

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

Copy No.

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CABINET DECISION

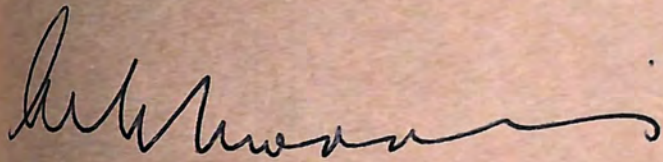
No. 5225

Submission No.: 4487

Title: KAKADU AIR ACCESS

Cabinet -

- (a) approved planning to proceed on development of one of the previously identified jet standard aerodrome sites north-west of Jabiru, including planning on a staged development of the preferred site if that is necessary; and
- (b) directed that this planning be undertaken totally from within the Department's existing resources.



A. G. MORRIS
Secretary to Cabinet.

16 July 1987

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THE NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

Copy No: 1

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SUBMISSION No: 4487

FOR CABINET

Title:	KAKADU AIR ACCESS
Minister	HON. FRED FINCH, MLA MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND WORKS
Purpose:	Reinstate Northern Territory Government planning for a jet standard aerodrome in the Kakadu area.
Relation to existing policy:	Consistent with the policy of providing necessary transport infrastructure in support of regional development and tourism.
Timing/legislative priority:	Early decision desirable.
Announcement of decision, tabling, etc:	N/A
Action required before announcement:	N/A
Staffing implications, numbers and costs, etc:	N/A
Total cost:	N/A

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CONFIDENTIALDepartment/Authority LAW

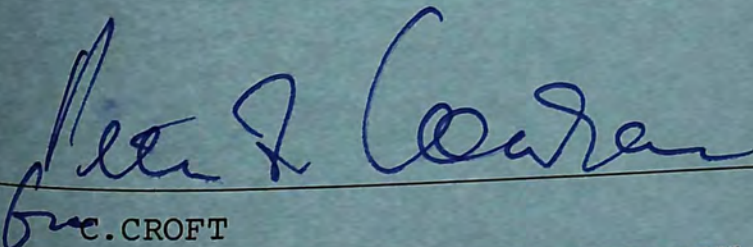
COMMENT ON CABINET SUBMISSION No.

TITLE: KAKADU AIR ACCESS

COMMENTS:

The submission is supported. Given the complexity of legal and constitutional issues involved (i.e. the status of the land both National (A.N.P.W.S.) Park and Aboriginal land) it is essential that this Department be consulted and be involved in any further negotiations. It will be necessary at all times to consider the effect of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and the National Parks and Wildlife Act. These matters must be considered at the planning stage.

Proposals for funding the construction and maintenance of the strip should also be considered at this stage. These considerations should include whether the project is funded solely by the N.T. or funded with the assistance of the Commonwealth, Gagudju Association.

SIGNED:  G. CROFT

DESIGNATION: SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF LAW

DATE: 20 MAY, 1987

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Department/Authority.....NORTHERN..TERRITORY..TREASURY.....

COMMENT ON CABINET SUBMISSION No.

TITLE:KAKADU AIR ACCESS.....

COMMENTS:

The Submission does not appear to advance arguments sufficient to warrant Cabinet reversing its decision of 22 April 1986.

Justification for formal admission to Capital Works Programming procedures of a jet airport twenty minutes east of Darwin would need to be considered very carefully against the background of passenger flow patterns and demand projections, the investment by land based operators in modern new equipment, the ownership of land and management control being beyond influence in the Park, and declining levels of available capital funds.

The information base which must be assembled (beyond the technical assessments now proposed) to enable proper programming consideration will only be derived from a broad based study involving a range of governmental agencies.

In-house technical planning, short of that which would accompany Design List status, could continue to be undertaken, as a matter of course, to the extent of resources available within the Department of Transport and Works for such general purposes.



SIGNED: N R CONN

DESIGNATION: UNDER TREASURER

DATE: 2 JUNE 1987

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Department/Authority..... **OF THE CHIEF MINISTER**

COMMENT ON CABINET SUBMISSION No.

TITLE: **KAKADU AIR ACCESS**

COMMENTS:

The recommendation is supported on the basis that at this stage there are no financial implications.

The Submission however presents no justification for proceeding with Option A other than by referring to rather vague expectations that tourist numbers will increase because of the planned Crocodile Hotel (with 110 rooms) and the possible conversion of the Ranger single mens' quarters by the Gagudju Association.

The Submission does not address the advantages and disadvantages of proceeding with Option B, which given the present economic climate may be able to support, in a more cost effective manner, any increase in tourist numbers. The reference to the rapid increase in demand for air services to Yulara is not necessarily a valid comparison given, inter alia, the greater capacity of Yulara to accommodate tourists and the greater distance of Yulara from a main town centre.

Obviously these issues will need to be addressed when funding for any proposal is required to be considered in the budgetary context.

SIGNED: L RICHARDSON *L Richardson*

DESIGNATION: DEPUTY SECRETARY

DATE: 25.5.87

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Department/Authority N.T. TOURIST COMMISSION

COMMENT ON CABINET SUBMISSION No. (DRAFT)

TITLE: KAKADU AIR ACCESS

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COMMENTS:

The draft submission is supported.

As noted in the submission, the Commission has actively promoted Kakadu in its overseas promotions and anticipates a significant increase in international visitation to the region.

SIGNED: 

DESIGNATION: ACTING CHAIRMAN

DATE: 22 MAY, 1987

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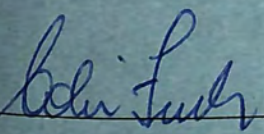
Department/~~Authority~~.....INDUSTRIES..AND..DEVELOPMENT.....

COMMENT ON CABINET SUBMISSION No.

TITLE: KAKADU AIR ACCESS

COMMENTS:

The Department fully supports this Submission and recommendation to Cabinet.



SIGNED: C J FULLER

DESIGNATION: SECRETARY

DATE: 27 MAY 1987

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Department/Authority..... CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

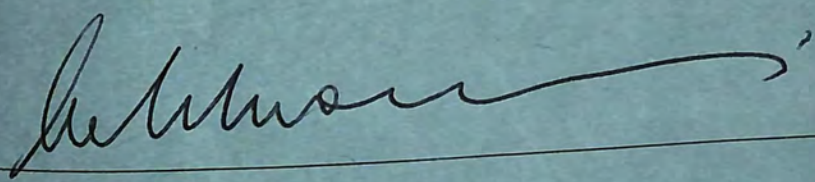
COMMENT ON CABINET SUBMISSION No.

TITLE: KAKADU AIR ACCESS

COMMENTS:

The Committee supports the proposal to identify and protect a suitable aerodrome site but does not support any commitment to proceed to design or development.

The Committee supports expenditure of such minimal amounts as are necessary to maintain the existing strip for current level of usage.



SIGNED: A.G. MORRIS

DESIGNATION: Chairman

DATE: 4 June 1987

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To: Dir Secretary

CONSERVATION COMMISSION OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

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OUR REF: A87/153

YOUR REF:



Mr I. Gordon *I.G.*
Secretary
Department of Transport & Works
GPO Box 2520
DARWIN NT 5794

DRAFT CABINET SUBMISSION - KAKADU AIR ACCESS

I refer to your memorandum of 19 May 1987 seeking comments on the abovementioned Cabinet Submission. The Commission supports the move to ensure adequate air access to Kakadu, to meet the demands of a growing tourism industry.

There are a number of issues, however, that do not appear to be covered in the draft Cabinet Submission, which should be considered before a decision is made to proceed with the proposed action.

1. It should be noted that the planning phase for the jet standard aerodrome will most likely involve environmental assessment under the Commonwealth Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act and possibly the NT Environmental Assessment Act.

If assessment is required, and this will depend on decisions by respective Commonwealth and Territory Ministers, both Commonwealth and NT procedures can be co-ordinated through arrangements for joint environmental assessment. These arrangements are currently being developed, and when finalised they will facilitate the assessment process and minimize duplication.

Assessment of the proposal to build a jet standard aerodrome should consider alternative sites, and should also occur as early as possible in the planning process.

2. Amongst the issues not clearly examined in the Submission, and which would be required to be addressed during environmental assessment, are:

*Yaxed to T & W. 25/5
Plus*

- . the implications of the project on Darwin-based tourism ventures, due to increased direct flights to Kakadu, i.e the potential loss to Darwin facilities and enterprises;
- . the implication of a further enclave within the Park, in the event that the airstrip and associated facilities are located at the identified site;
- . the impact of increased tourism on adjacent or nearby NT Parks, for example, Wildman River, Gurig National Park.

3. The Submission should contain more information on costs, for example, the cost of upgrading and maintaining the existing strip. Costs associated with the planning stage should be detailed. The comment (para 18) that "no major expenditure will be involved..." could be misleading.

4. It is should be noted that the last sentence of Section 8 is based in part on Section 9.2 Air Access, in the 1986 Kakadu National Park Plan of Management which states inter alia that '...The N.T. Government is presently assessing future airport development options to service the Kakadu area, particularly the possibility of developing a new jet standard aerodrome approximately 8 km north-west of Jabiru, with a view to putting proposals to ANPWS for its consideration.'

The Plan in the more important subsection 9.2.3. Management Prescriptions leaves the option open for a jet standard airport by the statement that '... Provision of a major jet standard airport near Jabiru will be fully investigated following the receipt of any formal proposal from the Northern Territory Government and a decision on whether to approve the proposal will be made only after full consultation with affected traditional owners, affected persons and the NLC, and taking into consideration the impact of the airport on access, the values of the park and the appreciation of the park by residents and visitors.'

Consideration should be given to including these extracts as an attachment to the submission referred in Section 8.

In summary, the Commission supports the recommendation, but highlights the need for the above issues to be addressed at an early stage.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Thomas

W A Thomas
Director of Conservation

25 MAY 1987

CONFIDENTIAL

- 1 -

THE ISSUE

1. Ensure that adequate aerodrome infrastructure is in place in the Kakadu area to meet the demands of the developing Kakadu tourist industry.

BACKGROUND

2. Issue of aerodromes in the Kakadu National Park area has been actively considered since 1980. Specific consideration has been given to the existing Jabiru and Cooina airstrips, and a new Kakadu jet standard aerodrome (probably B737) some 7km to the north-west of Jabiru (refer attached map). Two sites for the proposed aerodrome were identified in 1972.
3. Cabinet has been progressively informed of current developments and future implications of various aerodrome development scenarios in the Kakadu area.
4. Information Paper on 23 August 1985 informed Cabinet of the practical alternatives - upgrade Jabiru to all weather daylight F27/F50 standard to meet requirements for 8-10 years or construct a jet standard airport at the previously identified site near Jabiru, to commence operations around 1990.
5. Cabinet Decision 4260 (28 August 1985) approved the upgrading of Jabiru Aerodrome to all weather daylight F27/F50 standard as a 1985/86 Design List item at \$1.15m (April 1985 prices).
6. Cabinet directed in Decision 4589 (22 April 1986) that :
 - (a) the Jabiru Aerodrome upgrading item of \$1.6M be deleted from the 1985/86 Approved Design List; and
 - (b) the planning for a new airport at Jabiru be deferred (this referred to the Kakadu jet standard aerodrome).

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- 2 -

7. Jabiru and Cooinda airstrips both have DC3/F27 capability and cater for DC3 and F27 tourist flights. Cooinda is sometimes closed during the wet season. Jabiru is in need of major maintenance but Ranger Uranium, who own and operate the aerodrome, is reluctant to fund major maintenance on a aerodrome which is in excess of its requirements, i.e. aeromedical evacuation and light aircraft use. Tourism has no impact on their mining operation.

8. Kakadu jet standard aerodrome site is located on Aboriginal land within Kakadu National Park. Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (ANPWS) will shortly lease the land from the Aboriginal Land Trust. NT Government will need to sublease the required land from the Director ANPWS if aerodrome development proceeds. The proposed aerodrome development and approximate location are incorporated in the new Kakadu National Park Plan of Management.

CONSIDERATION OF THE ISSUE

9. Two developments have recently highlighted the Kakadu air access issue - announcement of the 110 room Crocodile Hotel in Jabiru and a reduced operating length at Jabiru Aerodrome which prevents DC3/F27 tourist operations. Air North DC3 and charter F27 tourist flights will not be able to return to Jabiru until the runway length is reinstated (note: Transport and Works has instituted urgent action to restore the full runway length at Jabiru).

10. Tourists are now visiting Kakadu year round, and wet season tourist flights are to be introduced from the coming wet season. This means that all weather DC3/F27 access to Kakadu must be provided if tourism growth is not to be restrained.

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- 3 -

11. Announcement of the planned Crocodile Hotel by the Gagudju Association is indicative of the increased domestic and international tourism attention being focused on the Kakadu National Park. Gagudju Association is also seriously considering acquiring the Ranger single mens quarters for conversion to self-contained units, as they realise that there will be a shortage of accommodation in eighteen months time.

12. There are severe development and other constraints on the existing Jabiru aerodrome. Terrain limitations largely preclude Jabiru being upgraded to even limited F28 standard. Even if the NT Government did upgrade Jabiru to limited F28 standard, it appears that Ranger Uranium would be required to retain ownership and remain aerodrome licensee because of mining lease requirements under the Atomic Energy Act.

13. ANPWS recently convened a meeting to discuss the standard of aerodrome infrastructure which will be required for Kakadu tourism. The NLC, Gagudju Association, Jabiru Town Development Authority and Transport and Works attended. Development of the jet standard site was the main point of discussion, with the view being expressed that an early (possibly staged) development would be required if international/interstate tourism requirements were to be met.

14. International tourists formed a significant part of the 100,000 Kakadu visitors in 1986. Extensive marketing effort in promoting the Territory overseas, reinforced by the Crocodile Dundee effect, has raised the international profile of the Territory's Top End, with Kakadu being the main attraction.

15. It may be that a sealed F27/F50 aerodrome, with limited F28 capability, will be required in the Kakadu area in the next two or three years.

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- 4 -

OPTIONS

16. There are two options:
- (a) proceed with planning for a jet standard aerodrome at the previously identified site while ensuring that no real restraints are placed on tourism by existing aerodromes; or
 - (b) do nothing about a jet standard aerodrome but concentrate on maintaining Jabiru as an almost all weather DC3/F27 aerodrome.

Option (a) is the preferred option. The minimum lead time required for proving up the site, land acquisition, planning and design, construction and commissioning is two years. If the rapid increase in demand for air services to Yulara is any example, a two year lead time may well place constraints on tourism development by the time demand for development of the jet standard site is demonstrated.

PUBLIC IMPACT OF THE RECOMMENDATION

17. All associated with tourism development in the Kakadu area will favour serious NT Government planning for development of a jet standard aerodrome. ANPWS support development of the aerodrome. The only issue raised by the NLC is compensation for use of Aboriginal land.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

18. No major expenditure will be involved until an item is programmed. An F27/F50 sealed aerodrome (with limited F28 capability and minimal passenger facilities) which can be used as the basis for a B737 aerodrome would cost around \$2.5M to \$3.0M in current prices. A B737 aerodrome with terminal facilities would cost around \$7.0M in current prices. Air traffic control and airport fire services would be an additional cost if required; this is unlikely.

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- 5 -

COMMONWEALTH, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

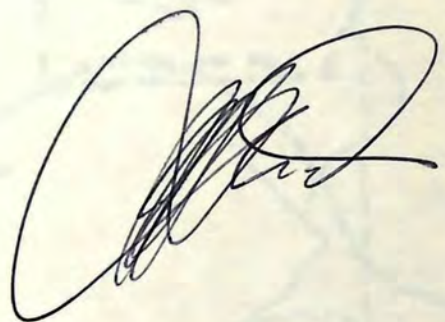
19. NT Government relations on this issue with the Director ANPWS and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs have been cordial. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs noted in October 1985 that his approval for any lease of the land was required under the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act, and asked to be kept informed of any developments.

CO-ORDINATION AND CONSULTATION

20. Chief Ministers, Conservation Commission, Industries and Development, Tourist Commission, Treasury, Law and Co-ordination Committee have been consulted in the development of this submission.

RECOMMENDATION

21. It is recommended that Cabinet approve planning to proceed on development of one of the previously identified jet standard aerodrome sites north-west of Jabiru, including planning on a staged development of the preferred site if that is necessary.



.....
F.A. FINCH

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