

Open Letter to Kevin Brown, CEO, Cairns Airport (CAPL)

Kevin Brown, CEO
Cairns Airport (CAPL)
Via email to: kevin.brown@ Cairnsairport.com.au

2015-04-23

Dear Kevin,

It has come to our attention that an option is being considered by Cairns Airport Pty Ltd (CAPL) to locate a new heliport at the site of the Jack Barnes Bicentennial Boardwalk. We will refer to this as the “East of Airport Ave Option.”

East of Airport Ave Option

It has been suggested that this heliport be located in what has incorrectly been described as “cleared land” currently devoid of mangrove trees.



Fig 1. The East of Airport Ave Option is located on this aerial photo as indicated by the red cross



This prospective heliport site on the eastern side of Airport Avenue is not vacant cleared land. Rather, it is:

- Natural salt marsh habitat, not an artefact of human activity and certainly not a ‘cleared area’. (On Google Earth, there is a clear pattern of the underlying beach barrier system, further suggesting a perfectly natural feature).

- A part of rare plant community in the Trinity Bay wetlands. Part of the just 23 ha of salt marsh of the total 3,000 ha of mangrove wetlands in the whole Trinity Bay Wetlands system. (The only other salt marsh is in East Trinity, outside the bund. Most of the salt marsh of East Trinity was destroyed as part of the failed attempt to develop it for agriculture).
- Easily the most accessible example of salt marsh in Cairns area and so of potential great importance for educational purposes - as are the adjacent boardwalks.
- Important to natural processes associated with the adjacent mangrove wetlands.

The airport mangrove wetlands have previously been recognised as being of national significance. The data records from that listing are still available online at the Australian Heritage Database.

We understand CAPL's desire to transfer the heliport to the eastern side of the runway in order to make the runway more efficient, and therefore delay the need for a second runway for at least 50 years according to your own assessment.

West of Airport Ave Option.

We understand that an alternative site that CAPL is considering for the new heliport is on the site of

the former cross runway – indicated in the aerial photo Fig 1. With the green cross



Of the two options, the West of Airport Ave Option looks to be the more ecologically responsible option as this land is already cleared and severely degraded from a habitat and biodiversity perspective.

We recommend that the strip of mangrove wetlands immediately adjacent to Airport Ave on the western side be conserved as a buffer zone between the planned built environment (new heliport), and the ecosystems on the east side of Airport Ave.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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