
CHAPTER 7
GENERAL AVIATION AND DEPARTMENT
OF DEFENCE OPERATIONS





“THE DIVERSITY OF OUR AVIATION BUSINESSES...IS WHAT MAKES THE INDUSTRY TICK.”

THE COALITION’S POLICY FOR AVIATION



7 General aviation and Department of Defence operations

General aviation and Department of Defence Aviation are essential for the ongoing success of aviation in Australia and the protection of Australia as a nation.

As the Airport serving the Nation's Capital, the general aviation and Defence Aviation sectors are important components of the aviation capability of Canberra Airport, and are expected to remain so for the life of this 2014 Master Plan.

The expansion of infrastructure catering to general aviation and Defence operations will be in response to demand. Throughout this 2014 Master Plan, Canberra Airport has identified a number of development opportunities to support and encourage future growth, including runway, taxiway, and apron upgrades and other aviation-related developments.

Table 5.5 in Chapter 5 outlines the forecast growth in general aviation, Department of Defence and VIP movements at Canberra Airport to 2034. These are incorporated in the 'other' movements category (along with freight movements). 'Other' aircraft movements have been forecast to grow at six percent per annum (base case) for the term of this Master Plan with anticipated lower growth slowing in general aviation movements (although freight, Department of Defence and VIP movements are expected to continue to increase).

7.1 GENERAL AVIATION OPERATIONS

General aviation operations continue to constitute a proportion of the aircraft movements at Canberra Airport, more so than at other capital city airports in Australia. Canberra Airport is committed to maintaining a vibrant general aviation sector at Canberra Airport.

General aviation operations at Canberra Airport currently include:

- ACT Emergency Services aviation wing (including bushfire-fighting capability in summer);
- Australian Federal Police air wing;
- Aircraft maintenance facilities;
- Significant business jet operations;
- Significant air ambulance operation, with regular services from the Royal Flying Doctor Service, NSW Air Ambulance and Wingaway;

- Aircraft charter operators for passengers and freight; and
- Private recreation flying.

The general aviation sector, in particular freight, business jets, pilot training, and emergency services, is expected to return to growth over the next five years.

Canberra Airport believes it is possible to secure a major flight training facility for pilots that would involve a significant increase in general aviation operations and requirements for aircraft parking aprons and hangars, as well as associated training facilities and dormitory accommodation. This facility would be located in the Glenora or Fairbairn precincts.

General aviation facilities are currently located in the Pialligo precinct of Canberra Airport to the west of the passenger terminal, although capacity constraints at the current facility mean larger general aviation aircraft operate from the Fairbairn apron. However, with growth in general aviation potentially conflicting with growth in regular passenger and freight operations in the terminal and Pialligo precincts, and with the provision of, and expected growth in, terminal support services in these precincts, Canberra Airport will relocate part of general aviation from the Pialligo precinct, east of the main runway, to Fairbairn or the Glenora precinct during the planning period of this 2014 Master Plan.

Relocation to an area not adjoining the RPT apron should result in a reduction in security requirements for general aviation operations although ultimately this will be determined by Government.

Canberra Airport also notes private proposals for a separate general aviation aerodrome or airfield within the ACT. Canberra Airport does not oppose the development of such a facility, provided its location and operations do not interfere in any way with the current and future operations of Canberra Airport and do not direct aircraft noise over residential areas of Canberra and the region.

As Canberra Airport's traffic grows general aviation and other smaller aircraft may be restricted during times of high demand as higher capacity aircraft are given priority. This is in line with practices at the majority of other major civil airports in Australia and overseas.

7.2 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE OPERATIONS

Department of Defence aviation has always had an important role at Canberra Airport, originally through the operation of RAAF Base Fairbairn on the north-eastern side of the Airport. Whilst the RAAF Base itself was closed in 2004, there continues to be a significant Department of Defence presence at the Airport.

The basing of the RAAF 34 Squadron aircraft fleet at Canberra Airport, providing VIP transport operations for Government, provides positive impetus for increased Department of Defence activity at Canberra Airport in the future. The current 34 Squadron fleet incorporates Boeing business jet (B737) aircraft and Challenger 604 corporate jets. Whilst Department of Defence advise there are no current plans to increase the SPA fleet, this 2014 Master Plan allows for any future requirement to increase Government SPA or other Department of Defence operations at Canberra Airport, including any larger aircraft to transport Government officials to overseas destinations. Any such future increase in the SPA fleet may require additional apron, hangar, and office space to be constructed at the Airport.

Canberra Airport would actively support any increase in Department of Defence aviation at the Airport, including but not limited to flight training, helicopter operations or other aircraft operations.

Qantas Defence Services has previously operated a heavy maintenance facility for the RAAF C-130 Hercules fleet in the Brindabella Business Park. Any of the larger facilities on the Airport could expect to be operated as a heavy maintenance facility for Department of Defence aircraft during the life of this 2014 Master Plan.

Ad-hoc RAAF and foreign military aircraft also visit Canberra Airport, either for transport, training, or display purposes, including the RAAF C-17 jet transport aircraft. Large United States Air Force transport aircraft such as C-17's and KC-10's are also regular visitors to Canberra Airport. Visiting military aircraft generally operate from the 34 Squadron facility, although on occasion additional parking space is required on the civil Fairbairn apron.

7.3 VIP OPERATIONS

Canberra Airport receives a significant number of visits per year by visiting foreign dignitaries, often using heavy wide-body aircraft. In 2006 the main runway 17/35 was lengthened and strengthened to better cater for these aircraft movements.

Visiting VIP aircraft are generally handled from the 34 Squadron facility including the dedicated VIP passenger terminal located adjacent to the 34 Squadron headquarters building. However, at times aircraft must be located on the civil Fairbairn apron to accommodate other aircraft operations from the 34 Squadron facility.

This 2014 Master Plan allows for the expansion of the 34 Squadron facility to accommodate further Australian and foreign VIP aircraft operations.

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