



Concurrent Meeting on 20 March 2025
**Darwin International Airport Community Consultation Group
& Planning Coordination Forum**

Web Report

held at Tindal Room, Airport Development Group Office & Microsoft Teams

1. Welcome and apologies

Chair Chris Bigg welcomed members to the meeting, and apologies were noted. The Summary Record and Meeting Report of the CCG meeting on 14 November 2024 had been previously settled by circulation.

2. Darwin Airport / Airport Development Group

Airport Development Group (ADG) overview

Tony Edmondstone spoke about the significant time involved in developing the new airline routes that have recently been announced. These typically take many years to come to fruition and the challenge now is to ensure these new routes are well utilised so that they are successful.

Tony went on to speak about a variety of other matters, including:

- ADG has recently finalised its next 5-year airline agreement with Qantas.
- ADG is committed to general aviation access, including the expansion of aircraft parking facilities at Darwin Airport.
- Work continues on the redevelopment of the hotels, with the purpose of building tourism through better accommodation products to entice more visitors to the NT, therefore increasing flights and lowering airfares.
- Tennant Creek Airport is now becoming a strategically important airport for the NT, in relation to both the resource and tourism sectors.
- A new cohort of students has begun this year at ADG's Indigenous Training Academy. A number of graduating students from previous years have transitioned into various parts of ADG's business.
- ADG is one of two main parties that has shown interest in acquiring Ayers Rock Resort.

Aviation Development and Operations

Rob Porter shared an update on aviation development, terminal and airfield operations at Darwin Airport. He began by showing a short video of the recent announcement of AirAsia Malaysia launching direct flights between Darwin and Kuala Lumpur, commencing 27 June 2025.

Aviation development

- Qantas' new service between Darwin and Singapore will commence 30 March 2025 with more available seats than originally planned due to up-gauging of the aircraft.
- Qantas' seasonal service between Darwin and Canberra will return in mid-2025.

- Qantas has increased frequency on the route between Darwin and Cairns (replacing Jetstar).
- In April, Airnorth will commence direct flights between Alice Springs and Cairns.
- Further international and domestic route announcements are anticipated in 2025.
- The 'aviation' portfolio within the NT Government has moved from Tourism NT to the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations. This should provide a broadened perspective covering liveability (outbound), freight and business travel.
- The NT Government's Territory Aviation Attraction Scheme (TAAS) continues to be a critical component of current discussions with airlines seeking to operate new routes to the NT.

There was general discussion amongst CCG members about the opportunities of greater inbound and outbound connectivity to South-East Asia.

Terminal operations

- The redevelopment of the terminal continues. Roll'd (food and beverage) opened in December and the new large travel retail store is due to open around Easter.
- Upgrades to the terminal forecourt are ongoing, including the installation of undercover walkways and realigned vehicle traffic flows providing a safer and smoother customer experience.
- Recent customer experience events and community engagement in the terminal have included the annual lion dance performance to celebrate Chinese New Year, and an interactive pop-up display for Valentine's Day.
- ADG continues its focus on inclusive travel and is committed to enhancing accessibility at Darwin Airport. Recent initiatives include: the ongoing implementation of the nationally recognised Sunflower Program for hidden disabilities; a new adult change room is now operational; a recent assessment has been undertaken against the Disability Discrimination Act; terminal wayfinding and messaging is being improved.

Airside operations

- The operations team continues to work closely with Defence and its contractors on the runway resurfacing project, which is due for completion in April 2025. The completion of this project signals that the airport is back to normal capacity.
- The floodlighting on the air transport apron has been upgraded to meet compliance standards, with upgrades now progressing to the eastern apron.
- The western general aviation (GA) apron is being expanded, and once complete will provide 28 additional parking bays for GA aircraft.

Peter O'Hagan queried whether the runway project drainage affects Rapid Creek. The project includes significant detention drainage that holds the water and then slowly releases it, to not impact on the local creek system.

Terminal landscaping project

Rob Porter followed with an update on the progress of the terminal landscaping project, including imagery of the first sections that have been completed. Works will continue over the next few years

Peter O'Hagan reiterated his comments from the previous meeting raising concern about the potential for seeds from non-native species entering the Rapid Creek corridor.

Hotels redevelopment update

Tristan Cribb began by summarising the significant amount of redevelopment works that have been completed so far at the hotels. The driver for undertaking these works are:

- investing in better tourism products in the NT to attract tourists
- setting a new standard to encourage other hotels to be invested in, creating competition in the market
- attracting other businesses to Darwin Airport through the vibrant and attractive precinct that's being created.

There is a long list of hotel upgrades in progress, expected to take 18 months to complete. These include the construction of 8 luxury 2-bedroom villas at the Mercure and the refurbishment of Mercure blocks 1 & 2, as well as the upgrade of the Novotel restaurant.

Planning matters

Victoria Moore advised that the Darwin Airport 2023 Master Plan is still under review by the Minister, with ADG hopeful the Master Plan will be finalised soon. ADG continues to provide comment on development applications off-airport and participates in pre-development briefings coordinated by NT Government, as required.

Indigenous & community projects

Rychelle Vines shared an update on ADG's Indigenous and community projects, including:

- ADG's Indigenous Advisory Committee (est. 2022) guides the development and implementation of ADG's Indigenous Engagement Strategy.
- ADG's latest Indigenous Engagement Report (May 2023 – June 2024) can be downloaded [here](#).
- In 2025, 7 new trainees enrolled in the Indigenous Training Academy taking the total number of students currently undertaking training to 17. Trainees are undertaking qualifications in Hospitality, Business, Electrotechnology, Cookery and IT. ADG is working to replicate the training program at Alice Springs Airport.
- ADG has exceeded its initial Indigenous procurement target, with 5% of all vendors engaged by ADG since October 2023 being Indigenous-owned businesses.
- ADG's Community Engagement Strategy supports tourism events, ADG's community Giving Program, ADG's Workplace Giving Program, stakeholder events and initiatives, and community engagement initiatives.
- ADG has commenced a new scholarship with Charles Darwin University.
- Round 3 of ADG's Community Giving Program will open on 15 May 2025.

Peter O'Hagan shared that Rapid Creek Landcare Group had been a recipient of Round 2 of ADG's Community Giving Program. With their grant, Rapid Creek Landcare Group arranged a print run of their *Mangrove Celebration 2024* booklet, about the mangrove species found in Lower Rapid Creek. The booklet can be viewed [here](#).

3. Department of Defence / RAAF Base Darwin

RAAF Base Darwin operations

WGCDR Lauren Guest advised:

- RAAF Base Darwin is celebrating its 85th anniversary this year.
- The peak military exercise season will be held between May and August, with smaller exercises extending through to the end of the year.
- The 14th rotation of the Marine Rotational Force–Darwin is now arriving.

- Defence's review of aerodrome security and managing intrusions at RAAF Darwin / Darwin Airport will commence shortly.

RAAF Base Darwin runway project

WGCDR Guest went on to provide a final project update for the runway resurfacing project, which is almost complete. The airfield ground lighting is now being upgraded, as is a full pavement reconstruction of the bomber replenishment area (due to be completed in time for this year's main exercise period).

Air Traffic Control

Nothing relevant to report.

Base Management

Nothing relevant to report.

Estate Planning

Nothing relevant to report.

4. Airservices Australia

Hannah Johnson advised that from November 2024 to February 2025 there was one aircraft noise complaint received by Airservices. The complaint related to helicopter movements over Leanyer and is being investigated.

5. NT Government – Lands Planning

Doug Lesh spoke of the NT Government's implementation of the NASF guidelines, with work underway on the application of Guideline B (windshear and turbulence) for Runway 36 at Darwin Airport / RAAF Base Darwin.

It was noted that the recently announced Territory Coordinator Bill will provide strong coordination regarding major investments and projects.

6. NT Government – Transport Infrastructure Planning

Chandan Kalase shared that the Transport Infrastructure division will provide an important role in the Chief Minister's initiatives of connecting the Territory and tourism destination connectivity.

7. City of Darwin

Doug Fotheringham announced that City of Darwin is hosting a two-day program called Darwin Fusion 2025 on 22-23 May. It will include the 2025 International Relations Conference and the 2025 Darwin International Trade Show.

City of Darwin council elections are scheduled to be held later this year.

8. Community Consultation Group member issues

Tony Edmondstone shared with members the results of a recent Darwin airfare analysis undertaken by ADG. The analysis compared 2019 pre-covid airfares with current airfares. The results found that the current price per kilometre is not materially different from 2019

when compared to other city pairs, if tickets are booked early. However, the difference is that last minute fares to/from Darwin become very expensive.

Tony Edmondstone led Community Consultation Group members in farewelling Chris Bigg who is stepping down after 5 years in the role as Independent Chair. Tony and members expressed their heartfelt thanks and best wishes to Chris, acknowledging his significant involvement with ADG.

9. Planning Coordination Forum

Planning Coordination Forum members agreed there was no need for a separate closed session following the Community Consultation Group meeting.

Remaining 2025 meeting dates: Thursday 17 July, Thursday 6 November