

Bacchus Marsh

Aero Club (Inc)

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[REDACTED]



Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

16 Apr 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

Defence estate planning - RAAF Williams, Pont Cook VIC

As an interested committee in the matter of potential disposal of RAAF Williams, the Bacchus Marsh Aero Club submits that the site should be preserved at the very least as a working airfield.

The Bacchus Marsh Aero Club (BMAC) was formally known as Point Cook Flying Club (PCFC). From its inception in 1974 as a RAAF welfare club for Defence members who were non-aircrew training as private pilots at Point Cook, the club changed over time to a local community not-for-profit club. This club was instructed to leave RAAF Williams in 2022 from Defence's need to vacate civilian entities from the base.

PCFC had for circa 50 years provided a means to local members both Defence and Civilian pilots, to make use of the excellent airfield facilities with training-type aircraft stationed there. Various Defence personnel had been members and made full use of the opportunity to fly from Point Cook as had a vast number of Melbourne pilots alike. BMAC could quickly relocate to its former location and reform as PCFC, therefore again providing its service to the local Point Cook community as a not-for-profit club.

The heritage significance of RAAF Williams undoubtedly holds great importance to the RAAF and the greater Melbourne area community as the start point of Australian Military Aviation. The recent years have observed lower use by normal and everyday RAAF operations however the excellent presentation of the RAAF Museum draws public interest and supports aviation heritage preservation.

Further, aviation at Point Cook continues to be strongly represented with the inclusion of two regular organisations in the form of R.M.I.T flight training and the Airforce Cadet flight training program. These both represent excellent and professional growth for youth aspiring to become the next generation of military and civil aviators. The cadet scheme was at one time a major contributor to recruitment and loss of this entity at Point Cook seems counter to providing young Australians an opportunity . PCFC when it did operate there, indirectly supported both these organisations, including some few members of the current 100SQN, as a means to access other aircraft and associated amenities.

As Defence considers the continued operation of RAAF Williams as value for money or heritage significance, the airfield is proving still to be useful and perhaps a partial approach is considered as the following example:

- Retain the RAAF Museum and 100SQN in place
- Retain runways and adjoining runway facilities
- Secure key buildings that supports continued ADF operations, specifically aimed at the current Joint ADF/CIVPOL usage case of Special Operations Activities that require day/night Helo/Fixed wing basing
- Partition a section/s of the airfield property for leasing arrangements to civilian aviation business, inviting investiture. Although larger, this is currently working in practice in Townsville and Darwin.

The benefits realised may be summarised as:

- RAAF heritage preserved for the foreseeable future
- Airforce Cadet flight training improves
- ADF retains an airfield capability for operational activity as required
- Future emerging capabilities such as Unmanned Systems may be provided basing and storage options and be located nearby Defence Research & Acquisition Agencies such as DSTO and CASG.
- Possible future site for other ADF full time or reserve units if and when they must relocate
- Large potential for business growth and civilian aviation investment to share property management costs.

As a Veteran and recently retired from the Army, I urge the Senate Standing Committee to consider that RAAF Williams Point Cook is held closely as a matter of heritage that provides the RAAF such a centre point of meaning. RAAF Williams still offers useful capability for Defence and the local community alike and may well be an excellent candidate for shared management.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Gellert

President

Bacchus Marsh Aero Club

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