

RUNWAY EXTENSION FEASIBILITY STUDY

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT

Lord Howe Island Board | 13 December 2018

Community Consultation Report

Lord Howe Island Airport Runway Extension Feasibility Study

Client: Lord Howe Island Board

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Prepared by

AECOM Services Pty Ltd

Level 21, 420 George Street, Sydney NSW 2000, PO Box Q410, QVB Post Office NSW 1230, Australia
T +61 2 8934 0000 F +61 2 8934 0001 www.aecom.com
ABN 46 000 691 690

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1.0 Purpose

This Community Consultation Report for the Lord Howe Island Airport Runway Extension Feasibility Study has been prepared to:

- outline the consultation approach and communication activities carried out; and
- document community and stakeholder feedback received during the *Preliminary Environmental Assessment* (PEA).

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Background

Lord Howe Island (the Island) is located 790 kilometres (km) from Sydney and is one of the most remote communities in Australia. As there are no marine passenger services to the Island, regular air services play a critical role to the Island's tourism-based economy and accessibility to services for the Island community.

Currently, the Island is serviced by QantasLink's Bombardier DHC-8 200 aircrafts from Sydney or Brisbane - typically flying a maximum of 29 passengers, during the summer months. QantasLink are unlikely to continue this service beyond 2022, because of the expected significant upgrade costs required for the aircrafts.

2.2 Project overview

The current 888 metre (m) runway on the Island limits the type of commercial aircrafts that can viably operate at the Airport beyond 2022. Without a runway extension, the types of aircrafts and services available from QantasLink and other airlines will be severely restricted.

In November 2017, the Lord Howe Island Board (the Board), who administer the Island, engaged AECOM Australia Pty Ltd to assess the viability of extending the runway to maintain the existing service level (i.e. a 30+ seat aircraft) through a Feasibility Study.

This included:

- determining if the runway extension could be built in line with safety regulations; physical obstacles that could impact landing and take-off; and the width of the airfield;
- identifying aircrafts able to land on the possible runway extension and airlines interested in providing this service;
- the engineering design of the runway extension;
- environmental and world heritage impact studies;
- the estimated construction cost of the runway extension; and
- the economic benefits of the runway extension.



2.3 Feasibility Study

The Feasibility Study consisted of five key milestones. Milestone reports are available to view on the Board's website www.lhib.nsw.gov.au/infrastructure/airport/runway-extension-feasibility-study.

Table 1 provides a brief description of each milestone.

Table 1 Feasibility Study milestones

Milestone	Description
1. Detailed assessment of an extended runway	Detailed assessment of the requirements for extending the runway and suitable 30+ seat aircrafts to service the Island beyond 2022
2. Geophysical investigations	Geophysical survey of the Lagoon area and existing airport runway
3. Concept design	Conceptual design for viable options for the runway extension, including engineering, coastal processes, cost estimate and project scheduling
4. Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA)	Consideration of the impact of constructing an extended runway on marine and land environments, including the impact on World Heritage listing
5. Economic Feasibility	Consideration of the economic feasibility of extending the runway, including alternate options for air services to the Island.

3.0 Community and stakeholder engagement

Throughout the Feasibility Study, community and stakeholder engagement was carried out to inform, and where relevant, consult the community and stakeholders about key milestones.

A *Consultation Plan* was developed to outline how the community, tourists and stakeholders would be informed and made aware of key milestones as the Feasibility Study progressed.

3.1 Objectives of consultation

The objectives of community and stakeholder consultation included:

- informing the community, tourists and key stakeholders about the Feasibility Study through timely and understandable communications, and accessible consultation tools and techniques;
- early and regular engagement so that the community is informed and could provide comment, where relevant, on the Feasibility Study;
- promoting the Feasibility Study's purpose and necessity;
- understanding community, tourist and stakeholder values and opinions on environmental impacts, access to amenities and services, and the social impacts of extending or not extending the runway;
- identifying objections to extending the runway and potential community impacts and concerns, especially environmental issues;
- helping the community, tourists and stakeholders understand that a runway extension is not a certain conclusion and that the Feasibility Study would help determine this; and
- strengthening existing relationships and building positive new relationships between the Board and the community and stakeholders.

3.2 Key community members and stakeholders

Consultation activities were aimed towards:

- the local community – residents and businesses on the Island;
- visitors – tourists visiting the Island;
- tourism industry operators on the Island; and
- aviation industry stakeholders – airlines, Air Services Australia (ASA), Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), Royal Flying Doctors Service and the Royal Australian Airforce.

3.3 Consultation tools and techniques

A variety of consultation tools and techniques, befitting the Island's community and stakeholders, were used to inform and seek feedback about the different milestones reached in the Feasibility Study. This included:

- a project webpage on the Board's website (www.lhib.nsw.gov.au/infrastructure/airport/runway-extension-feasibility-study);
- frequently asked questions on the project webpage;
- articles in The Signal;
- community updates;
- articles in the Board's quarterly bulletin;
- a project phone number (02 6565 2066) and email address (administration@lhib.nsw.gov.au);
- information sessions;

- an online feedback form seeking community feedback; and
- engagement, via letters, emails and phone calls, with key aviation stakeholders.

Table 2 outlines the consultation tools and techniques used for each milestone.

Table 2 Consultation tools and techniques per milestone

Consultation tools and techniques	Milestones				
	1. Detailed assessment of extended runway	2. Geophysical investigations	3. Concept design	4. PEA	5. Economic Feasibility
Project webpage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Frequently asked questions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Articles in The Signal	✓			✓	✓
Community updates	✓			✓	✓
Board's quarterly bulletin	✓			✓	✓
Project phone number and email address	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Information sessions				✓	
Online feedback				✓	
Engagement with key aviation stakeholders	✓				✓

4.0 Community consultation

4.1 Pre-PEA community consultation

Before the PEA, consultation tools and techniques were used to inform the community and stakeholders about the progress of the Feasibility Study. This included:

- a project webpage on the Board's website;
- frequently asked questions on the project webpage – updated throughout the Feasibility Study;
- one article in The Signal in February 2018;
- one community update in May 2018;
- two articles in the Board's quarterly bulletin in April and June 2018;
- a project phone number and email address – available throughout the Feasibility Study; and
- two letters sent to key aviation stakeholders including six airlines (QantasLink, Virgin, REX, Skytrans, Alliance and Eastern Air Services), ASA, CASA, Royal Flying Doctors and Royal Australian Airforce.

4.2 Community and stakeholder consultation for the PEA

Between Wednesday 3 and Wednesday 17 October 2018, community members and stakeholders were asked to identify environmental impacts of most importance to them regarding the construction and operation of the proposed runway extension. In particular, feedback was sought on the two proposed construction methods:

- Deck on Pile Design; and
- Land Reclamation Design.

Feedback was used to inform the PEA.

4.2.1 Promotion of the community consultation

The consultation was promoted to the community and stakeholders in September and October 2018 through:

- one community update in September 2018;
- one article in The Signal in October 2018;
- updates to the project website, including updates to the frequently asked questions;
- the Board's community bulletin in October 2018; and
- three community information sessions on Wednesday 3 October 2018 at:
 - 10am to 11am and 2pm to 3pm, Lord Howe Island Community Hall; and
 - 6pm to 7pm, Lord Howe Island Bowling Club.



The sessions were staffed by the Board's staff and AECOM's Project Manager and environmental scientists. The sessions held at the Community Hall included an informal presentation given by AECOM's Project Manager.

4.2.2 Community consultation feedback channels

Community members were able to provide feedback during the consultation period, through the following channels:

- information sessions;

- online form available on the project webpage (Appendix A);
- project phone number and email; or
- by post.

4.3 Submissions

In total, 42 people attended the three community information sessions; one email was received; and no phone enquiries.

Nine submissions were received for the PEA including:

- six by post;
- two at the community information sessions; and
- one by email.

4.4 Key issues raised

The key issues raised during consultation included:

- impact to World Heritage values;
- impact on coastal processes;
- climate change, particularly the rise of sea levels;
- biodiversity and biosecurity;
- traffic and transport during construction, particularly access along Lagoon Road next to the airstrip;
- marine access to the Lagoon during construction and operation;
- impacts to residents nearby such as noise, vibration and visual amenity; and
- socio-economic impacts, particularly the impact of additional tourists on the Island's existing infrastructure and systems (e.g. waste and water).

Responses to these and other issues are provided in Table 3 and should be read in conjunction with the PEA and other documents in the Feasibility Study.



Table 3 Issues raised during community consultation and how they have been addressed in the PEA

Topic	Issues/comments raised	Response
World Heritage	Concerns about the proposed runway extension's impact on the Island's World Heritage listing, including loss of heritage value, status and the impact on coral reef.	<p>The <i>PEA</i> assessed potential impacts to World Heritage status during the construction of the proposed runway extension. The <i>PEA</i> also considered visual impacts on the surrounding landscape should the runway extension become operational, which could impact World and National Heritage status.</p> <p>If the runway extension was to progress, additional assessments, such as a Statement of Heritage Impacts, would need to be considered as part of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).</p> <p>Section 9.1.1 and 9.2.1 of the <i>PEA</i> provides an outline of the potential impacts to World Heritage.</p>
Surface water	Impact of the construction of the proposed runway extension on water quality.	<p>The stormwater drainage infrastructure for the proposed runway extension has been designed to capture oil and sediment before discharging. Further detail can be found in Section 11.0 of the <i>Concept Design Report</i>.</p> <p>Section 9.1.2 and 9.2.2 of the <i>PEA</i> outlines the potential impacts to surface water during construction and operation of the proposed runway extension. If the proposed runway extension was to progress an EIS would be prepared and assessments would be carried out, including the identification of best practice surface water management measures.</p>

Topic	Issues/comments raised	Response
Coastal processes	<p>Concerns about the impact to the Lagoon and the continuing erosion of the coastline, if the proposed runway extension was to go ahead.</p> <p>A community member noted that because of the existing erosion, the deck on pile design option for the runway extension would help mitigate further erosion.</p>	<p>The <i>PEA</i> has identified coastal processes as one of the key issues for the proposed runway extension. Section 9.1.3 and 9.2.3 of the <i>PEA</i> discuss the potential impact on coastal processes for both design options.</p> <p>For operational purposes, the deck on piles design option was identified to have reduced coastal erosion impacts in comparison to the land reclamation design. More information on coastal erosion in relation to the design options can be found in Section 9.2.3 of the <i>PEA</i>.</p> <p>If the proposed runway extension was to progress, an EIS would be prepared and assessments would be carried out on coastal processes, and mitigation strategies would be further investigated.</p> <p>Further information on the coastal processes associated with both construction options can be found in Section 8.4 and 9.6 of the <i>Concept Design Report</i>.</p>
Contamination	Concerns about oil spills in the Lagoon, near Rabbit Island and the reef line.	<p>The <i>PEA</i> has identified the potential impacts of contamination during construction and operation of the proposed runway extension in Section 7.4, 9.1.4 and 9.2.4.</p> <p>The stormwater drainage infrastructure for the proposed runway extension and extended apron has been designed to capture oil and sediment before discharging. Further detail can be found in Section 11.0 of the <i>Concept Design Report</i>.</p> <p>Management and mitigation measures and plans would be considered in the EIS.</p>

Topic	Issues/comments raised	Response
Climate change and flooding	<p>Concerns about the impacts of climate change (e.g. flooding from high sea levels, cyclones or tsunamis) impacting the proposed runway extension.</p> <p>Question on whether the proposed runway extension would be future proofed for when sea levels rise by 0.9 metres.</p>	<p>The <i>PEA</i> has considered the potential flooding and climate change projections for the proposed runway extension.</p> <p>The <i>PEA</i> recognises that there is the potential for flooding in areas surrounding the airport. It is recommended that 2D or 3D computational modelling of the water dynamics within the Lagoon be carried out in the next design stages of the proposal.</p> <p>Additionally, the proposed runway extension would be designed for a 50 year life and would consider climate change and a rising sea level.</p> <p>Section 9.1.5 and 9.2.5 of the <i>PEA</i> further detail potential impacts during the construction and operational phases of the proposed runway extension.</p> <p>Section 7.0 of the <i>Concept Design Report</i> contains information on the Coastal Design conditions used.</p>
Aviation safety	Concerns about the Island's unpredictable weather, and the safety of larger aircrafts landing and moving around on the proposed runway extension.	<p>Section 9.1.6 of the <i>PEA</i> discusses the management of aviation safety that would be required on the airfield during construction, such as the restrictions on aircraft operations, and alerts to pilots on potential hazards along a flight route.</p> <p>Initial consultation with airline operators and ASA about operating larger aircraft to the Island is outlined in Section 4.7 and 6.0 of the <i>Detailed Assessment of Extended Runway Requirements and Suitable Aircraft</i>.</p>

Topic	Issues/comments raised	Response
Traffic, transport and access (including marine access)	<p>Larger buses would be needed to decrease congestion on local roads, such as Lagoon Road – as larger aircrafts will bring more tourists.</p> <p>Access issues for residences along Airstrip Road.</p>	<p>The <i>PEA</i> has identified potential impacts to traffic and local transport. It is not likely that a larger aircraft with more tourists would have a significant impact on the traffic and transport of the Island, nor significantly change the traffic numbers along Lagoon Road.</p> <p>During construction, marine traffic within the Lagoon area may be impacted by the movement of vessels delivering or handling construction equipment and materials. During operation, marine traffic movements would be impacted by the proposed runway extension in the Lagoon. Commercial and private boats currently using the passage between the existing runway end and Blackburn/Rabbit Island would likely need to use an alternative route.</p> <p>Section 9.1.7, 9.2.6, 9.1.13 and 9.2.10 of the <i>PEA</i> identify the potential impacts regarding traffic, transport and access.</p> <p>Further assessment of the traffic and transport impacts of the proposed runway extension would be carried out in the EIS.</p>

Topic	Issues/comments raised	Response
Biodiversity and biosecurity	<p>The importance of biosecurity.</p> <p>Concerns about the impact to plants and animals in the Lagoon during construction.</p> <p>Impact to Marine Park Sanctuary Zone.</p>	<p>The <i>PEA</i> included a desktop study to assess the environmental impacts, including impacts to flora and fauna. The likelihood of threatened ecological communities near the proposed runway extension area is high because of the habitat that the Island provides for threatened migratory and endemic species.</p> <p>Further detailed assessments into the extent of potential impacts on biodiversity, additional monitoring and field surveys would be carried out, should the project progress to the EIS stage.</p> <p>Section 9.1.8 and 9.2.7 of the <i>PEA</i> provide further details regarding the impacts on biodiversity and biosecurity because of the proposed runway extension.</p>
Air quality	Fumes (from larger aircrafts) would affect the environment and impact the whole Island.	Section 9.1.9 and 9.2.8 of the <i>PEA</i> provide details on the potential impacts on air quality because of construction and operational activities of the proposed runway extension.
Noise and vibration	Noise during construction and operation of the proposed runway extension.	<p>The <i>PEA</i> has identified that during construction, there is an overall high-risk rating for noise and vibration, however during operation, the risk of impact would be low.</p> <p>Given the low density residential nature of the Island, it is likely that the community would be impacted by construction noise. The majority of construction work would be carried out during standard daytime construction hours with occasional night work when required and subject to community consultation.</p> <p>A noise assessment, modelling and/or noise logging would be required for an EIS. Section 9.1.10 of the <i>PEA</i> provides further details on the potential noise impacts for each of the design options.</p>

Topic	Issues/comments raised	Response
Landscape and visual amenity	Community members were concerned that the proposed runway extension would be visually unappealing and impact the beauty of the Island.	<p>Construction activities would be temporary and would change throughout the different stages of the proposal.</p> <p>The existing height restrictions of vegetation within the vicinity of the airfield would remain in place, however any vegetation currently encroaching upon the existing aircraft safety airspace would need to be cut back.</p> <p>The Kentia palm trees located next to Lagoon Road, however, may be trimmed or removed during the realignment of the airport fence along Lagoon Road.</p> <p>If the proposal were to progress, a visual impact assessment would be carried out as part of the EIS. The assessment would include photomontages that show indicative before and after images of key land and water viewing locations.</p> <p>Potential impacts to landscape and visual amenity are discussed in Section 9.1.11 and 9.2.9 of the <i>PEA</i>.</p>
Resource use and waste management	The influx of people will cause further impacts to the Island's already exhausted resources and infrastructure such as waste and water systems, roads and accommodation.	<p>If the proposed runway extension was found to be feasible, it could expand service and tourism opportunities in the future.</p> <p>Further assessments of the Island's resources and infrastructure would be included in the socio-economic assessment as part of the EIS.</p> <p>Resource use and management during operation is discussed in Section 9.2.10 of the <i>PEA</i>.</p>

Topic	Issues/comments raised	Response
Social and economic	Community members were concerned that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the runway extension would increase tourist numbers which the Island would not be able to cope with; and • tourists would be impacted by the construction of the proposed runway extension. 	<p>The visitor capacity of 400 visitors on the Island at any one time would remain in place if the proposal were to progress further.</p> <p>The <i>PEA</i> recognises that an increase in visitor traffic and the expansion of tourism services may negatively impact residents on the Island. Further discussions regarding potential social and economic impacts are discussed in Section 9.1.13 and 9.2.10 of the <i>PEA</i>.</p>
Funding	How would the proposed runway extension be maintained by the Board?	<p>The Feasibility Study is being funded by the NSW Government's Restart NSW – Regional Tourism Infrastructure Funding Program to the value of \$450,000.</p> <p>Funding of the proposed runway extension would be investigated if it is the preferred solution beyond 2022.</p>

Topic	Issues/comments raised	Response
Alternative options to extending the runway	<p>Community members asked for consideration to be given to alternative solutions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • other airlines, besides QantasLink, providing services to the Island, using the existing runway; • using smaller airlines; • the Australian and NSW Governments fund airlines to provide fleets that could use the existing runway; and • a fast boat service to the Island. 	<p>Other options considered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stopping the use of services from Sydney and Brisbane, and rely solely on the current levels of charter flights from Port Macquarie; • introducing a service from Port Macquarie and another secondary city using smaller planes; • buying or leasing the DHC-8-200 aircraft to be operated by a suitable operator to continue services from Sydney and Brisbane. Once the expected 10 year service life is finished, one of the following sub-options would occur: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the Island would revert to relying solely on current levels of charter flight; or – upgrade to a different aircraft which could use the runway without extension (at present there is no viable aircraft available to do this). • extending the runway using the deck on piles design option to enable aircrafts such as the ATR72 and DHC8-400, and continue 30+ seat air services to Sydney and Brisbane. <p><i>The Detailed Assessment of Extended Runway Requirements and Suitable Aircraft and Concept Design Report</i> provide further information on the alternative options considered.</p>
Impact to property	Concerns that the proposed runway extension would impact leased land and a house; and whether compensation would be given to impacted leaseholders.	If the proposed runway extension was to proceed, the Board would work directly with impacted property owners.

Topic	Issues/comments raised	Response
Consultation	Recommendations that more consultation be carried out with people in the Australian airline industry who have 'hands on' experience.	The Board has continued discussions with QantasLink and other providers to scope the feasibility of various options. Discussions have also been held with other air service operators to assess interest and viability of operating air services. Key stakeholders include SkyTrans, CASA, REX, Royal Flying Doctor Service, Alliance, Royal Australian Air Force, Virgin Australia and Avation.

Appendix A

Online Feedback Form

Lord Howe Island

Airport Runway Extension Feasibility Study

Feedback Form

Name _____

Contact email _____

Contact number _____

What environmental factors are most important to you and why?

Please tick and add comments

Indigenous and Non-Indigenous heritage _____

Surface Water _____

Coastal processes _____

Contamination _____

Climate change and flooding _____

Aviation safety _____



Traffic, transport and access _____

Biodiversity and biosecurity _____

Air Quality _____

Noise and vibration _____

Landscape and visual amenity _____

Resource use and waste management _____

Social and Economic _____

Other _____

Is there anything else you would like considered? _____



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AECOM Australia Limited

Level 21, 420 George Street
Sydney, NSW 2000
PO Box Q410
QVB PO, Sydney
NSW, 1230
T +61 2 8934 0000
F +61 2 8934 0001