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Opening of CASA's New Brisbane Office Friday 14 November 2008

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Local Government,
Leader of the House,
Federal Member for Grayndler

It is a pleasure to be here today.

Since becoming a Minister almost 12 months ago I have been involved in a number of exciting and important milestones for Australia's aviation industry.

I have announced the development of Australia's first ever National Aviation Policy; I have turned the first sod at Melbourne Airport's major upgrade; and I have helped unveil the new Qantas A380, named after Australia's greatest female aviator, Nancy Bird Walton. These milestones are only part of the enormous amount of activity currently taking place within the aviation industry.

Opening CASA's new operational headquarters is another important milestone. This is an exciting day for CASA because the 130 staff here in Brisbane now have a new home in a state-of-the-art, environmentally friendly building. Bringing the Air Transport Operations group and the General Aviation Operations group together in Brisbane in 2006 was a good move by Bruce Byron. It brings CASA's front-line operational staff closer to industry in an area experiencing rapid growth in passenger carrying operations.

CASA has an important and complex role working with industry to achieve good safety outcomes and setting and enforcing safety standards. And, nothing, I repeat nothing, is as important in aviation as safety. Safety must underpin everything the industry does. Indeed safety will be right at the heart of the Draft National Aviation Policy or Green Paper which will be made public shortly.

To return to today's activities, I'd like to say that I am pleased to be here in the company of Bruce Byron. As you all know, Bruce is soon to step down as CEO. Bruce has been working with myself and my Department to choose his successor, which we will announce in the near future. In the mean time, I am delighted Bruce has agreed to continue in his current role for a short time until the Government formally decides on CASA's new CEO.

I am particularly pleased to be able to publicly thank Bruce on behalf of the Federal Government for his work. It is largely through Bruce's efforts that we are here today to open this new building which brings CASA's front line staff closer to operators. A new, environmentally friendly, purpose-built headquarters symbolises a new and re-invigorated CASA.

Bruce has been instrumental in encouraging a more cooperative approach to working with the aviation community to maintain and enhance aviation safety. Bruce - Yours will be big shoes to fill.

Ladies and gentlemen, Australia has a proud reputation of having world class transport safety agencies. You, along with the Australian Transport Safety Bureau and Airservices Australia are recognised internationally for your skill and expertise. It's a point I made a few weeks ago in Singapore when I addressed a major Asian aviation conference. I am sure that this new operational headquarters will further enhance CASA's ability to make continuous improvements and ensure air safety for all Australians.

It now gives me great pleasure to declare CASA's new Brisbane office officially open.