

AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE POSTURE REVIEW.

RAAF WILLIAMS POINT COOK.

September 16, 2011.

This submission is restricted to comments concerning the future of RAAF Williams Point Cook.

Point Cook RAAF Base was declared as surplus to Defence requirements in the early 1990's and little physical change has been made to the Base since that time. The announcement in February, 2004, that the Base would be retained in public ownership with the establishment of a not-for-profit National Aviation Museum Trust for management of the site was a landmark decision raising hopes that its outstanding potential as an aviation heritage site with world-wide significance would be realised. However, in November, 2005, Defence resumed ownership and management of the Base, and since that announcement, little physical progress has been made towards the achievement of its heritage potential despite it being listed as a National Heritage site, the highest form of heritage listing in Australia, in October, 2007.

Whilst we are still awaiting announcement of future Defence planning for the Base, the limited information available would indicate that it is the intention to reinstate RAAF Williams Point Cook as a major Defence Base with very limited access to the public. Bearing in mind the heritage of the Base, the increasing and rapid urbanisation of the area with consequent impact on the infrastructure services available, and the major Defence facility at Laverton, the development of the Base as a major Defence installation would appear to be a very expensive proposal and undoubtedly the wrong approach to adopt. However, a limited Defence installation to cater for helicopters and other requirements to combat potential terrorist threats to Melbourne would appear to be an important use of the Base. Bearing in mind that the Base occupies approximately 340 hectares, provision of such a facility should not greatly impact on development of its heritage potential for educational and tourist purposes.

It is considered essential and in keeping with the Base's heritage, that the RAAF Museum should remain there and possibly other limited RAAF activities such as the RAAF band could be relocated there. Such activities would enhance and serve to strengthen the RAAF heritage of the Base.

We strongly urge the adoption of a policy which makes possible the development of the outstanding heritage qualities of the Base whilst having limited Defence facilities to counter potential terrorist attacks in the Melbourne area. Achievement of both of these objectives is possible and at considerable cost savings to re-establishment of the Base as a major defence base.

From a long term strategic point of view, reinstatement of the Base as a major defence facility is simply the wrong policy to adopt. The development of the heritage qualities of the Base is a unique opportunity for Australia – we must not let it pass.

David Goldsmith,
President,
Australian Gliding Museum.

Graeme Barton,
Secretary,
Australian Gliding Museum.
2 Bicton Street,
Mount Waverley, Vic, 3149