earliest opportunity for investigation.

3. Please advise on roadwork plans for the Central Arnhem Highway for the next financial year, in particular improvements from Nhulunbuy to the Ramingining turn off to assist with accessibility to the homelands and reduce living costs as well as encourage business development.

A total of \$18.82 million has been allocated for roadworks on the Central Arnhem Road in 2019-20. The work comprises:

- \$11.25M for the Central Arnhem Road Upgrade as part of the jointly funded program with the Australian Government;
- \$4.91M upgrade to sealed standard between chainage 250.4km to 254.5km;
- \$2.66 million for cyclical maintenance; gravel resheet; and culvert and floodway upgrades at various locations in the Gove Region.

Initial planning is underway for the Central Arnhem Road program of works, including the development of a corridor investment strategy to determine priorities for this expenditure. Community consultation will be an essential part of the planning process, as well as engagement with Northern Land Council and Traditional Owners prior to road sealing as the majority of the Central Arnhem Road is located on Aboriginal Land. Initial meetings have commenced with some stakeholders.