

My submission is directed primarily at issues relating to RAAF Williams, and more particularly again, to RAAF Williams, Point Cook Airfield.

It is my extreme hope that my submission might give the decision makers pause to reflect on the contents of this paper, and to pay a little more than lip service to its ideals.

It would be my strongest of opinions that Point Cook should NOT be included in the overall posture review and the overall planning processes for military bases in Australia. Point Cook is an extremely rare and unique case in terms of military airfields in Australia and in fact, probably, the world. Its heritage and historical significance is sadly these days, often taken for granted and overlooked. Point Cook should be taken as a separate and stand-alone precinct for consideration under the posture review, and any other review, for example, the review on civilian use of military bases.

Point Cook base is currently quite appropriately home to the RAAF Museum. This airfield, known throughout the world as the oldest continuously operating airfield in the world, and with a very rich history not only in military terms but in aviation history generally, is without doubt the correct place for such a Museum. This Museum attracts something like 6,000-7,000 visitors PER MONTH all of whom are of course, civilians. There are other civilian operations on the Base, e.g. a large university flying school, a vintage aircraft joyflight operator, a Warbird joyflight operator, a smaller private flying school and flying Club, plus a number of private aircraft owners based on this airfield. The net result of this is that the base is currently populated by civilian numbers far in excess of any military personnel numbers.

Given the existing civilian population and use, the airfields extreme historical value, its untapped tourist potential and its need to be developed into the air force's jewel in the crown in terms of a showpiece of Australian military AND general aviation history, it simply cannot be treated in a pool of other military bases, it must be a unique and separate case for consideration.

Serious consideration need to be given to the future use of this base by the military. Government announcements that it is intended as a "working heritage RAAF base" are well and good and would have my support, but this needs to be carefully thought through. With specific reference to the excellent display that is the RAAF Museum, civilian access to the Base should be promoted and encouraged, not continually made more and more difficult. Civilians should have the ability to see the Base as a whole, including the WWI historical southern tarmac precinct. Therefore, military use of this special base should be limited to non-sensitive activities only, especially on the Southern Tarmac. This can easily be achieved by maintaining an active airforce activity at Laverton, rather than Point Cook. There are many arguments to support this, not the least of which are issues like access - road, rail etc., (poor at Point Cook, good at Laverton) and security. Public viewing of activities at Point Cook is relatively easy, public boating in coastal areas, proposed bike and walking paths immediately adjacent and private aircraft overflying or landing/taking off all give the public an easy look at goings on. Not the case at Laverton.

Plans to restrict public access to the southern tarmac area should be shelved. At best this area could be used for military activity during major Melbourne events (a base for

Blackhawk choppers for example) and potentially not be used at all other times. Given its significant historical value and tourist potential, this would represent a great waste of this asset. Surely for the infrequent times that special forces might need to be close to Melbourne, Laverton can still be used and if not - Avalon should be considered.

The crux of my submission remains that Point Cook should be separated from general discussions about military bases and uses due to its extreme public value and its value to the Australian Defence Force as a historical showpiece.