

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019

## **Northern Territory Airports celebrates milestone year, with the world premiere of aviation history film, *The Sweet Little Note of the Engine***

This year marks the centenary of aviation history in the Northern Territory. In 1919, a Fannie Bay airstrip – previously a horse paddock – welcomed its very first flight, marking a new paradigm for aviation in the Northern Territory and Australia. Ever since, Darwin has experienced a fascinating history to emerge as one of the most significant places for aviation in Australia. Darwin International Airport, which shares its aerodrome with Defence, has held a significant place in this rich history. This year marks 21 years since the airport became privatised, along with Alice Springs and Tennant Creek airports, under the Northern Territory Airports’ banner.

CEO Ian Kew welcomes the opportunity to commemorate this important year.

“For over two decades, Northern Territory Airports has been part of the vibrant Top End community. We embrace the role Darwin International Airport has had in aviation history and we look forward to an exciting future ahead.”

To celebrate this anniversary and help showcase this fast-moving history, Darwin International Airport hosted a cocktail party on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2019 for over 100 friends and dignitaries in a secure airside location – an event of this nature is believed to be a world first occurrence. Guests enjoyed the premiere of a documentary by Exposure Productions which delves into this thrilling and fascinating history, emphasising the importance of Northern Australia in the context of Australian aviation.

Produced by accomplished filmmaker Andrew Hyde (Exposure Productions), *The Sweet Little Note of the Engine* traverses key historical moments that help define Darwin as one of – if not the most – important places for aviation in Australia. From The Great Air Race and the birth of QANTAS, through to the bombing of Darwin and the Petrov Affair; from The Beatles stopover, through to Cyclone Tracy and the Bali bombings – there is no denying the significance of the powerful stories encompassed in this landmark film and place we call home.

Darwin International Airport is proud to be a long-standing supporter and sponsor of the film, and is in great company with co-partners, Channel Nine and the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre. The film project has also received funding support from Screen Territory and the Northern Territory Government.

The sponsorship of this film development, since its inception, is one of the many ways Darwin International Airport has supported important historical and cultural projects over the years. In 2016, the airport launched a history book by revered historians Peter and Sheila Forest, *The World Flies in and Darwin takes off!* which Darwin Airport was a project supporter and sponsor. As part of its ongoing sponsorship program, Darwin International Airport also partners with the Northern Territory Travelling Film Festival and Darwin International Film Festival encouraging the development of new and exciting work within the screen industry in the NT. This is part of the airport's program focused on arts, culture and community, and supporting everything from festivals to film, music to dance, spoken word to publications.

"We believe our airport to be a place way beyond a transport hub for locals and tourists. We are a part of the history of the NT and strive to support the community of Darwin and the Top End embracing an exciting, unique and frontier destination for visitors and locals alike," suggested Kew.

2019 is the year to celebrate the centenary of aviation history in Northern Australia and acknowledge the spirited and adventurous pioneers of aviation who laid the foundation for growth, trade and development. Darwin International Airport is proud to be an intrinsic part of this history and welcome the opportunity to share this momentous year with our local community through the inspiring expression of film.





## **Background on privatisation**

In 1988 the Federal Airports Corporation (FAC) made an offer to the government to acquire Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Canberra and Townsville airports. The government accepted the offer, on the condition that FAC would build new terminals at Darwin and Alice Springs.

Works began in earnest in May 1990 at Darwin Airport and were completed by 1991. Officially opened on 14 December 1991. Darwin's passenger volume in 1991 was 600,000.

The FAC was wound up in 1997 and its portfolio of Airports sold off to private enterprise. Airport Development Group acquired the three airports in June 1998. NT Airports owns and operates Darwin International Airport, Alice Springs Airport and Tennant Creek Airport and welcomed more than 2.83million passengers in the 2017-18 period.

## **Background on The Sweet Little Note of the Engine**

Geographically located in the centre of metropolitan Darwin, the airport has always been at the heart of the place; a symbol of the town's isolation and potential. With its strategic importance at Australia's front door, Darwin Airport has historically helped keep the town alive, provided a lifeline in times of trouble and a hero's welcome to some of our greatest and most loved.

This documentary recounts, through the eyes of those that were there, the stories of the earliest aviation pioneers, the war time fight for survival, the unrivalled mass evacuations after Cyclone Tracy and the airports leading role in taking Darwin from empire outpost to a dynamic, multicultural city on the doorstep to Asia.

Produced by current Bob Plasto Screen Award recipient, Andrew Hyde of Exposure Productions, and inspired by Peter and Sheila Forest's book *The World Flies in and Darwin takes off!*, this film has been years in the making. Following the premiere, the full-length film will be aired on Channel Nine on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July at 9:30pm.

## **Fast Facts**

- The Airport Development Group (ADG) has been part of the Northern Territory community for almost two decades.

- ADG is almost entirely owned by superannuation funds, contributing positive returns to the retirement funds of some 70,000 Territorians
- ADG is proudly 100 percent Australian owned by IFM Investors (77.4%) and Palisade Investment Partners Limited (22.6%)
- NT Airports play a vital part in growing the NT economy, contributing \$270 million to the NT Economy during 2017-18 or 1.2 per cent of the gross state product.
- The three airports have 85 full-time employees and many other contractors providing key airport services, generating total direct and indirect jobs for some 1800 Territorians.
- Ian Kew has been CEO of NT Airports since 22 January 2001. Ian is also the Chair of the Darwin Major Business Group and Chair of the Darwin Festival.
- Over \$461 million has been invested in DIA since privatisation including the \$75 million Terminal expansion program which commenced in 2013 which was officially opened by Prime Minister Tony Abbott on 9 May 2015.
- The expansion enlarged the terminal floor area from 16,000 to 27,000 sqm and three new aircraft parking bays were added, doubling the airport's passenger capacity.
- The long-awaited arrival of Chinese carrier Donghai Airlines into the NT was a significant achievement for ADG in May 2018.
- In 2019 DIA celebrate the presence of Qantas, Virgin Australia, Airnorth, SilkAir, Jetstar and Donghai Airlines consolidating Darwin as a hub for northern Australia and Asia with DIA passenger numbers in excess of 2.1million
- The lease to ADG covers a total area of 311 hectares. Of this area, some 90 hectares is available for commercial development which encompasses Darwin Airport Resort and Bunnings.
- DIA's business precinct, Darwin Airport Central, is the perfect blend of commercial, retail and leisure amenities for locals and visitors, a state-of-the-art development covering 60 hectares.
- In 2016 and 2017, DIA installed two large scale solar arrays. The \$13 million project is the largest airside photovoltaic system in the Southern Hemisphere, with 15,000 solar panels over eight hectares. The solar farm is located on six hectares of airport land which is not required for aviation purposes.
- As well as a major investment in solar energy, all three airports drive environmental stewardship objectives and guide continual improvement in environmental management. to ensure airport land is cared for and developed in a responsible way.

- A strong community focus is a continuing priority for NT Airports. Sponsorship of local arts and cultural groups, corporate giving and a workplace donation system help the company stay connected to the people living in the Northern Territory.

## **Future Plans**

- Major upgrades to security equipment at DIA and ASA are scheduled over the next 18 months. Computed Tomography (CT) checked baggage and passenger screening systems will be installed. The new equipment provides the opportunity to bring our business to world class level in aviation security.
- In what is believed to be a world first – DIA is embarking on project to have all ground support equipment (GSE) which is used to service aircraft between flights, powered by renewable energy generated from our solar farm by 2020
- Plans have been progressed for a new \$11 million freight and training hub which could generate more than \$200 million for the NT economy each year
- ADG is working on a proposal to build an underground aviation fuel pipeline from the East Arm Port to our jet fuel storage facility at the Darwin International Airport. The \$155 million project includes a jet fuel pipeline and new port terminal facilities connecting Darwin International Airport and RAAF base Darwin.

**For media enquiries, please contact:**

Jill Morris

Communications and Media Manager, NT Airports

(08) 8920 1814 | 0402 088 141 | [jill.morris@ntairports.com.au](mailto:jill.morris@ntairports.com.au)