



ELLISTON
19 April 1994

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I wish to inform members of the House about the outstanding achievement of the small community of Elliston on the West Coast of Eyre Peninsula in the electorate of Flinders. This small community of 250 residents in the Elliston township, with only 1 400 in the district council area, recognised its need for a suitable all weather aerodrome and set about building one of its own. While it is not yet finished, the major earthworks have been completed. The people of Elliston recognised that to help their local economy they had to increase the potential for tourists to visit their town and district. They recognised that this was one of the only ways to help create employment in the town and give them any hope of retaining their young people. An all weather airstrip will bring tourists to Elliston and this part of the West Coast of Eyre Peninsula because it is unique as a tourist destination.

It is a very picturesque destination, a collection of immense cliffs of brilliant colours with a wild, unpredictable and often raging sea, and its remoteness is timeless. It is truly a tourist destination of world class. However, the airstrip was also seen as making it possible to increase the commercial activity for Elliston. The community can see that an airport will allow local business access to the outside world. An airstrip will allow various products from the sea, such as rock lobster and abalone, to be flown out of Elliston direct rather than be transported by road. With very limited resources, the community set about the huge task of building a modern airstrip in a district noted for its undulating sandhills and limestone outcrops.

Work commenced in November 1993 when drilling and blasting operations began removing the rocky outcrops. About 15 000 cubic metres of rock was blasted and work on bringing in filling started on 14 January this year. The carting of filling was completed on 28 February in what was one huge voluntary working bee. In all, the voluntary labour totalled over 5 500 man hours. Many local farmers left their farm operations for nearly 2½ weeks at a stretch to help with this community project. Given the poor season that these farmers experienced last year and the low commodity prices and high import costs that they have had to bear, this has been a marvellous example of community support.

In the huge earthmoving operation, 14 tiptrucks (12 of them owned by local members of the community) were used to shift the filling. Three bulldozers were used to push up the filling and level it at the site, while a water tanker and tractor were also provided by the community. Four articulated loaders were loaned by the community and made short work of loading the trucks in an operation which started at daylight from Monday to Friday for four weeks. These same farmers had properties to run, stock to attend to and their own concerns for the future. However, they left all that behind for the sake of their community. It truly demonstrates the enterprise and resourcefulness of people who live in these communities.

The work undertaken by the community has meant that the cost of building the Elliston aerodrome has been reduced in real terms from \$450 000 to approximately \$130 000. There is much to do. The runway still has to be rubbled, and an unloading and parking apron is yet to be built with lighting and fencing to be installed. Funding for these facilities is still to be resourced. Members would acknowledge the huge effort made by this small community to provide it with an airstrip. Once this facility is completed, the Elliston community will have a mantle of safety that it has never had before. Night or day, a flying doctor or ambulance aircraft will be able to fly into the region to lift out anyone requiring medical evacuation as a result of illness or injury.

The airstrip will mean that the State's medical retrieval team can fly out anyone unfortunate enough to warrant such a mercy mission. This is a mantle of safety that many other communities have already and take for granted. It is a mantle of safety which, when the airstrip is completed, will be valued by the people of Elliston and its district. I am pleased to report that my admiration for these hard working and resourceful people is shared by many members of this House.