



BUDGET BOOST BRINGS BRAND NEW LIFEFLIGHT BASE TO SUNSHINE COAST

News / Business aviation, Finance



LifeFlight will build a new helicopter and jet base on the Sunshine Coast, following the announcement of more than \$586 million in additional Government funding over the next ten years, for the state-wide aeromedical service. The record funding arrangement gives certainty to Queenslanders that for the next decade, the vital search, rescue and aeromedical services provided by LifeFlight will continue to operate, bringing equity of health care to people across the state, from its multiple bases. \$18.63 million has been allocated to building a new base within the Aerospace Precinct at Sunshine Coast Airport.

Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk commented: "Our government is committed to providing free, world class health care no matter where you live in Queensland.

LifeFlight Australia Chair Honourable Jim Elder, said: "This announcement is welcome news for LifeFlight and the communities we serve every day and we thank the Palaszczuk Government for this commitment. \$18 million is a significant sum for a profit-for-purpose organisation such as ours, which often relies on grants from multiple sources, sponsorship and community fundraising to realise large projects which directly assist us in coming to the aid of Queenslanders. So many generous donors, our Regional Vice Patron, Mrs Joceyln Walker, our Regional Advisory Committee led by Mr Brendon Murray and local businesses worked together a couple of years ago to make our current base more modern and efficient. The renovated Roy & Nola Thompson Hangar will absolutely continue to support the sustainability of our operations well into the future. "

The purpose-built aeromedical hub, specifically designed for the increasing demands of the region that covers the Sunshine Coast, Wide Bay, South Burnett and Burnett regions, will future-proof LifeFlight's aeromedical service for generations to come.?

"We are fortunate to have a world-class dedicated, agile and reliable helicopter rescue service for seriously ill and injured Queenslanders," said Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment Cameron Dick.

LifeFlight CEO Mr Ashley van de Velde OAM stated: "When completed, this base will give us the flexibility to accommodate various combinations of aircraft from the LifeFlight fleet, depending on the needs of the state's aeromedical network. It may be two choppers and a jet; it might be multiple helicopters. Many of the pioneers of the original Sunshine Coast service, who remain actively engaged and interested in the service today including former Sunshine Coast Rescue Helicopter Service CEO, Mr Jim Campbell who along with Hayden Kenny OAM, Rod Forrester, Bill Freeman and Roy Thompson AC are Life Members of LifeFlight Australia, and we acknowledge the decades of dedicated service to their communities and to this service. "

The hangar will have appropriate space and support facilities to give LifeFlight the versatility to, if operationally required, immediately house two AW139 RACQ LifeFlight Rescue helicopters and one Challenger 604 Air Ambulance jet. The base will include crew accommodation and other improved facilities to make 24-hour response more efficient, larger engineering areas, direct Ambulance access to the hangar, more space for support and administration staff and a Visitor Centre to allow for even more engagement between LifeFlight and the local community.?

LifeFlight is deeply connected to the entire region serviced out of our Sunshine Coast and Bundaberg bases. The roots of the entire service can be traced back to 1979, when the rescue chopper fired up for its first mission from a base at the Big Cow on the Bruce Highway. Next month marks 10 years since the organisation and the Sunshine Coast Helicopter Rescue Service merged.?

Ashley van de Velde also highlighted the work of two other Life Members – the late Des Scanlan who established the original Sunshine Coast Helicopter Service and the late Don Moffatt AM who up until recently remained a driving force in the region.

Hon Jim Elder singled out Life Member and long-term philanthropic supporter of the service, Mr Roy Thompson by confirming that the Roy & Nola Thompson LifeFlight Hangar housing our current operations would be retained by the service.

Sunshine Coast Airport is helping guarantee the future of LifeFlight in the region, with generous terms on a 20-plus year lease of a parcel of land large enough to build the current planned base and allow room for expansion in the decades ahead. Construction of the new base will take approximately 11 months and should begin in early 2024, following a tender process.?

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