

7. General Aviation and military operations

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As the Airport serving the nation's capital, the General Aviation and military aviation sectors are key components of the aviation capability of Canberra Airport, and are expected to remain so for the life of this Master Plan.

The expansion of infrastructure catering to General Aviation and military operations will be in response to demand. Through this 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.

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Table 5.6 in Chapter 5 outlines the forecast growth in General Aviation, Military and VIP movements at Canberra Airport to 2029/30. These are incorporated in the 'other' movements category (along with freight movements). 'Other' aircraft movements have been forecast to grow at 2.9% per annum (mid-range) until 2016/17, after which it is expected to slow to 1%, with an anticipated slowing in General Aviation movements (although freight, military and VIP movements are expected to continue to increase).

7.1 General Aviation Operations

General Aviation operations continue to constitute a significant proportion of the operations 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 a substantial bushfire-fighting fleet in summer);
- Australian Federal Police air wing;
- Pilot training school;
- 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 flying.

The General Aviation sector, in particular freight, bizjets, pilot training and emergency services, is expected to grow over the next five years.

Canberra Airport also 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. Canberra Airport notes that whilst private General Aviation users may fall over the planning period of this Master Plan, Canberra Airport still expects there to be a need for commercial pilots, especially when the current economic conditions improve.

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 that 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 continue to talk to, and reach agreement with, users of the Airport to relocate General Aviation from the Pialligo precinct to Fairbairn or the Glenora precinct during the life of the Master Plan.

Furthermore, Commonwealth Government-imposed aviation security requirements at major airports have unfortunately imposed a significant cost and inconvenience burden on recreational General Aviation operations. In this heightened security environment, it is noted that the current location of the General Aviation area adjacent to the RPT apron is not appropriate in the long term.

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 will 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 Military Operations

Military aviation has always had a key role at Canberra Airport, originally through the operation of RAAF Base Fairbairn on the north-eastern side of the Airport. Whilst the entire Airport site is now under civil administration, there continues to be a significant military 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 military activity at Canberra Airport in the future. The current 34 Squadron fleet incorporates Boeing Business Jet (B737) aircraft and Challenger 604 corporate jets. Whilst Defence advise that there are no current plans to increase the Special Purpose Aircraft (SPA) fleet, this Master Plan allows for any future requirement to increase Government SPA or other military operations at Canberra Airport, possibly including a 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 Fairbairn.

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

Qantas Defence Services also operates a heavy maintenance facility for the RAAF C-130 Hercules fleet in the Brindabella Business Park, further increasing military aviation activity at the Airport. Whilst the maintenance of C-130 aircraft is soon to be relocated interstate, it is expected that alternative aircraft heavy maintenance activities will be conducted at the facility in the future.

Ad-hoc RAAF and foreign military aircraft also visit Canberra Airport, either for transport, training or display purposes, including the RAAF's new ultra-large C-17 four-engined jet transport aircraft. Large US 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. Since the approved 2005 Master Plan, the main Runway 17/35 has been 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 Master Plan allows for the expansion of the 34 Squadron facility to accommodate further Australian and Foreign VIP aircraft operations.