



Concurrent Meeting on 28 July 2022
**Darwin International Airport Community Consultation Group
& Planning Coordination Forum**

Web Report

held at Ansett Room, Mercure Resort Darwin Airport & 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 3 March 2022 had been previously settled by circulation.

Airport Development Group's (ADG) new virtual Welcome to Country was screened. The film features Larrakia traditional owner Edwin Fejo accompanied by Alviston Wunungmurra on the didgeridoo. The video was created in collaboration with The Youth Mill, a Darwin-based organisation who support awareness and preservation of culture and identity.

2. NT Government – Lands Planning

Doug Lesh spoke of the Greater Holtze Area Plan currently being prepared by the NT Planning Commission. Greater Holtze has been identified as the future growth area in Greater Darwin. The area includes Holtze, Kowandi, Holtze North and Howard Springs North. The draft Area Plan is expected to be released for Stage 2 consultation in Q3 2022.

3. Darwin Airport

ADG overview

Tony Edmondstone shared a broad update on progress at Darwin Airport:

- The redevelopment of the hotel/resort continues, with the new swimming pool shell expected to be completed by the end of this year. Work has commenced on painting the water tower in a Larrakia artwork.
- The landscaping of the new road improvements is about to commence. Darwin Airport is working with City of Darwin on the landscaping of the two new roundabouts.
- The aviation industry has experienced cancellation of flights and passenger disruption across Australia in recent times. Darwin Airport is in dialogue with the airlines about these challenges.
- Darwin Airport is aware of the significant congestion issues being felt particularly at check-in and security. The airport is working through how best to resolve these issues and in what sequence, being mindful of the other significant capital works underway in the airport precinct and limiting the impact to our customers.
- Although NT Government has made numerous announcements about the Amphibian Aerospace Industries (AAI) development at Darwin Airport, it's not yet been resolved where it will be located.

- In 2022, 15-18 students have commenced at ADG's Indigenous Training Academy, undertaking Certificate III Hospitality traineeships. The next intake of students will be in Q3 2022.

The upcoming auto bag drop project was also discussed, with Dawn Lawrie reiterating her previous feedback about the importance of a human interface to assist with the self-service technology. Tony confirmed that it is airline practice to have support staff on hand.

Tony reflected on the role Darwin Airport may play in the future, along with Northern Australia more broadly, in consideration of the various announcements of future significant investment in the Territory by the defence and oil & gas sectors.

Aviation development

Tony Edmondstone went on to give an aviation update:

- Passenger numbers have been positive across Australian airports over the last few months as the industry begins its recovery from the COVID pandemic. Domestic passenger volumes at Darwin Airport exceeded pre-COVID levels in both May and June 2022.
- International passenger numbers at Darwin Airport were nearly doubled from March to May, mostly due to the Qantas direct London flights (which have now reverted to Perth). Most passengers on the London flights were transiting through Darwin rather than originating in Darwin.
- International passengers at Darwin Airport are currently at about 50% of pre-COVID figures, with the rebound expected to take some time.
- Other recent highlights include Qantas commencing direct flights to Dili; Jetstar has recommenced flights to Denpasar; and Singapore Airlines has recommenced flights to Singapore. Jetstar Asia has announced it will exit the Darwin-Singapore route from early August 2022.

Industry outlook:

- Higher airfares are expected due to the high fuel price environment and supply not keeping up with demand as airlines rationalise services to deal with industry resourcing issues. Airlines' schedules are likely to continue to be dynamic in the short term.
- High demand for domestic travel to Darwin persists, stretching outside the traditional peak season periods.
- The new competitive environment domestically and changing aviation landscape in the Asia Pacific region lends to unique opportunities to expand Darwin's destinations in the short-medium term.

Property & terminal

Adrian Massey presented on the new retail developments in the terminal. Darwin Airport's new food & beverage partner, SSP, took over the existing F&B outlets on 1 July 2022. Over the next 18 months the existing outlets will be refurbished and new outlets constructed. Works will include expanding the first floor between Gates 8 and 10 to provide more space to create an improved layout and circulation flows.

Dawn Lawrie queried the halal offerings available at the airport. It was confirmed that there are menu options available.

A range of improvements are proposed for the car parking products at Darwin Airport. These enhancements will include the appropriate accessible car parking requirements.

Tony Edmondstone also noted that the landside precinct plan (presented at the last meeting) proposes to pedestrianise the existing forecourt area in front of the terminal. Darwin Airport is aware of the mobility / ease of access needs in this area, which will be addressed during the subsequent design development of the project.

Operations

AJ Wackrow provided an operations update, including:

- A desktop Aerodrome Emergency Plan exercise was conducted in late July, well attended by external emergency stakeholders. The objective of the exercise was to test first response procedures and then passenger processing procedures.
- The installation and commissioning of new aerobridges continues. Bay 2 is now complete, Bay 4 works are awaiting commissioning, and Bay 3 is expected to commence this year.
- The aircraft parking for the air transport apron is under review due to the number of aircraft now parking for extended periods, and there is the probably need to develop extra parking bays in future.

Darwin Airport 2023 Master Plan

Victoria Moore briefed members on the background, process and timeline for the development of the next Darwin Airport 2023 Master Plan. The 'exposure draft' version of the master plan is expected to be shared with CCG and PCF members in late 2022.

Chandan Kalase confirmed DIPL's traffic model is expected to be completed in August/September and will then be shared with Darwin Airport for use in their ground transport modelling.

4. Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Megan Thomas provided a departmental update including:

- The Hon Catherine King MP was sworn in as the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government in June 2022.
- The Australian Government has committed to deliver an Aviation White Paper to set the scene for the future growth and development of the aviation sector. The Aviation White Paper is expected to focus on a range of issues across the aviation sector.
- The Department is progressing with its review of regulations due to sunset in 2024 and 2025. Consultation on Stage 1b, which focuses on modernising and streamlining infringement notice schemes and the process for declaring airport sites, closed on 3 June. The Department will consider technical changes to the process for declaring airport sites and enforcement (e.g. use of infringement notices) in light of submissions provided. Consultation in coming months will focus on options to streamline Commonwealth responsibilities for on-airport activities.

- The National Airports Safeguarding Advisory Group last met on 16 June 2022. The Group discussed a number of Guideline reviews, with the review of Guideline C: Managing Wildlife Strike Risk commencing in June.
- The Department will provide a detailed update on the work of the Aviation Access Forum at the next CACG meeting.

5. Department of Defence / RAAF Base Darwin

RAAF Base Darwin PFAS Management Update

Nelma Akhund gave an update on Defence's PFAS Investigation & Management Program for RAAF Base Darwin:

- A community engagement session was held in Darwin last month, to communicate progress towards PMAP recommendations. There were 7 attendees. Key issues and themes raised included: impacts of PFAS exposure from Rapid Creek and health advice; the approach to PFAS management in Katherine versus Darwin; investigation results at individual properties; soil remediation works; future sampling at Rapid Creek; ongoing monitoring program.
- Short term actions have been put in place to limit exposure to PFAS while Defence develops the longer-term actions.
- Remediation investigations continue in source areas where the former fire fighting foam containing PFAS was used.
- Soil remediation works commenced this week, where some of the PFAS impacted soil will be taken to Victoria to be destroyed by an oxidation process.
- The Ongoing Monitoring Plan surrounding RAAF Base Darwin incorporates 34 groundwater sampling locations, 23 surface water sampling locations and 6 aquatic biota sampling locations. The samples from these locations provide information on how effective the remediation actions have been, and where to look for future possible problems if the plumes move in future. To date the sampling has been consistent with the original investigation.
- In 2022/2023 a Remediation Action Plan and technical specification are due to be developed.

The timing of the remediation for the old fire training area within the Darwin Airport lease boundary was queried. Nelma confirmed it wasn't one of the current projects, and as such was expected to be included in the base-wide Remediation Action Plan.

Operations

FLTLT Mitch Heming provided details of the upcoming military exercises, including:

- Exercise Diamond Storm was successfully completed in June 2022.
- Exercise Northern Tiger is currently underway with fast jets.
- Exercise Pitch Black is scheduled for 19 August to 8 September. Up to 15 other countries will be participating in the exercise, with around 2500 personnel attending and up to 100 aircraft. The Pitch Black Flypast will be held at Mindil Beach on Thursday evening 25 August, and the Open Day will be held at RAAF Base Darwin on Saturday 27 August.
- Exercise Kakadu will be held in mid-late September.

Regarding military aircraft noise, AJ Wackrow requested a daily update for the upcoming military exercise flying schedule that could be shared with airline operators whose passengers are boarding via the tarmac rather than aerobridges. Defence to arrange.

Projects

FLTLT Mitch Heming advised that some of the major capital works on base are nearing completion, including apron works and the aircraft rinse facility. A range of capital projects are in the planning phase for delivery in 2023.

Air Traffic Control

Nola Chellingworth shared a brief ATC update, noting that there had been covid staffing issues in recent weeks, however the control tower was still manned 24-hours but was providing an information service between 10pm and 6am until 1 August 2022.

Defence Support

Nola Chellingworth advised it has been an extremely busy year with works on base:

- The RAAF Base Darwin mid-term refresh will address ageing infrastructure and base entry points.
- Defence is working with NT Government on the redevelopment of the entry points to the Base. Planning is in the very early stages, with works anticipated to commence in 2024.
- Pitch black, learning from past challenges vehicle access to the Base will be staggered during the exercise period to mitigate previous congestion issues.
- WGCDR Jim Collisson will be undertaking extensive media coverage relating to Exercise Pitch Black.
- The weed and fire management program has been working really well across the Base.
- Base Management team look forward to being part of an indigenous apprenticeship program next year.
- A drainage study is being undertaken across the base.

Estate Planning

Tim Hogan noted that Estate Planning is in discussion with NT Government on planning aspects and potential RAAF constraints for the proposed Greater Holtze Area Plan. Defence has provided comment on recent development applications around the airfield, particularly in relation to aircraft noise, building heights, wildlife hazard and extraneous lighting.

Defence has recently engaged a consultant to undertake modelling of the public safety areas for RAAF Darwin, using the same methodology as that recently completed for RAAF Amberley.

Bob Calaby advised that Darwin Airport, Defence and the Rapid Creek Water Advisory Committee provided comment on the recent development application for the conversion of the former Malak caravan park to a residential subdivision. Of particular concern was stormwater drainage, and as a result a small detention basin will be constructed as part of the development to control stormwater discharge into Rapid Creek.

6. Airservices Australia

Frances Duffy summarised that one noise complaint was received by Airservices in the last quarter. The complaint was referred to Defence as it related to military aircraft. In total, two noise complaints have been received by Airservices for 2022 to date, both relating to military aircraft.

7. NT Government – Transport Infrastructure Planning

Chandan Kalase advised there were no major updates to provide for this meeting, noting that NT Government are working with Defence and Airport Development Group on potential developments on the NT Government roads surrounding Darwin Airport / RAAF Base Darwin.

8. City of Darwin

Brian Sellers shared a number of council updates:

- Simone Saunders was recently announced as City of Darwin's new CEO.
- Council has released the 'Discover Darwin' website, created for visitors, investors and residents. <https://discover.darwin.nt.gov.au/>
- Council is about to release a new tourism initiative relating to the Larrakia 'seven senses' (six seasons plus spirit) to promote Darwin as a destination outside of the traditional dry season.

9. Community Consultation Group member issues

Grahame Webb requested that future aviation updates include the level of analysis and data previously shared, both reflections of past performance and predictions for the future. As a local tourism operator, Grahame finds it difficult to get reliable tourism data, and he finds the Darwin Airport updates particularly valuable.

Remaining 2022 meeting dates: Thursday 3 November.