



## **-DARWIN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT COMMUNITY CONSULTATION GROUP**

### **Report on Meeting No 14 – 2 July 2015**

held at

Pandanus Room, Airport Management Centre, Darwin International Airport

#### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

Independent Chairman Daryl Manzie welcomed members to the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the DIA Community Consultation Group. Apologies were noted.

#### **2. Air Service Developments Retail and Ground Transport**

Jim Parashos reported on Darwin airline services including:

- year to date passenger numbers are soft in line with the Australian economy and other airports;
- service changes for various airlines;
- airline market outlook which has limited growth prospects; and
- DIA focus on sustaining existing air services and working with airlines to develop new markets.

It was commented that the number of passenger seats near Gate 5 needed to increase. Jim responded that terminal seating was still being tweaked and that additional seating had been ordered.

For terminal retail and airport ground transport Jim outlined:

- new retail offerings completed since May 2014;
- the Green Bean, Two Brews and News Travel International outlets which will open in August;
- terminal digital advertising initiative;
- message space project to provide a creative platform to showcase the Territory and provide a focus for welcoming convention delegates etc; and
- ground transport objectives for the next 12 months are upgrading the carpark equipment, relocating the car rental car park to the eastern end of the terminal. Relocation of the car rental car park will significantly reduce internal airport traffic.

#### **3. Expansion of Rydges Resort**

Paul Cosker detailed the expansion of room capacity at Rydges Resort and outlined:

- the Resort is consistently running near capacity and needs additional rooms,
- proposed expansion is 108 rooms in 3 adjacent 2 storey buildings with 10 existing resort cottages relocated within the site;
- construction method will minimise ground disturbance;
- erosion and sediment control plans are in place; and
- emphasis on soft landscaping to minimise additional paved areas with new landscaping consisting of local native species and mature planting.

Questions were asked about the look and feel of the additions and the importance of not affecting the current Resort ambience was highlighted. It was emphasised that construction during the wet season, particularly in a potential flood zone, can be an issue. Reference was made to the water level during Cyclone Carlos.

The Independent Chairman noted that there needs to be an awareness of the community interest and concern about anything that happens in or near the Rapid Creek corridor. Paul Cosker indicated that he had spoken to Rapid Creek Landcare and was conscious of the community profile of the project. He was advised to also speak to flood affected residents.

#### **4. Exercise Talisman Sabre 15**

Brigadier Bob Brown, Exercise Talisman Sabre 15 spokesman, presented an overview of Exercise Talisman Sabre 15 including:

- Exercise runs from 5 July to 20 July;
- a major geographically dispersed undertaking reflecting the importance of the US alliance;
- is the largest ADF exercise and held every 2 years;
- has a wide spectrum of military activities eg force preparation, amphibious operations, urban combat, land warfare, humanitarian relief, logistics, live firing etc;
- air and maritime operations focused in the north;
- there will be port visits by vessels after the exercise;
- there will be heightened air activity with the most noticeable element being 5 US FA-18 Growler aircraft; and
- Defence takes its environmental responsibilities seriously.

There was a discussion on the fast jet and helicopter noise experienced during an exercise. The Independent Chairman observed that the Darwin population is very supportive of Defence but occasionally people are annoyed by aircraft noise.

Noise complaints can be lodged with the RAAF Base Command Post by telephoning 1300 DEFENCE.

#### **5. RAAF Base Operational Issues and Exercises Remainder 2015**

WGCDR Wes Perrett outlined that:

- Exercise Aces North has concluded successfully. Aces North incorporated 22 fast jet aircraft and other support aircraft. There was a single fast jet noise complaint and 2 helicopter complaints;
- the Talisman Sabre flying program is not available yet but there is only 5 fast jets. This is far fewer than Exercise Pitch Black and hence few noise complaints are anticipated;
- flying program is anticipated to include both day and night flying. Defence will continue to comply with the Fly Neighbourly Policy which has been designed to minimise the impact on surrounding communities;
- there is close liaison with the Turf Club and other community event organisers to coordinate Darwin flying;
- a US Marine contingent of 140 personnel accompanying the CH-53 helicopters will remain until October; and
- exercise program in the remainder of the year is light.

WGCDR Perrett also related that he had appeared at the Development Consent Authority hearing into the rezoning of part lot 5182 as part of Defence opposition to the rezoning.

## **6. Office of Aircraft Noise Ombudsman**

Tim Abberton of the Office of the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman (ANO) related that:

- the remit of the Office had expanded to include oversight of Defence aircraft noise complaints similar to the review of aircraft noise complaints made to Airservices;
- ANO is undertaking an audit of the of the of Federal Government 'conditions of approval' for the FA-18F (Super Hornet);
- complaint management training was conducted at RAAF Base Darwin on 2 July;
- Australian Standard AS2021 was reviewed under the chairmanship of Ron Brent the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman. The review was not as broad as Ron Brent desired but an explanatory supplementary handbook to the Standard is being developed;
- the Defence aircraft noise website is unwieldy and Defence had been spoken to about it; and
- following the example of local government in Jandacott and Pearce in WA he suggested that some indication should be given to land/house purchasers that the area they are purchasing in is subject to aircraft noise.

## **7. Airservices Matters**

Rhiannon Eddy reported that there were 2 aircraft noise complaints in 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2015 compared to 4 complaints in 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2014. Airservices are proposing to move to an online database which would provide more timely information than the quarterly reports. There is also some prospect of WebTrack being installed in Darwin.

It was raised that there is confusion on the part of the public on who to direct an aircraft noise complaint to – Airservices or Defence. The issue is that Airservices will only accept complaints about civil aircraft and Defence will only accept complaints about military aircraft but often the complainant does not know whether the aircraft is civil or military. Tim Abberton of the Office of the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman has the view that an individual should be able to lodge a complaint without knowing whether the aircraft is civil or military and let the authorities sort it out.

The Independent Chairman noted that there has been considerable improvement over time in how aircraft noise complaints are handled.

## **8. Defence Support Report**

In response to representations that Defence was not managing noxious weeds near the Rapid Creek corridor, Ray Luke outlined that noxious weed management in certain areas of RAAF Base Darwin had received insufficient attention in the contract transfer to Transfield. However, considerable effort had gone into broad acre management. Fence lines had now been installed in strategic locations which means that the contractor now has easier access to previously difficult areas. While 90% of the weed management task was carried out effectively there were areas abutting Rapid Creek which had not been managed well recently. This is being rectified.

It was pointed out to Defence that there was a lot more Gamba Grass on the Defence boundaries near Rapid Creek than in the past. Justine Nordin responded that this was a timing issue and that the Gamba Grass would be managed effectively.

## **9. DIA Property Developments**

Ross Baynes presented on property developments at DIA including:

- construction of a second JKC car park;
- proposed hangar and office development for Bond Helicopters;

- the entertainment precinct with the Ardent Family Entertainment Centre currently being outfitted;
- significantly expanded jet fuel storage facility;
- proposed warehouse and showroom development which is subject to a pre-commitment level;
- proposed fast food pad near the service station; and
- a potential self-storage facility.

## 10. Department of Infrastructure & Regional Development Update

Helen Gannon outlined several policy developments in the aviation portfolio:

- a Discussion Paper with concrete proposals for reforming the Master Plan and Major Development Plan provisions in the *Airports Act 1996* was put out for comment. The Discussion Paper recognised that one size does not fit all and it is likely that the largest airports will remain on a 5 year master plan cycle while the other airports will be extended to an 8 year cycle. The monetary trigger for a Major Development Plan process will likely be increased from \$20M to \$30M with some form of indexation;
- there is a review of the *Airports Act 1996* parking regime which only applies at 8 of the Federally leased airports (not applicable in the Northern Territory). The review is also considering arrangements at the other airports which may result in changes to the operating framework across all airports;
- in the review of 43 Disability Access Plans there had been 32 submissions from the disability sector and 12 from the aviation sector. Recommendations will go to the Minister in the near future;
- a review by CASA on the regulations around carriage of assistance animals is underway. There will soon be public consultation on the matter;
- the review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport has been underway for some time. A final report will be issued in several weeks; and
- the review of Community Aviation Consultation Groups and Planning Coordination Forums received a lot of information during the data collection stage. Of the 600 surveys sent out there were 320 responses plus 50 interviews.

Community Consultation Group Chairs will meet in Canberra in September.

## 11. Rapid Creek Flooding from a Resident Point of View

James Dunlevie, a representative of Rapid Creek flood affected residents, related Rapid Creek flooding as experienced by a family badly affected by the 2011 Cyclone Carlos 2 days of heavy rain. He related that he and other flood affected residents believed a big part of the flooding problem is the development upstream that is putting more water into Rapid Creek at a faster rate. This was identified in several flood studies.

He and fellow flood affected resident Tim Moore are members of the Flood Mitigation Advisory Committee. James highlighted that one of the recommendations from the Committee is that DIA investigate and implement flood mitigation solutions to manage storm water runoff resulting from the total cumulative impacts of all development on DIA land since privatization.

James noted that DIA had made certain commitments to flood affected residents and welcomed DIA support of the proposed retention basin on the 'triangle block' but did not believe this was enough. He emphasised that if all recommendations of the Flood Mitigation Advisory Committee were fully implemented then the Rapid Creek flooding problem would be largely solved.

The Independent Chairman provided perspective on the hazards of tropical rainfall combined with the large tidal movements experienced in Darwin. He thanked James for taking Rapid Creek flooding to the personal level.

Ian Kew related how DIA has been talking to Tim Moore and James Dunlevie for some time and has commissioned studies on effective storm water management solutions as the airport progressively develops. DIA is 11% of the total catchment and pays a lot of tax. He highlighted that DIA was working with all interested parties including the Northern Territory Government for joint solutions.

## **12. Rapid Creek Hydrology and Effective Flood Mitigation initiatives**

Peter Saunders of Jacobs presented on the Rapid Creek catchment and effective mitigation measures including:

- an overview of the Rapid Creek catchment flood prone areas and that DIA comprised 11% of the catchment area feeding into Millner;
- the impact of airport development;
- effective storm water management measures;
- retention basins are the most effective measures, particularly a retention basin on the triangle block.

Consultation Group members said that more information was coming out on effective mitigation measures and that previous studies did not regard retention basins as cost effective.

The Independent Chairman observed that more information on effective mitigation measures is becoming available which means that the Northern Territory Government funding available can be put to good use. He also noted that all relevant stakeholders were talking to each other which is healthy.

## **13. Community Consultation Group Member Issues**

Ian Kew informed that DIA will sign a contract for a 4 MW solar power facility shortly and that Defence and other parties had given a green light to the project. The solar facility will generate 65% of day time power requirements and is the largest solar project at any airport in Australia. He also outlined that the Stage 3 solar project in Alice Springs will take solar generated power to 100% of requirements in winter and 90% in summer.

An announcement will be made when the Darwin solar contract is signed.

## **14. General Business**

There was no general business.

Note: Next meeting Thursday 19 November