



DARWIN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT COMMUNITY CONSULTATION GROUP

Web Report No 31 – 4 March 2021

held at

Board Room, Wirraway Business Centre, Darwin International Airport

1. Welcome and apologies

Chair Chris Bigg welcomed members to the 31st meeting of the Community Consultation Group. The Summary Record and Meeting Report of the meeting on 5 November 2020 had been previously settled by circulation. A number of new attendees were welcomed to the group.

2. Darwin Airport – CEO

Tony Edmondstone spoke of recent developments at Darwin Airport, including:

- Airport Development Group (parent company of Darwin Airport) plans to create a world class destination resort in Darwin, with the redevelopment of the Mercure Darwin Airport Resort and Novotel Darwin Airport Hotel. The market focus will be families and couples. The existing water tower will be wrapped in a Larrakia artwork and illuminated at night, creating an iconic landmark.
- Passenger numbers have continued to increase and are currently at 70% of usual domestic traffic.
- The airport is bullish in its predictions for visitors to Darwin in the upcoming dry season as Australians are unable to travel internationally.
- Airport Development Group is supportive of a speedy resolution regarding the detainees being held in a federal facility at Darwin Airport.

3. Darwin Airport – Property & Terminal

Property

Ross Baynes outlined the relocation of the proposed Bagot Road Development to the intersection of Sabine Road / McMillans Rd / Osgood Dve. This move follows thorough consultation with community and indigenous groups. All indigenous groups in proximity of the proposed development either withdrew their objections or provided support based on the alternative location. Airport Development Group has an in-principle agreement with the NT Government (DIPL) to upgrade the Sabine Road / McMillans Rd intersection to an all movements signalised intersection.

The hotel redevelopment is in the planning phase and may include upgrades to the existing accommodation, the addition of a new lagoon pool, poolside restaurant and extensive tropical gardens. Six of the existing bungalows are currently undergoing refurbishment.

The airport plans to improve Henry Wrigley Drive (and associated intersections) between the Rapid Creek bridge and the short stay car park. This will include realigning Sir Norman Brearley Drive to the southern side of the Novotel Darwin Airport Hotel. Covered pedestrian paths are also being considered. These enhancements to the airport's road network are

anticipated to commence in this year's dry season, and once complete will provide seamless, safer access to the terminal and surrounding precincts.

Airport Development Group's recently established Investment Division is preparing a proposal for a large scale mixed product fuel storage facility at East Arm. A jet fuel pipeline from East Arm and the airport continues to be pursued.

Terminal

Adrian Massey highlighted recent commercial developments at Darwin Airport, including:

- A new online retail offering was launched in November 2020, to further support Darwin Airport's retailers and precinct tenants – <https://onsale.ntairports.com.au/>
- Most domestic retail outlets in the terminal are now open and trading well.
- The airport is investing significantly in digital advertising screens to showcase great experiences in the NT.
- Face masks are now stocked in vending machines in the terminal. 3700 masks have been sold since it became mandatory in January for face masks to be worn inside airports and on-board aircraft.
- A Ground Transport strategy is currently being developed.

4. Darwin Airport – Aviation Development

Allan Woo provided a briefing on Darwin Airport's passenger recovery:

- Passenger numbers continue to trend in a positive manner. The recent COVID-19 hotspots over the festive period impacted airlines' forward bookings resulting in passenger numbers stagnating in December/January.
- Seat capacity on airlines servicing Darwin is up 72% on 2020.
- Darwin's domestic air connectivity is positive, with airline services having been re-established to most of the ports that were serviced pre-pandemic.
- Qantas will begin operating Embraer E190s between Adelaide – Alice Springs – Darwin from mid-2021, providing greater frequency and more choice for residents.
- 24-hour operations are set to resume at Darwin Airport in late-March, with Qantas and Jetstar shifting their Melbourne services to after midnight arrivals/departures. This is a good sign of recovery.
- Repatriation flights are expected to continue into Darwin throughout 2021.
- Airport Development Group now publishes a quarterly aviation update. Subscribe here: <http://eepurl.com/hrakMf>

5. Darwin Airport – Operations

Peter Pallot explained that Darwin Airport has recently received accreditation from Airports Council International for health measures and practices that are in place at the airport to combat COVID-19. These measures are in line with international recommendations and industry best practices.

A terminal master plan is currently being developed to create a safe and more convenient terminal for passengers and visitors. A particular area of focus at the moment is an upgrade to the check-in area to include self-serve check-in kiosks and automatic bag drop units.

DIA and Defence have commenced work on a very complex project to relocate the hook cable pits for the main runway. Both DIA and Defence emphasised that the cooperation between parties has been excellent.

Darwin Airport's Disability Access Facilitation Plan has recently been rewritten. The accessible car parking bays in front of the terminal have been relocated to provide better access to the terminal, and there is now a direct phone contact for assistance. The plan can be downloaded from the airport's website: <https://www.darwinairport.com.au/when-you-arrive#special-assistance>).

Community member Dawn Lawrie strongly recommended that travelators be considered in the terminal master plan (as they were for the Terminal Expansion Project) to provide better accessibility between levels. Dawn also reiterated previous comments she had made regarding the challenges of accessibility to reach the ticket machines at the boom gates upon entry and exit to the car parks.

6. Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Megan Thomas and Callan Langlands advised that the Australian Government continues to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on the aviation industry and its longer-term sustainability, including opportunities for reform. In late 2020, the Australian Government sought input from the aviation sector and the public to inform a five-year plan to strengthen and grow the aviation sector beyond COVID-19. The plan will be released in the first half of 2021.

While COVID remains a key challenge, the Department is returning its focus to 'business as usual' activities, such as the recommencement of the National Airports Safeguarding work. The Aviation Access Forum will next meet in May 2021, and an update will be given at the next CCG meeting.

Tony Edmondstone shared two observations regarding the future sustainability of the aviation sector: the need for a single approach to domestic borders; and the opening of outbound international flights to fill empty seats.

7. Defence – RAAF Base operations

SQNLDR Michael Moroney and SQNLDR Craig Sedgman informed the group of operational matters at RAAF Base Darwin:

- COVID-19 repatriation flights continue to be processed through the RAAF Base.
- The 2021 contingent of the Marine Rotational Force – Darwin (MRF-D) has begun to arrive in Darwin.
- A number of military exercises are scheduled for 2021, including Arnhem Thunder, Rogue Ambush (previously High Sierra) and Talisman Sabre (predominantly east coast of Australia).
- Construction works continue at RAAF Base Darwin, including the Air 7000 project for P8 aircraft, the aircraft arrestor system upgrade, BRA extension, fuel tanks and solar farm. SQNLDR Michael Moroney reiterated the collaborative approach between Defence and DIA on the aircraft arrestor project.
- On 31 March 2021, the RAAF will mark 100 years of service to Australia. A City of Darwin Freedom of Entry Parade is scheduled for 2 June. RAAF and DIA are working together to create a display to mark the centenary. 2021 also marks the 80th anniversary of Australian Air Force Cadets.

8. Defence – Air Traffic Control

SQNLDR Martin Ferguson thanked DIA for their involvement and assistance with the development and construction of the new air traffic control tower. The scaffolding around the new tower has now been dismantled. This has improved visibility from the tower allowing aircraft procedures to almost return to normal, along with faster processing of arriving and departing aircraft.

9. Defence – Base Manager

John Cox summarised the two divisions of Defence's Estate & Infrastructure Group – Infrastructure and Service Delivery. The Service Delivery division is responsible for supporting activities on base.

Defence's 'planned' works budget is aimed to be \$8 billion over the next 10 years, with just over \$2 billion currently committed. This is an extensive investment into both Defence and the NT community. In addition to these capital investments, Defence has contributed to over \$4M in stimulus investment post-COVID, including an additional tranche of immediate works scheduled for release to small-medium enterprises.

RAAF Base Darwin is undergoing a mid-term refresh, with maintenance of older facilities.

10. Airservices

Fiona Lawton summarised the noise complainant data received by Airservices in 2020 for Darwin Airport. In total there were 8 individual complaints, an increase from 4 in 2019. In comparison to other Australian capital city airports, this number is very low. These complainants related to three main issues:

- General aviation traffic – over Leanyer, caused by visibility restrictions in the existing air traffic control tower, during the construction of the new tower.
- Night movements – air transport aircraft operating in the early hours of the morning and early morning circuits prior to departure, a requirement for pilot recency.
- Military operations – either military or civilian aircraft operating in the support of military exercises.

11. Proposed concurrent Community Consultation Group (CCG) and Planning Coordination Forum (PCF) meeting

Chris Bigg outlined the proposal to hold the Community Consultation Group and Planning Coordination Forum meetings concurrently (rather than as two separate meetings held over two days). The benefits being that many of the members attend both meetings and much of the content presented at both meetings is the same. It is intended that the first concurrent CCG and PCF meeting will be Thursday 29 July 2021. Details to be provided closer to the date.

12. Community Consultation Group member issues

Chris Bigg recognised Lesley Alford's recent resignation from the CCG. Lesley has been a member of the CCG since it was first formed in 2011.

Post meeting note: Email from Lesley Alford: "... could you pass on my farewell and thank the committee members for all their work over the years, it has been an enjoyable committee to be a part of."

13. General business

No matters raised.

Remaining 2021 meeting dates: Thursday 29 July, Thursday 4 November.