



Concurrent Meeting on 18 July 2024  
**Darwin International Airport Community Consultation Group  
& Planning Coordination Forum**

**Web Report**

held at Ansett Room, Mercure Darwin Airport Resort & 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 March 2024 had been previously settled by circulation.

**2. Darwin Airport / Airport Development Group**

**ADG overview**

Tony Edmondstone spoke to the lack of flight connectivity and high airfares being experienced across Australia. He noted that in Darwin passenger volumes continue to be down compared to pre-COVID levels. Once complete, the runway resurfacing works at Darwin will signal the airport is back to full capacity.

**Aviation development**

Allan Woo shared that international passenger numbers have been recovering at Darwin Airport, underpinned by increased frequency by Singapore Airlines. Qantas is expected to commence direct flights between Darwin and Singapore in March 2025.

Domestic passenger numbers are down due to constrained seat supply which in turn is driving up airfare costs to/from capital cities. In Darwin, the runway resurfacing project has impacted on this, with airline seat and/or cargo capacity restricted, resulting in high airfares. Once the runway works are complete it will provide certainty to airlines to operate services to Darwin. ADG is in discussion with a number of carriers to introduce new domestic and international destinations from Darwin.

Bonza's collapse has resulted in the loss of 3 routes to Darwin and Alice Springs. ADG is in discussions with other domestic carriers to operate these routes. Airnorth has added over 500 seats each week between Perth and Alice Springs, with the carrier reporting strong performance. Jetstar will exit from the Darwin-Cairns route at the end of October, with Qantas to fill the route and provide daily services, improving itinerary options.

**Operations**

Rob Porter gave an update on operations at Darwin Airport including:

- Fitout works continue in the terminal on the retail and food & beverage offerings. Red Rooster and Soul Bar opened earlier this year, with Roll'd and the Gliding Goose to open soon. Following the dry season, construction will commence on a new Relay retail store (newsagent and grab & go offering), expected to be completed by the end of the year.

- ADG has purchased 5 new motorised wheelchairs for airlines to use in supporting mobility impaired passengers. The first 2 units have arrived with training to be given to airlines and ground handlers prior to the units going live.
- The NT Disability Advisory Committee convened their last meeting in June 2024, with committee members participating in a comprehensive tour of the Darwin Airport terminal.
- The installation of shade structures in the short stay car park is almost complete.
- Works have commenced on the western general aviation (GA) apron expansion which will provide additional parking bays for GA aircraft.
- The floodlighting on the air transport apron has now been upgraded to LED lighting, providing better power usage and improved safety outcomes with a brighter operating environment at night.
- The eastern chiller upgrade project is nearing completion. The existing noisy chillers in front of the terminal are to be removed, providing a more welcoming environment. The new chillers are economically efficient with low power consumption and low noise levels.

### **Indigenous & community projects**

Rychelle Vines gave an update to members on the progress of ADG's Indigenous Engagement Strategy and recent projects:

- ADG's Indigenous Advisory Committee continues to grow and develop. The committee first met in January 2022 and continues to meet every 6 months.
- ADG is committed to providing education and employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians. ADG's Indigenous Training Academy was launched in 2022 with an intake of 7 trainees, with an additional 13 trainees joining the academy in 2023. As the program has become more established, ADG has received trainee enquires through word of mouth, relations of trainees and Indigenous agencies.
- The Gurumbai Cultural Trail upgrades are now complete. ADG has recently received a Green Airports Recognition Award for the project from the Airports Council International – ACI Asia-Pacific & Middle East. An Indigenous Rangers Forum of 600 attendees will convene in Darwin later this year, of which the new Gurumbai Cultural Trail will form part of the forum.
- At the hotel and resort, significant artwork murals have been undertaken to the water tower, Novotel front wall and Novotel pool wall, and the hotel villa naming project has now been rolled out to 14 villas.
- A cultural theming plan for the Mercure and Novotel is being prepared. It will showcase the unique cultures and lifestyle of the Northern Territory regions and is aligned with the Tourism NT marketing strategy being developed.

### **Rapid Creek Reserve path opening**

Matthew Evans spoke to the recent opening event for the Gurumbai Cultural Trail upgrades at Rapid Creek Reserve. The event was well attended, and also included tree planting. ADG has created a short video of the Gurumbai Cultural Trail which can be found on ADG's social media channels. Darwin Airport recently hosted the Inter-airport Environment Forum which included a guided tour by David Kurnoth (Larrakia Nation) of the Gurumbai Cultural Trail.

### **Darwin Airport 2023 Master Plan**

Victoria Moore shared that the Draft version of the Darwin Airport 2023 Master Plan was submitted to the federal minister in February this year for the minister's review and consideration. The Master Plan is still undergoing review, and ADG is working with the Department to finalise a few queries that have been raised during the review process.

### **3. Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts**

Peter Inall gave an update on departmental matters, including:

- The Aviation White Paper is expected to be released very soon. Over 2000 submissions were received on the Green Paper, which have been carefully considered.
- The Australian Jet Zero Council has met 3 times since inception, and is due to meet again later this year. The workplan can be found at: <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/department/media/publications/australian-jet-zero-council-workplan>
- The National Airports Safeguarding Advisory Group (NASAG) last met in June 2024. Discussion items included governance and the implementation of recommendations from the 2019 review. NASAG is next scheduled to meet in late 2024.

### **4. Department of Defence / RAAF Base Darwin**

#### **RAAF Base Darwin operations**

SQNLDR Jay Murray spoke to Exercise Pitch Black which is underway, with 18 countries participating of which 4 are new to the exercise. The focus is on international engagement and working together. Some civil aircraft flight times have been tailored to suit the exercise schedule. Following Exercise Pitch Black will be Exercise Falcon Shield and Exercise Kakadu. In 2025, there are expected to be quite a number of smaller military exercises, and more larger military aircraft due to works scheduled at RAAF Base Tindal.

#### **Base Management**

Katina Croft gave a short update, advising that base management were very busy currently looking after Exercise Pitch Black.

#### **RAAF Base Darwin runway project**

GPCAPT Adrian Carswell advised that construction of the runway resurfacing project is approximately 75% complete, with works expected to be completed by the end of the year. Some 85,000 tonnes of asphalt have been laid as part of the project. There has been a 100% return of the runway to full service on time, ready for the civil aircraft midday peak. During the 2024 program of work, Defence has received 41 requests from airlines to delay the 2am construction start time, of which more than 90% of these requests have been able to be accommodated. In 2025 the project will turn its focus to the military aprons.

### **6. Airservices Australia**

John Graham shared that there was one aircraft noise complainant at Darwin Airport / RAAF Base Darwin for the period 1 January – 1 July 2024, relating to recent changes in civilian helicopter movements to and from the airport. Airservices' Noise Complaint and Information Service (NCIS) is liaising with the complainant.

John shared an update on the implementation of the OneSKY Australia project. OneSKY will replace Australia's separate civil and military air traffic management systems with a common, advanced and integrated system known as the Civil Military Air Traffic Management System (CMATS). The project is now in the testing phase, with the planned deployment in 2026 and operationalisation from 2027.

## **7. NT Government – Lands Planning**

Doug Lesh spoke of a number of planning matters including:

- The Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics is considering including the Greater Holtze Area Plan in the NT Planning Scheme 2020.
- The NT Planning Commission is continuing to undertake background investigations to assist with enabling the Commission to be in position to progress with future consultation on a discussion paper (stage 1 consultation) for a draft South of the Gap Subregional Land Use Plan for Alice Springs.
- The proposed planning scheme amendment to incorporate the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre Area Plan in the NT Planning Scheme 2020 is on public exhibition from 5 July to 2 August 2024.

Doug spoke to the NT Planning Commission's recent release of a discussion paper on the Strategic Directions Planning Policy project. The policy will guide the delivery of future land use plans and policies that will help to promote and support the liveability, productivity, connectivity, efficiency and resilience of our communities. Consultation on the discussion paper closes on 31 July 2024. Doug suggested members consider the proposed policy statements and provide comment.

## **8. Community Consultation Group member issues**

Grahame Webb shared his observations in the changes to the visitation profile (local / interstate / international visitors) at Crocodylus Park over the past 12 months, reflecting on the challenges of tourism in the Northern Territory.

Remaining 2024 meeting dates: Thursday 14 November.