



**Army Community Assistance Program  
27 October 1998**

**Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders):** I cite a positive story which does not involve my district but which deserves acknowledgment. Army personnel have transformed the remote Aboriginal community of Oak Valley, in the north-west of our State. When they left this community, its transport, health and supporting facilities had been upgraded and improved. Work included reconstructing a 1 200 metre airfield to an all weather, day and night strip, building roads, landscaping, constructing a football oval and providing health services. The Army also conducted health courses and training in backhoe and semitrailer operation. These are legacies that will continue to benefit the community long after the Army has left the area.

The Oak Valley project is an excellent example of how the Army is actively involved in projects that provide both tangible and intangible benefits to the community in the longterm. The Army is doing the work as part of a 1998 training schedule. The project comes under the ATSIC Army Community Assistance Program and Oak Valley is one of 10 communities which was accepted for inclusion. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission met material costs estimated at \$1.9 million, while the Army provided the manpower and expertise to carry the various projects to fruition.

A combination of Army units was involved in management and construction with a number of other units being involved in contracting work, primarily the Army Reserve. Projects of this kind are an extremely valuable and practical training experience for Army Reserve personnel. Between 60 and 90 Army personnel were on site at any one time. Reconstruction of the 1 200 metre airstrip included installation of pilot-operated lighting, which allows Royal Flying Doctor Service aircraft to land at all hours. The rebuilt airstrip can now accept aircraft as large as the Hercules C130. Six roads in the community that were bush tracks have been built and are now eight metre wide, well delineated, all-weather roads. The project included construction of three houses by a local contractor.

Other Army work included landscaping and revegetation to help provide a more attractive environment. A 30 000 litre water tank has been built, and it is fed from a local bore. The rubbish tip has been fenced, community toilets built, a community football field established and security lighting provided within the community centre around the shop, administration buildings, workshop and children's play area so that children can play outdoors on hot nights. A new school building has replaced the two caravans that were providing school facilities for up to 80 students. The Army has left members of a community whose daily lives are benefiting from easier mobility and greater knowledge of preventive health measures.

This exercise is only one of many of which the Army and Army Reserve can be justly proud, and I am delighted to see our Army resources employed in such constructive projects in times of peace. I commend the efforts of our Army to the House. It would be wonderful if such constructive work were being undertaken by other armies around the world. When one sees the TV news at night, one is grateful for where we live. We are indeed a lucky country.