

**This submission is primarily made in relation to the ongoing Defence use of the RAAF Williams Defence complex consisting of the former RAAF Station at Laverton, and the former RAAF Station at Point Cook, with prime focus on the retention of Point Cook as a working heritage base consistent with its status on the National Heritage List.**

My name is Mark Pilkington, I was the secretary of the Point Cook Airfield Preservation Action Group from 1998, represented that group in the Don Heyward Steering Committee working groups of 2001-2003, testified to the Senate Inquiry into the disposal of Defence sites, negotiated directly with Fran Bailey for the retention of Point Cook in government hands and development of the National Aviation Museum Trust proposal, was a member of the Trust Establishment Group undertook discussions with AVM Blackburn (DCAF) in 2006, and various Parl Sec of Defence such as Sandy Mc Donald and Peter Lindsay 2006-7, and in 2004 authored and submitted the nomination of Point Cook to the Commonwealth Heritage List and National Heritage List to Minister for Heritage David Kemp, I also authored a small booklet providing a brief history of the aviation and built heritage of Point Cook.

I am therefore an informed and interested citizen wishing to comment on this Defence Posture Review with particular reference to the retention of Point Cook as a “working heritage base” in line with the 2007 Government planning principles and RAAF plans, and not as a High Security Operational Base as apparently currently intended..

### **SUMMARY**

Point Cook is Australia’s oldest aviation heritage site, and is the only historical site managed by Defence that is listed on the National Heritage List, it is possibly of World Heritage Status given its historic WW1 Seaplane base and CFS training school existing on the Southern Tarmac.

While it is appropriate to retain Point Cook as a working Heritage Base given its status on the National Heritage List, it is not appropriate for Point Cook and the historic Southern Tarmac to be used for high security and operational activities given the regular civilian and public access to the base itself, the coastline and nearby coastal waters, and the adjoining coastal metropolitan park.

### **RECOMMENDATION IN REGARD TO POINT COOK**

It would be far more appropriate to extend the commercial / heritage precinct down to much of the historic Southern Tarmac for regular access by Civil aviation and the General Public and ensure most if not all existing heritage buildings could be made available for occupancy and use, including public access and use of the historic 1916 seaplane jetty and allow for greater public access to these important heritage buildings in line with the Underlying Principle to locate Defence activities in such a way as to facilitate public access and use.

The declaration of the entire airfield and southern tarmac as a Defence operational precinct is not consistent with that government policy and planning principle, and is well beyond the planning principles announced by Government in 2007 to establish a working heritage base. Point Cook should be primarily used to house Defence and Airforce activities that are compatible with open public access and side by side civilian aviation activity, these include:

- RAAF Museum,
- AirForce Band
- Air Cadets Headquarters
- Air Cadets Camps
- Air Force Historical Section
- Air Force Recruiting

The re-population of Point Cook by Defence is requiring apparently @\$40M of in ground infrastructure upgrade inclusive of power/water/comms, and a further apparent \$33M to relocate operational activities from Laverton to Point Cook is questionable..

A revised Master Plan layout of precincts and entry methods focused on public access, together with a re-visit of a Community Trust model under a lease from Defence, to manage the public areas, and maintenance and civilian use of surplus heritage buildings could access similar heritage funding to that gained for Point Nepean, and provide a stable and continuous management model for this important National Aviation Heritage site

Attached are the following site layouts of the Point Cook site, these are:

**1. 2002 SKM / Don Heyward Steering Committee – future use**

Note the large area of public access particularly south of the parade ground, along with the New Apron and hangar area to the North.

**2. 2004 Fran Bailey proposal to sell Point Cook.**

Note the large area of public access particularly south of the parade ground, along with the New Apron and hangar area to the North.

**3. 2007 RAAF proposal for a working heritage base**

Note the airfield is listed as a Public precinct and there is no apparent security or access limitations proposed for the historic Southern Tarmac.

**4. 2010 current apparent Defence intentions for an “Operational Precinct”** covering the airfield and the Southern Tarmac, that limits public access south of the parade ground, including any access to the southern tarmac, the most historic part of the base.

**5. The same layout showing the impact of Defence precincts** and limitations on public access to the majority of this National Heritage Site.

**6. An alternative layout returning to much of the intended outcomes** of the 2002, 2004 and 2007 layouts as proposed by SKM/Don Hayward, Fran Bailey and the RAAF.

**7. That same layout showing the improved public access** and secure Defence precinct.

**8. A revised layout of the base showing a high Security Defence Precinct in the North of the Base**, and public access via the Eastern Gate to the central and southern areas of the base, the Defence precinct could retain sole use of the Northern Gate and the intended northern tarmac for civil aviation could be relocated elsewhere, ie to the south.

**9. An Alternative Civil Aviation Precinct to the south of the Parade Ground**, providing for public access and removing the need for civil aviation access to the northern precinct area, maximising that area’s security.

**10. An alternative future “mixed use” of the historic southern tarmac** to maximise public access and utilisation of the historic buildings and jetty, retaining a high security maintenance / support area for Black Hawk Helicopters utilising 2 existing Bellman Hangars and limiting public access beyond the western end of Hangar 213, but providing full public access to the rest of the Southern Tarmac, this includes retention of the rifle range in a secure fenced environment, but creates the opportunity for the facility to be used by Defence and civilian users.

## **RAAF WILLIAMS - POINT COOK**

RAAF Williams is a base consisting of two separate sites, the former RAAF Laverton and the Former RAAF Point Cook.

The sites are approximately 20km south west of Melbourne with the Laverton site being located on the Melbourne to Geelong freeway with near direct freeway access from both its northern end (not currently used) and its southern end which is its main gate.

Point Cook consists of a land side area of 1.0 km x 0.5km excluding the operational areas of the airfield.

It is located 6km south of Laverton and is being encroached by residential development, it is poorly served by freeway access or rail/public transport, and the main road in and out of the area is suffering overuse due to the volume of residential development outstripping the arterial road capacity.

Laverton had its airfield sold off in the 1990s for housing redevelopment due to the shortness of the runways not being suitable for operations of the combat and heavy lift RAAF aircraft. (two 1400M runways).

In 1992 flying training ceased at Point Cook and the two bases were amalgamated into a single RAAF Williams base with an intention to close one or both.

During the 1990's both Laverton and Point Cook were considered for the siting of a National Aviation Museum.

Following a defence review in the late 1990's it was decided that Point Cook would be closed and sold off in the early 2000's due to its runways being even less suitable for operations of the combat and heavy lift RAAF aircraft ( 1000M and 1300M runways).

Since that time Point Cook's unique built heritage values have been fully realised and it has since been placed on the National Heritage List, the only current site in the Defence Estate of that ranking other than natural environmental sites that sit within training and exercise areas.

Point Cook is Australia's oldest aviation heritage site, and is the only historical site managed by Defence that is listed on the National Heritage List, it is possibly of World Heritage Status given its historic WW1 Seaplane base and CFS training school existing on the Southern Tarmac.

Point Cook was considered for operation under a community trust model under a proposal in 2004 by the Parliamentary Secretary Fran Bailey, as undertaken at the 5 former RAN National Heritage sites forming the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, and the former Army National Heritage site at Point Nepean.

Instead in 2005 the then Parliamentary Secretary Teresa Gambaro proposed that Point Cook would remain in Defence control and since 2006 Defence has been undertaking a Defence Estate Review to re-populate Point Cook.

In 2007 the then Parliamentary Secretary Sandy McDonald announced the Underlying Planning Principles for Point Cook which stated:

*I have agreed with a recommendation to separate the Defence operational and public areas of the base into discrete precincts with appropriate levels of access.*

*The public precinct will accommodate authorised commercial leases that use spare capacity of the airfield, the RAAF Museum and heritage buildings, and the Point Cook Primary and Pre-schools," Mr Lindsay said.*

*"RAAF Williams Point Cook will continue to be maintained by Defence as an operating airfield able to support military flying operations when required, as well as by the RAAF Museum.*

*The airfield will continue to be used, under arrangement, by civilian flying operators, although over time, commercial arrangements will be put in place similar to those at other airfields."*

*Vision:*

- RAAF Williams Point Cook will be an open 'Working Heritage Base', capable of conducting operations while preserving and displaying Air Force and Australian aviation heritage.*
- It will be open to the public to promote public awareness of Australia's aviation history.*
- It will inspire Australia's youth by providing experiential learning in many facets of military and civil aviation.*
- Given the relative proximity of RAAF Williams Point Cook to the Melbourne CBD, it is proposed that RAAF Williams Point Cook continue to be able to support military flying operations when required, particularly as a contingency to support national security requirements.*
- Such operations would be accommodated as required. Provision for such use is essential in the base master plan.*

*Underpinning Planning Principles:*

*The following underpinning planning principles are agreed:*

- RAAF Base Point Cook will remain in Defence ownership and management.*
- The RAAF Museum will remain at RAAF Base Point Cook.*
- Future use of RAAF Base Point Cook is to have full regard to Defence's responsibilities under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and the site's nomination for placement on the National Heritage List.*
- Appropriate, adaptive reuse of buildings of particular heritage value is the preferred management strategy.*
- Point Cook is to continue to be maintained by Defence as an operating airfield. It is to be able to support military flying operations when required, as well as by the RAAF Museum. The airfield is to continue to be used, under arrangement, by civilian flying operators, but it is expected that over time commercial arrangements will be put in place similar to those at other airfields.*
  - The future use and management of RAAF Base Point Cook (including the location of Defence functions and activities) is to be cognisant of, and facilitate, public access and use.*
  - Future Defence use of the Base is to have regard to the location of the Point Cook State School and Pre-school.*
- RAAF Bases Laverton and RAAF Base Point Cook are to be retained in the longer term.*
- Funding will need to be sourced to undertake the necessary upgrade works to site facilities, to provide for the ongoing maintenance requirements and to enable other Defence elements (predominantly Air Force) to re-locate to RAAF Base Point Cook.*

In reality the Defence planning for Point Cook has been heading towards excluding public access from much of the base, and in particular the most historic part of the base, the WW1 Southern Tarmac which contains the oldest surviving aviation buildings in Australia, along with constraining civil aviation use of the base in terms of aircraft licenced to operate on the site, or to be accommodated on site by limiting them to a new Northern Tarmac area just south of the main northern boundary.

However in reality the Point Cook airfield remains un-suitable to operations of current combat or heavy lift RAAF aircraft as the C-17 is able to land at Point Cook “unloaded” and therefore for no useful purpose.

Point Cook is used for the occasional Black Hawk training operations or Melbourne major event support however such activities are few and far between and do not warrant the permanent closing of the Southern Tarmac to public access, as those very occasional operations could be accommodated at the far east end of the Southern Tarmac with a security fence stopping public access beyond the western end of Hangar 213 or 214.

The current main defence activity at Point Cook is the RAAF Museum, although a current proposal exists to re-populate Point Cook as an operational Defence Heritage Base with up to 400 servicemen being based on site, to divide the base into 3 broad precincts:

**The Defence Accommodation Precinct:**

This incorporates the entire former RAAF Academy complex from the North west corner down to and including the Officers Mess.

It is unclear how much of the former RAAF Academy lecture and science rooms Defence intends to utilise and an alternative public / civilian access outcome might see that facility better utilised by a tertiary Engineering educational organisation such as RMIT? for its Engineering Degree studies, these could be combined with Swinburne University and perhaps even local studies from the Werribee Victoria University Campus.

**The Commercial / Heritage Precinct:**

This permits entry from the northern gate down Williams Road, and provides public access to the RAAF Museum, the intended civilian aviation precinct along the new northern tarmac, and a collection of heritage buildings consisting of the WW1 Officers Mess, WW1 married quarters, the parade ground and AFC Memorial. **NOTE: This is effectively the limit of public access to the site, and severely limits the ability for non-defence use to utilise and preserve many of the heritage buildings on the site.**

**The Operational Precinct:**

This restricts entry south of the parade ground and includes the entire airfield, the rifle range, and the entire historic WW1 Southern Tarmac, the most important historical portion of the base.

The Defence Air Force re-population proposes to permanently relocate the following activities onto Point Cook:

Airforce Band (into the Commercial / Heritage Precinct)

The following activities to be relocated from existing accommodation at Laverton:

Combat Support Unit

1 AFDS unit

21 squadron

It is also possible Commando activities may relocate from Williamstown Fort Gellibrand if the Defence Estate review is able to close that facility.

All of these units are proposed to be accommodated together on the Southern Tarmac in buildings 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 101, 104, to share armoury and other resources.

However this causes the RAAF museum to lose valuable large hangar storage space, and leaves heritage buildings 90, 221, 210, 211, 212, 213 and 214 vacant and un-used, and at risk of neglect and deterioration. The “arguments” for these units to be permanently relocated to Point Cook is for the very occasional support of Black Hawk operations, a far cheaper alternative is to minimise the footprint required for Black Hawk operations to Hangar 213 & 214 and a new hard standing to the east of that hangar and to operate the CSU and AFDS as an attachment from their existing home base at Laverton via occupation of Hangars 213 & 214 for the occasions when such use is required.

Alternatively Black Hawk Helicopters apparently have a cruise speed of 150 knots or 278 km/h and range of 592km? therefore support of Melbourne major events could alternatively be supported from either Puckapunyal (100km NE) or Avalon (50km SW), and Avalon offers a far more comprehensive Melbourne “bare base” opportunity to be managed, resourced as a detachment from RAAF Williams and to be capable of operating the full range of operational Defence Aircraft in a far more secure and secluded manner. It is not appropriate for Point Cook and the historic Southern Tarmac to be used for such operational activities given the regular civilian and public access to the base itself, the coastline and nearby coastal waters, and the adjoining coastal metropolitan park.

It would be far more appropriate to extend the commercial / heritage precinct down to much of the historic Southern Tarmac for regular access by Civil aviation and the General Public and ensure most if not all existing heritage buildings could be made available for occupancy and use, including public access and use of the historic 1916 seaplane jetty and allow for greater public access to these important heritage buildings in line with the Underlying Principle to locate Defence activities in such a way as to facilitate public access and use. The declaration of the entire airfield and southern tarmac as a Defence operational precinct is not consistent with that government policy and planning principle.

Point Cook should be primarily used to house Defence and Airforce activities that are compatible with open public access and side by side civilian aviation activity, these include:

- RAAF Museum,
- AirForce Band
- Air Cadets Headquarters
- Air Cadets Camps
- Air Force Historical Section
- Air Force Recruiting

The re-population of Point Cook by Defence is requiring apparently in the order of \$40M of in ground infrastructure upgrade inclusive of power/water/comms.

The relocation of the RAAF Band to Point Cook is apparently to cost in the order of \$11M? and that relocation into the Commercial/Heritage Precinct seems a suitable investment.

The upgrade of the RAAF Museum into new facilities at an apparent cost of \$60M to \$64M is required to better house this nationally significant aviation heritage collection in a new purpose built 11,000SQM facility, and the RAAF Museum is long overdue for appropriate funding having survived on a shoe string since its creation in 1952, however were the Federal Government to agree to spend such money it would seem relevant to re-visit the whole National Aviation Museum question and consider co-siting such an outcome with the RAAF Museum at Point Cook to maximise the taxpayer investment?

## **Southern Tarmac Precinct**

However the relocation of the RAAF Williams Combat Support Unit to the Southern Tarmac is estimated to cost \$26M and this seems an un-necessary and avoidable cost as against retaining CSU at its existing accommodation at Laverton, or establishing a full defence air support capability in the form of an attachment and activating it at Point Cook when necessary, thereby minimising limitations of public access to those few times.

It is understood that part of the relocation of the Combat Support Unit may include the establishment of a Melbourne Area Armoury, and that might be sited in the historic Southern Tarmac. This site has beach front access from the coast where a marine park permits direct public approach, and coastline access from the east from the coastal park, and from the west from public and private land, it seems a ludicrous location to try and secure a major armoury, and such an activity should ideally be located at nearby Laverton where a far higher level of security can be achieved due to the secure fence lines and lack of public access requirements to that site.

As an alternative such an activity might be established at Point Cook if placed in the Northern Defence "Accommodation Precinct where fence line security can be far better achieved.

The relocation of 21 Squadron and 1 AFDS from Laverton to Point Cook will cost an apparent additional \$7M regardless of location within the working accommodation precinct or the "operational zone" on the Southern Tarmac and it would be better to locate these in the working accommodation precinct or retain them at Laverton in their existing location with expenditure on that site to improve those facilities.

These combined costs in the order of \$33M on the Southern Tarmac are not solely reflecting the costs of refurbishing historic buildings and include significant costs for administrative facilities, warehousing, refuelling, armoury, vehicle storage, explosive storage, refuelling, creation of messing facilities all to support very occasional Black Hawk operations to the base for annual training or perhaps 5 yearly support of Major Heads of Government events in Melbourne.

The apparent intended use of Hangar 101 as a Hangar for Black Hawks requires the demolition of one or more of the 4 Bellman Hangars on the Southern Tarmac and that is a retrograde step not consistent with protecting the heritage of the site.

The occasional support of visiting Black Hawks could simply be achieved with a purpose built hard standing to the west of hangar 214 on the Southern Tarmac, and use of Hangar 214 (or 213 & 214) as a Point Cook annexe to CSU / 21 Sqn and 1 AFDS remaining based at the more secure Laverton facility, without the need to close off the entire historic Southern Tarmac to public access and civil use.

However Black Hawk Helicopters apparently have a cruise speed of 150 knots or 278 km/h and range of 592km? therefore support of Melbourne major events could alternatively be supported from either Puckapunyal (100km NE) or Avalon (50km SW), as against Point Cook being 20km away from the CBD. Operation from those alternative locations would create an additional delay in arriving at CBD in the order of 17 additional minutes from Puckapunyal or 7 minutes from Avalon?

Such an outcome would be a far lower cost to the taxpayer, seem to provide for a more useful Air Defence capability in the Melbourne region, and would free up the majority of the Southern Tarmac and indeed more of Point Cook for heritage / tourism and civil aviation use opportunities.

## HERITAGE MANAGEMENT OF POINT COOK

Defence has recently submitted a Heritage Management Plan by ERA in 2008 to the Minister for Environment and Heritage under its EPBC Act obligations.

That HMP contradicts some of the intended future uses Defence is planning for Point Cook under its high security Operational Base model, the following are extracts of my public submission to the Point Cook HMP when it was out for public comment in 2009.

Section 2.5 Future Use This section discusses the Future Use considerations including re-activation of RAAF Williams Point Cook as a “Working Heritage Base” yet there is no reference at all to the “Underlying Planning Principles” issued as policy by the Parl. Sec for Defence Peter Lindsay in September 2007 and in particular the following:

*The future use and management of RAAF Base Point Cook (including the location of Defence functions and activities) is to be cognisant of, and facilitate, public access and use. • Future Defence use of the Base is to have regard to the location of the Point Cook State School and Pre-school. • RAAF Bases Laverton and RAAF Base Point Cook are to be retained in the longer term. • Funding will need to be sourced to undertake the necessary upgrade works to site facilities, to provide for the ongoing maintenance requirements.*

The current Defence plans to close off public access and use of the most important heritage precinct on the base, the Southern Tarmac for “operational purposes”, is not consistent with facilitating public access.

The HCMP correctly identifies on page 6 in clauses 2.3.1 Maintenance that "The primary risk to the Heritage Values at Point Cook is through disuse, leading to lack of maintenance, and repairs, consequently resulting in deterioration of building fabric, Unused buildings quickly deteriorate.... results in buildings that are unsafe for use, unfit for purpose, and unattractive as restoration projects, often resulting in demolition as the most viable solution."

The report notes that 60% of the base is currently un-occupied, and if those buildings remain empty and not required for Defence purposes they will not be maintained, and suffer eventual demolition, the current “blue base” strategy of Defence removes all civilian aviation to the north of the base, and removes any ability for non-Defence use of the heritage buildings, other than the pre-school and State school.

Under 2.3.2 Compatible Use the HMP identifies that “*there is a potential for a number of different uses for various precincts on the base, at that the location and types of fences ... must be considered carefully to maintain consistency to the original planning concept.*”

Under 2.3.4 Security, the HCMP identifies that increased security is being required across Defence bases and that the current museum access may be limited in the future due to heightened security restrictions.

Defence already has a very secure base at Laverton, with no need to support public access for civil aviation or museum visitations, and there is a need to re-think the intention to relocate significant “operational” and security sensitive resources from that secure base to Point Cook, and still be able to ensure significant public access. This issue is more important given the foiled terrorist attacks on Holsworthy Army base.

Section 2.3.4 and 3.1.2 in regards to Security proposes to manage Point Cook in accordance with the latest Defence security requirements, and it is therefore clear that the “operational” activities being proposed for Point Cook are NOT consistent with the “underlying planning principles” and that those principles are not being used as the basis of Defence planning.

Section 3.1.5 proposes a policy of seeking compatible uses for Point Cook buildings and precincts, and the 2003 Point Cook steering committee investigated such options, however the current Defence precinct designs severely limits civilian use to most of the vacant buildings including all of the Southern Tarmac, and therefore threatens buildings that Defence cannot use (such as building 90 the 1922 Motor Transport Garage or building 108 the Seaplane Jetty) with remaining vacant and being neglected and eventually demolished to avoid Defence spending on buildings it is not using.

Section 3.2.1 Deals with the Southern Tarmac, the most important and historically significant part of the base, with the earliest aviation buildings in Australia, from the pre-WW1 hangars of 1914, the WW1 Hangars of 1917, the interwar buildings from 1919 and the 1920's, it predates all other aviation related buildings in the Nation both civil or military.

Yet the importance of that precinct is not reflected in its value as a whole, unlike the “heritage Precinct” planned around the married quarters.

While some buildings are listed as Exceptional and high, the group is unclassified at all, yet clearly worthy of being “Exceptional” as a group. In addition the overall intactness of the Southern Tarmac precinct and the future of a number of individual buildings are at great risk due to neglect of buildings due to the lack of Defence use, and the lack of access for Civilian use.

In addition there are current plans by Defence to build new buildings in this precinct, demolish buildings from the WW2 and post war period, and an apparent attempt to try and recreate the precinct back to its 1930's layout by moving building 210, the historic 1914 Aeroplane Hangar onto the site of the Bellman's when they are demolished. However it is clear that is a “third” and inappropriate site, not a return to the “original” site, and any move will destroy more of the heritage of building 210 and its existing building fabric that any re-siting will “reinstate”.

The HMP must ensure the historically sensitive Southern Tarmac site is managed as a collective precinct, and not naively modified to create a “quays” 1930's streetscape at the cost of interwar, WW2 and post war buildings that are just as important to the overall Southern Tarmac story.

The HMP must also ensure that no new construction is undertaken on the heritage sensitive Southern Tarmac site, the heritage values should not be damaged by “Operational” issues that may only be a transient and infrequent use of the precinct in any case.

Defence is seeking to close off the public access to the most significant historic part of the base, the Southern Tarmac. This is assumed “to set it aside to support military flying operations when required, particularly as a contingency to support national security requirements. Such operations would be accommodated as required.”

Yet such operations are very few and far between, but are resulting in many historic buildings on the Southern Tarmac being considered "not fit for purpose, and not required for Defence use" but also not available for civilian use.

Point Cook is the only National Heritage Site remaining in the Defence control and it seems clear Defence does not have the focus or resources to maintain it.

Of the 4 Bellman Hangars on the Southern Tarmac, 2 are rare examples of the original samples sent out from the UK, (all others in Australia and at Point Cook are locally made examples), but have been slated for demolition . While their uniqueness is well known and even referenced in a public display within the RAAF Museum, it is not recognised at all in the CMP and the buildings are therefore considered of moderate significance and "demolition considered appropriate" as per page 27.

Yet with some refurbishment they would be very suitable for use by civilian aviation, as they had previously been used for many years. In fact in 2006 4 long term tenants of the Bellman Hangars were evicted (on claims of the Hangars were unsafe and requiring demolishment - contrary to independent engineering advice), and since that time the Hangars have remained unused and vacant, deteriorating further. This has resulted in Defence foregoing the @\$50,000 annual income previously generated, which over this last 4 years could have generated @\$200k to fund recladding of the roof's, and reinstatement of the stormwater guttering and down pipes to avoid ongoing water damage to the building structure.

Clearly the two rare UK built examples would be considered "High" significance not only to Point Cook but nationally across Australia..

An important heritage issue is the WW1 seaplane jetty on the Southern Tarmac, recognised in this report as being of Exceptional significance, and recommending investment of funding to preserve it for use by "*relevant user groups*" (page 26) , yet Defence has done no preventative maintenance on the jetty for years, and its highly unlikely that without regular public access requirements to the jetty that Defence will provide any funding at all to maintain it as there is no "Defence" use for the jetty.

There is need of further work on the HMP treatment of the Southern Tarmac to ensure protection of both the WW1 and later buildings regardless of intended use by Defence.

The Report does not appear to recognise the collective group of buildings on the Southern Tarmac as being the most important part of the base? contrasting table E.14 "Significance of Southern Tarmac Assets" which only lists the 25 various "Aviation" buildings in individual categories from intrusive (1), low (3), Moderate (9), High (7) and Exceptional (4), where as the WW1 and interwar group of 13 married quarters (houses) listed in Table E.16 "Significance of Staff Residences Precinct Assets" are all individually listed as "High" (13) and notated that the it is considered that collectively, the group is of an "Exceptional level of value"??

Point Cook is Australia's most important AVIATION heritage site, the values that place it on the Commonwealth and National Heritage List is its links to Australia's Aviation History, it is therefore beyond belief that the Heritage Management Plan and assessment is that the most "Exceptional" precinct of buildings existing at Point Cook is 13 uniform wooden houses not unlike those found on early Army or Navy bases un-related to Aviation activities?

It is therefore clear many of the historic buildings on the base, and particularly on the Southern Tarmac will be left unutilised, and therefore targeted by Defence for demolition.

The current Defence layout and implementation of the "working heritage base" is creating great risk to the ongoing preservation of the historic buildings on site, there needs to be a re-think of the Master Plan for the Heritage Base in light of the National Heritage Listing and in compliance with the Government's direction in its underlying planning principles of 2007 for "*the future use and management of RAAF Base Point Cook (including the location of Defence functions and activities) is to be cognisant of, and facilitate, public access and use.*"

There is an URGENT need for DEHWA to step in and take control of the management of the site and provide immediate heritage funding as undertaken at similar National Heritage sites such as Point Nepean and the Sydney Harbour Trust sites.

In 2000 the Federal Government set up the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust with funding of \$90M to manage, preserve and develop public access and usage of 6 former Defence sites at Middle Head, Georges Heights, North Head, Woolwich and Cockatoo Island.

A more direct comparison is the creation in 2004 of the Point Nepean Community Trust with funding of \$48M to manage, preserve and develop public access and usage of the former Defence Point Nepean site, inclusive of \$31M to restore and develop the Quarantine Station / Norris Barracks buildings.

While the “Working Base” model is intended to retain an ongoing Defence relationship with the site, a worthwhile objective, it has effectively left the site and important buildings in limbo for the last 6 years, awaiting future funding that may never come, or be too late.

In the 6 years since being placed on the CHL in 2004, and subsequent replacement of the Trust outcome at Point Cook the only significant heritage building maintenance undertaken at Point Cook was to replace the asbestos roof on the 1914 Aeroplane Workshops (building 95), and 1927 Seaplane Hangar (building 101), many others are suffering leaking roof’s, leaking or non-existent guttering and down pipes, flaking or missing paint, resulting in the timber frames and weatherboard structures rotting rapidly.

A revised Master Plan layout of precincts and entry methods focused on public access, together with a re-visit of a Community Trust model under a lease from Defence, to manage the public areas, and maintenance and civilian use of surplus heritage buildings could access similar heritage funding to that gained for Point Nepean, and provide a stable and continuous management model for this important National Aviation Heritage site.

The Historic buildings of Point Cook cannot afford to await another 3 or 4 years for Defence to allocate some funding for maintenance, or for the buildings to collapse to neglect, action is required in this Centenary of Australian Aviation, to ensure Point Cook’s heritage buildings will survive for the site’s own centenary in 2014.

## **CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION IN REGARD TO POINT COOK**

It would be far more appropriate to extend the commercial / heritage precinct down to much of the historic Southern Tarmac for regular access by Civil aviation and the General Public and ensure most if not all existing heritage buildings could be made available for occupancy and use, including public access and use of the historic 1916 seaplane jetty and allow for greater public access to these important heritage buildings in line with the Underlying Principle to locate Defence activities in such a way as to facilitate public access and use.

The declaration of the entire airfield and southern tarmac as a Defence operational precinct is not consistent with that government policy and planning principle, and is well beyond the planning principles announced by Government in 2007 to establish a working heritage base.

Point Cook should be primarily used to house Defence and Airforce activities that are compatible with open public access and side by side civilian aviation activity, these include:

RAAF Museum,  
AirForce Band  
Air Cadets Headquarters  
Air Cadets Camps  
Air Force Historical Section  
Air Force Recruiting

The re-population of Point Cook by Defence is requiring apparently @\$40M of in ground infrastructure upgrade inclusive of power/water/comms, and a further apparent \$33M to relocate operational activities from Laverton to Point Cook is questionable..

A revised Master Plan layout of precincts and entry methods focused on public access, together with a re-visit of a Community Trust model under a lease from Defence, to manage the public areas, and maintenance and civilian use of surplus heritage buildings could access similar heritage funding to that gained for Point Nepean, and provide a stable and continuous management model for this important National Aviation Heritage site

Attached are the following site layouts of the Point Cook site, these are:

**1. 2002 SKM / Don Heyward Steering Committee – future use**

Note the large area of public access particularly south of the parade ground, along with the New Apron and hangar area to the North.

**2. 2004 Fran Bailey proposal to sell Point Cook.**

Note the large area of public access particularly south of the parade ground, along with the New Apron and hangar area to the North.

**3. 2007 RAAF proposal for a working heritage base**

Note the airfield is listed as a Public precinct and there is no apparent security or access limitations proposed for the historic Southern Tarmac.

**4. 2010 current apparent Defence intentions for an “Operational Precinct”** covering the airfield and the Southern Tarmac, that limits public access south of the parade ground, including any access to the southern tarmac, the most historic part of the base.

**5. The same layout showing the impact of Defence precincts** and limitations on public access to the majority of this National Heritage Site.

**6. An alternative layout returning to much of the intended outcomes** of the 2002, 2004 and 2007 layouts as proposed by SKM/Don Hayward, Fran Bailey and the RAAF.

**7. That same layout showing the improved public access** and secure Defence precinct.

**8. A revised layout of the base showing a high Security Defence Precinct in the North of the Base,** and public access via the Eastern Gate to the central and southern areas of the base, the Defence precinct could retain sole use of the Northern Gate and the intended northern tarmac for civil aviation could be relocated elsewhere, ie to the south.

**9. An Alternative Civil Aviation Precinct to the south of the Parade Ground,** providing for public access and removing the need for civil aviation access to the northern precinct area, maximising that area’s security.

**10. An alternative future “mixed use” of the historic southern tarmac** to maximise public access and utilisation of the historic buildings and jetty, retaining a high security maintenance / support area for Black Hawk Helicopters utilising 2 existing Bellman Hangars and limiting public access beyond the western end of Hangar 213, but providing full public access to the rest of the Southern Tarmac, this includes retention of the rifle range in a secure fenced environment, but creates the opportunity for the facility to be used by Defence and civilian users.

The following are brief comments on other defence facilities in Victoria.

### **RAAF WILLIAMS - LAVERTON**

Laverton is currently the primary location of RAAF Support Command, and other Defence functions including:

ADF School of Languages  
Defence International Training Centre  
No 21 City of Melbourne Squadron (Air Force Reserve)  
No 1 Airfield Defence Squadron  
Expeditionary Health Squadron  
Combat Support Unit  
Airforce Band

Existing operational combat support activities such as CSU, AFDS, 21 Sqn should be being retained at Laverton where there is no requirement for public access and security can be maximised, and any closure of metropolitan bases such as the Williamstown Fort Gellibrand and relocation of Commando forces should concentrate those operational activities at Laverton where direct rail access and freeway access provides ideal commuter access, truck and transport access.

Laverton has an existing landside footprint of 1.2km x 1.0 km (ie no airfield remains)

Vacant land suitable for defence development  
= 0.4km x 1.0 km = existing golf course  
= 0.25km x 0.6km = existing oval.

Vacant creek land suitable for recreational use – golf driving range / oval  
= 0.4km x 0.6km

Laverton is a very suitable base to concentrate Airforce, Army and civilian staff of Defence with the closure of other Melbourne / Metropolitan bases.

By retaining Point Cook under Defence ownership but with civilian airfield use and public access to the site, Defence retains access to operating runways, a site for the RAAF Museum, RAAF Band and other public open access compatible activities to be based, while allowing for the occasional Black Hawk training activity or temporary closure and activation as a military airfield, however Point Cook's runways are too short for most Defence aircraft other than light training aircraft.

Laverton is bounded to the south by the Melbourne – Geelong rail-line and is served by its own rail station "Aircraft".

It has no need for public access, is therefore ideal to create and maintain as a high security operational base, has significant vacant land to accommodate much more operations and units, and has rail and freeway access for both uniform and civilian defence staff access, it should remain the primary Defence location in the RAAF Williams establishment.

### **EAST SALE**

East Sale is currently intended to be retained as the Basic Flying Training and Advanced Flying Training School of the Defence Force, along with the RAAF College, and this is an appropriate flying training function to retain in the South Eastern States to support operational bases in the North and West, and this is supported.

## **AVALON**

A more critical concern with the Defence Posture Review and Estate planning for Victoria and Melbourne and perhaps Defence planning oversight is that there seems to be no consideration of use of the Defence airfield at Avalon (and leased to Linfox), which is itself only 25km south west of Laverton and has a runway of 3000M for possible support of military operations to defend Melbourne or Victorian strategic assets?

It is surprising in the past reviews and disposals of Victorian defence airfields that this site wasn't and still isn't used at all to establish a basic facility for military operations, as required, of fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft from Black Hawks to F-18s, C-17s, Hercules or future JSF aircraft should an operational defence of Victoria, Tasmania or Melbourne seriously. Such a facility could again be managed as required by CSU, AFDS and 21 Squadron from their existing Laverton base as an attachment in a single purpose built large building at Avalon. The bi-annual operations of RAAF aircraft for the Avalon Airshow demonstrates the site's obvious suitability for development of a "bare base" facility at the southern end of the existing runway – away from civil aviation activities at the northern end, and under management from RAAF Williams.

The \$36M currently planned to relocate CSU, AFDS and 21 Sqn from Laverton to Point Cook in the historic Southern Tarmac would be far better spent creating a bare base facility at Avalon that could support rotary and fixed wing aircraft across the entire Defence force capability, rather than simply Black Hawks and empty C-17s.

## **PUCKAPUNYAL**

This Army training facility should also be retained in Victoria and as the major army base to defend Victorian population and infrastructure should it be required, it also could form an appropriate base for solely for Black Hawk training activities with possible relocation of CSU, AFDS and 21 Sqn to that site at a cost far less than \$36M as is proposed for Point Cook?

## **VICTORIA BARRACKS**

Should be retained as a central Melbourne CBD office facility with all other rented office facilities concentrating at this site or a redeveloped / green field construction on the Laverton RAAF Williams site.

## **HMAS CERBERUS**

Should be retained as a training base for the RAN, consistent with supporting operational bases to the North and North West, and the site provides the Navy with a deep water facility in Victoria should operational defence of the Victorian population and infrastructure be required.

**Mark Pilkington**