

**MM - Release of Report - A study of Wilton and RAAF Base Richmond for civil aviation operations - (79351, 79353)**

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**REPORT:**

For some time the Australian Government has been exploring the aviation capacity needs of Sydney. In March 2012, the Australian and New South Wales governments received the Joint Study on aviation capacity in the Sydney region (the Joint Study). In response to the Joint Study the Australian Government appointed experts to undertake a technical scoping study into the most suitable site in the Wilton area for greenfield airport development that would be capable of supporting Sydney's civil aviation needs on a 50 year planning horizon, and further explore the use of RAAF Base Richmond for limited civil operations.

On Friday, 10 May 2013 the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, the Hon. A Albanese MP, released the much awaited report titled "*A study of Wilton and RAAF Base Richmond for civil aviation operations*" (the Report) together with a considerable volume of supporting documentation.

The content of the Report and supporting documentation is extensive addressing a number of issues including "Assessing Wilton" and "Better utilising Richmond".

In respect of "Better utilising Richmond" the report addresses the possible use of the RAAF Base Richmond basically on two scenarios, namely with the existing runway configuration and with the addition of a further north-south runway. The Report indicates that the existing runway configuration has potential to provide, eventually, for up to 5 million passenger movements per year. The addition of a north-south runway having potential, eventually, for up to 20 million passenger movements per year.

The Report also appears to indicate that while limited civil aviation use of RAAF Base Richmond may be appropriate to provide supplementary capacity for Sydney its expansion, due to the costs involved, would not be favoured in lieu of a greenfield second airport development for Sydney. However, the Report does suggest "*if the Government decides not to proceed with a Greenfield airport, serious consideration should be given to planning and protecting the future capacity to build the north-south runway at Richmond.*"

In summary the Report concludes the following in relation to RAAF Base Richmond:

- *RAAF's current use of Richmond does not preclude a level of civil operations. Given it is an operating airfield, such services could commence later this decade, and significantly earlier than any greenfield site.*
- *However, RAAF Base Richmond cannot provide sufficient capacity for Sydney's long-term aviation needs.*
- *A decision to expand Richmond with a north-south runway would involve significant costs and the acquisition of land from the University of Western Sydney, as well as substantially more road and rail investment.*
- *Any decision to consider expanding the Richmond airfield would need to be made in the wider context of how the greenfield airport would be developed.*

As a result of the findings of the technical scoping study, the Minister has indicated the government will;

- *"conduct geotechnical analysis of the Wilton site to determine the impact mining subsidence could have on an airport development; and*

- *commence discussions to explore the possibility of opening up RAAF Base Richmond to civil aviation.”*

At the time the Report was released by the Minister the General Manager, Sydney Aviation Capacity within the Department of Infrastructure and Transport also forwarded the following email to Council's General Manager:

*“As you are aware, the Australian Government commissioned a series of scoping studies in mid-2012 to investigate the suitability of a site at Wilton for an airport development and the potential use of RAAF Base Richmond for limited civil operations.*

*I am pleased to inform you that this work has been completed and, this morning, the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, the Hon Anthony Albanese, publicly released A study of Wilton and RAAF Base Richmond for civil aviation operations.*

*The report and technical papers that underpin it are available on the Department's website at <http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/aviation/scopingstudy/index.aspx>.*

*To ensure that local councils continue to be informed throughout this process, we intend to provide briefings in the coming weeks. This will provide an important opportunity to discuss any issues or concerns that your council or local stakeholders may have. We will be in contact shortly to discuss these arrangements.*

*In the meantime, should you have any questions or matters you would like to discuss, please feel free to contact me.*

*Thank you for your ongoing interest and I look forward to continued engagement with you on this important issue.”*

With regard to the issue of community engagement regarding the possible use of RAAF Base Richmond for civil aviation purposes it would be envisaged that this would be one of the issues that would be addressed in the briefings to be provided to local councils referred to in the fourth paragraph of the above email. In this regard, the Council last considered the issue of community engagement at its meeting held on 5 February 2013 when it was resolved:

*“That Council write to the Commonwealth Government to request comprehensive consultation with residents of the Hawkesbury LGA before any changes are made to the current operations of the RAAF base.”*

In respond to correspondence arising from the above resolution the Minister by letter dated 21 March 2013 advised Council, in part, as follows:

*“No decision regarding a second Sydney airport or the use of RAAF Base Richmond will be made until the Government has received and considered these studies.*

*As indicated by my Department in previous correspondence, there will be further opportunities for consultation to enable Council and communities to have greater input into the Sydney region's aviation capacity solutions. To this end, I have indicated a report on the scoping studies will be made publicly available. My Department will advise you of its release. “*

Once Council has been contacted by the General Manager, Sydney Aviation Capacity within the Department of Infrastructure and Transport, as indicated in the recent email, the issue of community engagement to be undertaken as a result of this ongoing process regarding the potential use of the RAAF Base Richmond will be raised and a further report subsequently submitted to Council.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the information relating to the recent release of the report titled "*A study of Wilton and RAAF Base Richmond for civil aviation operations*" be noted and a further report be submitted to Council following the briefing sessions referred to in the email of 10 May 2013 from the General Manager, Sydney Aviation Capacity within the Department of Infrastructure and Transport.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

There are no supporting documents for this report.

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