



Concurrent Meeting on 2 November 2023
**Darwin International Airport Community Consultation Group
& Planning Coordination Forum**

Web Report

held at Tindal Board Room, 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 6 July 2023 had been previously settled by circulation.

2. City of Darwin

Emma Struys gave an update on council initiatives and matters including:

- City of Darwin is implementing the strategies developed last year. The 2030 Movement Strategy and Economic Development Strategy 2030 are council's primary focus in the planning space.
- City of Darwin has recently won a number of awards including the Planning Institute of Australia's Outstanding Strategic Planning Project Award for its suite of strategies.
- City of Darwin is moving to a different e-scooter and e-bike provider (Beam) with better safety measures.
- A 40 km/h speed limit has been implemented in the Darwin CBD.
- The cruise season has commenced, with 103 cruise ships – 15 or so with more than 1000 passengers on board – scheduled to arrive in Darwin between November 2023 and May 2024.

3. Darwin Airport / Airport Development Group

ADG overview

Tony Edmondstone spoke of the ongoing developments and improvements around the Darwin Airport site, including the hotel/resort, landscaping works, terminal enhancements (including new food & beverage offerings and security screening relocations) and car parks. It is anticipated that most of these improvements will be completed by next dry season.

Aviation development

Allan Woo shared an update on aviation development, including:

- Total passenger recovery at Darwin continues to stagnate, down 6% compared to pre-covid figures. Last year was considered somewhat of a 'unicorn' year, with no international services and the NT being a bucket-list destination for domestic visitors.
- International connections from Darwin are currently constrained. For example, during covid Jetstar Asia exited the Darwin-Singapore route, and as such Singapore

Airlines is the only carrier operating services on this route. The current capacity for the route is down 70% compared with pre-covid.

- The NT Government's new Territory Aviation Attraction Scheme (TAAS) has helped secure new airline services with Bonza entering the NT market:
 - Darwin – Sunshine Coast, commencing 29 November 2023
 - Darwin – Gold Coast, commencing 1 December 2023
 - Alice Springs – Melbourne, commencing 12 December 2023
- Alice Springs passenger figures are down 40% compared to pre-covid figures, due to airlines exiting the Alice Springs market and no longer hubbing through Alice Springs.

Tony Edmonstone spoke to the recent Senate inquiry on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements, sharing ADG's observations that the current regulatory environment for aviation doesn't work for regional and remote areas. Using the remoteness of Darwin as an example, air connectivity is critically important to liveability in the region.

Operations

Rob Porter spoke in more detail of the developments and improvements underway at the airport, including:

- The installation of the new self check-in kiosks and auto bag drop equipment is now complete, with wait times and overall customer experience improved.
- The eastern screening point has been renovated and expanded into a unified domestic screening point, delivering a streamlined and safe passenger experience. It includes an express lane for passengers requiring special assistance.
- Work continues on the new food and beverage outlets being constructed in the domestic departure lounge. The Northern Common opened in September, and quick service restaurants like Red Rooster and Soul & Grain are due to open in early 2024.
- The aerobridge replacement program continues, due to be completed by the end of 2023.
- Darwin Airport is working closely with Defence on the runway resurfacing project.

In response to a query prior to the meeting from CCG member Dawn Lawrie, Rob Porter spoke about how Darwin Airport accommodates special assistance animals. Certified guide dogs, hearing dogs or other assistance dogs that assist a person with a disability are welcome inside the Terminal, under the *Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dog Act 2009*. Currently, the gardens outside the terminal provide comfort areas for assistance dogs. The airport is currently considering how assistance dogs may be accommodated within the terminal, and is investigating how comfort facilities might be provided closer to the boarding gate in preparation for boarding a flight.

Other accessible initiatives in place or under investigation as part of the airport's aim to provide facilities and services that are accessible for all members of the public include:

- The airport's Disability Access Facilitation Plan is available on the airport's website. It covers availability and access of services at the airport for all our passengers with a disability. Darwin Airport is currently reviewing the plan to ensure its accuracy regarding all the improvements being made at the airport.

- There are designated disabled parking areas for the drop-off and pick-up of disabled passengers, as well as disabled parking bays in the car parks.
- The terminal fire system is being upgraded to include lights to alert passengers with hearing impairments.
- To support mobility-impaired travel and in response to recent experiences with airline wheelchair stock not meeting passenger requirements, Darwin Airport is investigating procuring wheelchairs that can be shared across airlines and passengers.
- In 2024 Darwin Airport plans to subscribe to the Hidden Disabilities program in place at other Australian airports.
- Once the current terminal improvements have been completed, Darwin Airport intends to launch the digital accessible wayfinding app BindiMaps. The app helps users of all abilities navigate through the airport by providing a choice of text, map view, or audio directions using real-time, step-by-step directions to any destination.

Ground transport

Jordan Schrapel provided detail on the ground transport improvements underway:

- Work has begun on the construction of shade structures in the premium area of the short stay car park. Following this, shade structures will then be installed in the car rental premium car park.
- A new road entry to the long stay plus car park is under construction, to be accessed via Fenton Court. It's expected the new entry will be opened in December 2023. The road signage around the airport will be updated to reflect this change.
- Darwin Airport is in discussions with Uber to restructure how drivers pick up passengers at the airport in an effort to reduce wait times.

Rapid Creek Reserve path upgrades

Matthew Evans spoke about the improvements underway to the path within the Rapid Creek Reserve, behind the resort. A 650m section of the path is being widened to provide better and inclusive access to the area, as well as more rubbish bins installed and additional plantings. The airport is working with Larrakia Nation and Rapid Creek Landcare Group on informative signage that will be installed along the path. It's expected the project will be completed by the end of this year.

Indigenous and community projects

Rychelle Vines provided a comprehensive summary of ADG's Indigenous Engagement Strategy and recent achievements, including:

- Six trainees from the original intake of ADG's Indigenous Training Academy have recently graduated with a Certificate III Hospitality. A number of the trainees have also been recognised with hospitality industry awards, and 2 trainees have been employed by ADG.
- A further 13 trainees commenced in 2023, with ADG now offering: Certificate III Horticulture, Certificate IV Business, Electrical Apprenticeship, Certificate IV in IT, Certificate III Hospitality. ADG's Indigenous Mentoring Program provides connection and support for the trainees during their training.

- Theming of the hotel/resort continues, including two new large artworks recently painted on the Novotel facade. Signage is to be installed to explain the stories behind these artworks.
- ADG is developing and implementing an Indigenous Procurement Charter to ensure indigenous participation across our supply chain.

Darwin Airport 2023 Master Plan

Victoria Moore shared an update on the progress of the 2023 Master Plan. The 'Preliminary Draft' version is currently out for public comment until 18 December 2023. A series of 'pop-up' public information displays have been planned:

- Tuesday 14 November, 2-5pm, Casuarina Square (near Hoskings Jewellers)
- Wednesday 15 November, 11.30am-2.30pm, Darwin Airport terminal, domestic departure lounge
- Thursday 16 November, 2-5pm, Gateway Shopping Centre (near Gloria Jeans).

The Preliminary Draft Master Plan and Summary Booklet are available to download from the Darwin Airport website (<https://www.darwinairport.com.au/business/planning-development/airport-master-plan>). Hard copies are available to view and purchase from the Darwin Airport Management Centre. Written comments can be submitted by email, mail and via the webform (at the web address above).

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

Megan Thomas spoke primarily about the Aviation Green Paper, released on 7 September 2023 for consultation. The Terms of Reference informed the development of the Green Paper. In short, the Green Paper and stakeholder views obtained through the consultation process will be a key input to the development of the Aviation White Paper.

Megan highlighted some sample questions in the Green Paper relating to community aviation consultation groups (CACGs) including: *Are CACGs working for the community? What are good aspects, and what can be improved?*

The Aviation Green Paper and further details about the Aviation White Paper process can be found at: <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/have-your-say/aviation-green-paper>. Submissions are open until 30 November 2023.

5. Department of Defence / RAAF Base Darwin

RAAF Base Darwin Air Traffic Control

SQNLDR James Lee provided a short update, noting that air traffic control is in heavy consultation on the planning and safety of the runway resurfacing project. The major exercises for 2024 are currently in the planning phase.

RAAF Base Darwin projects

GPCAPT Adrian Carswell provided an update on the runway resurfacing project that commenced in August 2023. The project is on track, and if the weather holds the scheduled works for this year will be completed ahead of schedule (prior to 30 November 2023).

Almost half of the main runway will be resurfaced by the end of this year (with grooving to follow). Some 17,000 tonnes of asphalt have been laid so far. Of the overnight runway closures held, there has only been one delayed start to works commencing (in order to allow a flight to depart) and no delayed return to operations.

Following the wet season, the resurfacing works are expected to recommence after Easter (2 April 2024, TBC). Workshops are scheduled for November to refine the Method of Works Plan for the 2024 program.

Defence Support

Nola Chellingworth spoke of RAAF Base Darwin matters including:

- Base preparations are complete for the upcoming cyclone season.
- Defence will provide an update at the next meeting on the operations scheduled for 2024. It's expected 2024 will be very busy with both Operation Pitch Black and Operation Diamond Storm scheduled.
- The Mid-term Refresh Project for RAAF Base Darwin is expected to commence in 2024.

Defence Estate Planning

Tim Hogan gave an update on Estate Planning, including:

- The new 2043 Australian Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF) for RAAF Base Darwin and Darwin International Airport was endorsed on 6 September 2023. Consultation with the community, NT Government and local governments took place in February. Following this, Defence re-examined its operating scenarios and identified areas where incremental adjustment could achieve a small reduction to the ANEF contours. It's important to note that those living outside the ANEF 20 contour will experience aircraft noise.
- Defence has prepared a new set of public safety area contours specific to RAAF Base Darwin, to replace the US Department of Defense model that was previously used. Defence is scheduled to present the findings at the next NASAG meeting later this month.

Doug Lesh noted that the 2043 ANEF is now mapped in the NT Government's Integrated Land Information System (ILIS).

6. Airservices Australia

John Graham shared that for the July-October quarter there had been one noise complainant relating to aircraft noise at Darwin Airport / RAAF Base Darwin. The complaint was made in August and related to military flying operations.

Doug Lesh raised a query about sourcing historic aircraft noise complainant data. It was agreed that Airservices should be able to provide the NT Government with: the number of aircraft noise complaints received in the past 3 years relating to Darwin Airport; the suburbs the noise complaints came from; a general description/category of what the noise complaint related to (e.g. military aircraft, civil aircraft, helicopters, general aviation etc).

John also flagged that members of the public can also contact Defence directly about military-related aircraft noise complaints. Tim Hogan (Defence Estate Planning) offered to

prepare a similar summary of any noise complaints Defence had received over the same period.

7. NT Government – Lands Planning

Doug Lesh advised that the NT Government is preparing a new overlay for the NT Planning Scheme that protects the helicopter flight path corridors for Royal Darwin and Katherine hospitals, in response to NASAG Guideline H: Protecting strategically important helicopter landing sites. This overlay will require any development over 8.5m within these corridors to submit a development application.

The Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics is considering including the Greater Holtze Area Plan in the Northern Territory Planning Scheme. The NT Government has worked closely with Defence in relation to proximity to Robertson Barracks.

In Alice Springs, the South of the Gap Area Plan is expected to be released for consultation next year.

8. Community Consultation Group member issues

The airport noted feedback passed on by Grahame Webb from a community group regarding alcohol advertising on the airport's billboards and anti-social behaviour being experienced in the northern suburbs of Darwin.

2024 meeting dates: Thursday 14 March, Thursday 18 July, Thursday 14 November.