

Question on notice no. 98

Portfolio question number: SQ24-001227

2024-25 Supplementary budget estimates

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts Portfolio**

Senator Susan McDonald: asked the Airservices Australia on 4 November 2024—

Senator McDONALD: Good evening. I won't be long. I want to turn to northern Australia airfields. Have you got any data on the number of flights that have been unable to land because of weather?

Mr Curran: That's not a statistic I have to hand. To explain some of the complexity there, it would very much depend on the aerodrome—

Senator McDONALD: Could I be more specific to help you?

Mr Curran: Thank you, yes.

Senator McDONALD: Mount Isa is the largest inland city in northern Queensland, and I've had the joy of, on several occasions, being turned around at the airstrip and having to get in my car in Townsville and drive back to Mount Isa, along with medical specialists, conference attendees and families. Qantas tells me it's because Airservices has not installed the suitable equipment at Mount Isa that would allow them to do instrument landings for low-visibility approaches.

Senator McDONALD: Alright. Just to speed up time for the next estimates, could you do that specifically for Mount Isa and could you also take a look across northern Australia at airfields, particularly ones with high traffic, that are going to have a significant impact on the population—hospitals, those sorts of things—when aircraft aren't able to land there, whether it be from Brisbane, Townsville or Cairns, particularly when it's over a couple of days. It's a really significant issue, and I am surprised that in 2024 we're still doing this.

Mr Curran: We'll take that on notice. On the locations, we've pulled up the data on Mount Isa. There are three types of instrument navigation there, but perhaps I'll take that on notice rather than try to go into the technicalities of what those instrument nav aids are. I think Qantas may have been referring to an instrument landing system, and the change between what's there now and an instrument landing system is quite significant in

terms of cost and investment. We'd need to understand exactly what Qantas' perspective on that was.

Answer —

Please find answer attached

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Committee Question Number: 98

Departmental Question Number: SQ24-001227

Division/Agency Name: Agency - Airservices Australia

Hansard Reference: Spoken, Page No. 119 (04 November 2024)

Topic: Airservices Australia – Northern Australia navigation infrastructure

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Answer:

Mount Isa aerodrome is equipped with instrument approach procedures called Required Navigation Performance (RNP) that have vertical and lateral guidance which allow aircraft to arrive at Mount Isa when cloud is more than approximately 500-600 feet above ground level. The Qantas Group also have RNP-AR (Authorisation Required) instrument approach

procedures at Mount Isa for use by suitably equipped aircraft which allow these aircraft to land at Mount Isa when cloud is no more than approximately 400-500 above ground level, however Airservices understands that not all Qantas Group aircraft operating into Mount Isa currently are equipped/approved to fly these approaches.

An Instrument Landing System (ILS) approach at Mount Isa may offer some improvement on the existing RNP approaches (i.e. may allow for landings when cloud is lower than that permitted by the existing RNP procedures). However given the significant investment required for installation of an ILS, it is typically only warranted for locations that are routinely impacted by low cloud. During the period 1 November 2023 – 31 October 2024, a total of 11 flights out of 2225 flights diverted from Mount Isa (noting that not all of these diversions may have been due to low cloud).