

# Airstrip Upgrade to RFDS 24 Hour Standard At Gnaraloo Station

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## AIRSTRIP UPGRADE TO RFDS 24 HOUR STANDARD AT GASCOYNE REGION WORLD RENOWNED TOURISM AND EXTREME SPORTS MECCA

Gnaraloo Station has secured two contributory grants from the Australian and State Government for a proposed upgrade of the Gnaraloo Airstrip to allow the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) to access the area on a 24/7 emergency basis.

“Gnaraloo is an isolated and remote location and at best, depending on the condition of the unsealed road from time to time, it is a three-hour round trip between Gnaraloo and Carnarvon over heavy corrugations,” Gnaraloo station owner Paul Richardson said.

“The road may become impassable after seasonal weather events such as cyclones, flooding or heavy rains. The potential inaccessibility of Gnaraloo by air could prove fatal in the event of the need for an emergency evacuation of a seriously injured person. So the upgrade of essential infrastructure like the airstrip is an important development for the community.”

He said the RFDS was not able to access the site on a number of occasions during 2006 and 2007 due to the existing Gnaraloo Airstrip falling short of its required standards.

Gnaraloo Station is a mix of pastoral operations and tourism. It is frequented by day-use, overnight and visitors to the Ningaloo Reef who stay for extended periods of time. Extreme water sports has made Gnaraloo world renowned.

Karen Hattingh, the Environmental Scientist who assisted Gnaraloo Station with its Grant applications for the airstrip upgrade, said it is not surprising that there have been a number of serious medical emergencies at Gnaraloo given that extreme surfing, windsurfing and kite-surfing occur at ‘Tombstones’ and surrounding breaks on powerful large waves in high intensity winds and big swells which break over a shallow reef of live coral. She said that surfers travel from around the world to ride the challenging breaks.

“Visitor activities also include boating and fishing (from shore, cliffs, rocks and spearfishing) and there have been a number of accidents and serious injuries sustained as a result of these activities” Ms Hattingh said.

During the 2007/08 financial year, Gnaraloo Station submitted two successful Grant Applications under the State Government’s Regional Airports Development Scheme (RADS) and the Australian Government’s Remote Aerodrome Safety Program (RASP). The Department for Planning and Infrastructure administers RADS and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government administers RASP.

Gnaraloo Station will also make financial and in-kind contributions to the proposed works.

In March 2008, Gnaraloo Station applied under the Gascoyne Regional Development Scheme Round 8 for a further contributory grant to support the significant costs of the proposed airstrip upgrade works. The Gascoyne Development Commission is expected to announce successful Grant Applications under the scheme in September 2008.

“The Gnaraloo Airstrip is located outside the Gnaraloo pastoral lease and two Gnaraloo tourism leases in what will become public land under the State Government’s 2015 Land Exclusion Initiative. The proposed airstrip upgrade will allow public access to an essential community health service,” Karen Hattingh said.

Paul Richardson said the airstrip upgrade was an important proposed initiative. He acknowledged and highlighted the support Gnaraloo Station has received for the proposed work from the:

- Royal Flying Doctor Service
- Shire of Carnarvon
- Gascoyne Development Commission
- WA Department of Health – Gascoyne Division
- Carnarvon Hospital
- WA Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC)

• Army (Pilbara Regiment)

• Australian Customs Service. Upgrade works will commence in the 2008/09 financial year.

Works will be undertaken in stages and is scheduled for completion by December 2009.

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