

# BRISBANE AIRPORT'S NEW PARALLEL RUNWAY PROJECT - CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION MEASURES

BY KARYN RAINS (BRISBANE AIRPORT)



Located around 14kms north-east of the Brisbane central business district, the Brisbane airport is situated on a 2700 hectare precinct which accommodates a range of activities including domestic and international terminals, aviation and business operations, and by virtue of its size and geometry enjoys large buffer zones providing a barrier between airport operations and surrounding communities.

To alleviate growing passenger and air traffic congestion, and to accommodate future growth, planning for a second runway at Brisbane Airport has been underway for over 20 years. Major infrastructure projects such as this require extensive site surveys and design studies; are subject to numerous legislated planning conditions and approvals; involve detailed stakeholder engagement; and, pose a range of construction and operational challenges.

In 2007 the Brisbane Airport New Parallel Runway project was approved by the Australian Government following the completion and acceptance of a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Major Development Plan (MDP).

The project involves construction of a new runway, and associated infrastructure, on a low lying coastal area, parallel to Brisbane Airport's existing runway. The proposed runway site is currently subject to inundation during high tide, flood events and at risk to future climate change impacts such as storm surge and sea level rise. As such, climate change impacts were considered in the planning and design for the ongoing continuity and long term viability of operation of the new runway.

## Impacts/Risks Addressed

Given the sub-tropical location of the site, and its proximity to the coast, the key climate change related risks were identified as sea level rise, storm surge from increased cyclones and other low pressure events, local/regional flood events and increase in average temperatures. Specifically, there were a number of key design and planning decisions for the NPR where consideration of climate change and other related stakeholder issues featured.

Specifically, these were:

- **Project go / no go decision:** As part of the design process for the NPR, alternatives to building a new runway were considered. After evaluation of the options available to address the airport's current operating constraints and future growth projections, construction of the NPR was found to be the most appropriate option.
- **Runway placement and layout:** Six options were considered. Each option presented a range of issues for assessment, including cost, operating and safety standards, noise restrictions, environmental impacts, and climate change resilience.
- **Runway height:** The height above sea level of the runway became the major climate change related design issue. The final design had to take account of historic and projected severity and frequency of sea level rise, storm surge and local/regional flood events. Based on the available evidence a design decision was then made to take account of the level and likelihood of the risk (e.g. sea level rise) and the cost of mitigation (e.g. raising the height of the runway).

### Information & Knowledge Gaps

In considering the impacts of climate change on the proposed runway the project drew upon information and expertise from across a range of scientific and engineering sources. Initial considerations for flood and storm tide surge modelling were derived from the findings of a multi-agency investigation which assessed the magnitude of the present and future ocean threats from tropical cyclones in Queensland and the vulnerability of coastal communities to extreme winds (Queensland Government 2004).

### Response Strategy

From the early stages of the project, BAC's New Parallel Runway project team were fully aware of the need to consider future climate change impacts in the design, construction and operation of this major asset and the role that engagement with key stakeholders would play in the design and approval process.

### Climate Change Impacts

Given the vital importance of the infrastructure and its long term operating life the design response to potential climate change impacts was as follows:

- Sea level rise and increased frequency of cyclonic events was addressed by incorporating a 400mm allowance plus 500mm additional wave set up freeboard in the hydrological modelling in accordance with research available at the time for the Queensland coast.
- Consideration of temperature increases in future decades was automatically accounted for in the ultimate length planning for both the existing main runway and for the new runway, each of which has significant additional lengths available to be added in the future.

In the preliminary design developed in 2005 the minimum design level for the NPR based on a 1% Average Exceedence Probability (AEP) design storm tide level was determined to be 2.4m AHD or 3.53m Airport Datum (AD). This consisted of:

- Existing storm surge level of 1.5m AHD;
- Climate change increase of 400mm (including 300mm sea level rise and increased cyclone frequency); and
- Wave set up freeboard of 500mm.

### Additional design considerations

In addition to the storm tide, climate change and freeboard allowance, a further design consideration influenced the final design elevation for the NPR. BAC decided that it would be preferable to select a minimum design to be the same as the existing runway (5.2m AD) so as not to have an undesirable incline (gradient) along the linking taxiways and links into adjoining aprons. This design feature minimises aircraft fuel burn during taxiing between the NPR, the existing runway system and existing aircraft terminals. In addition to decreased fuel burn a runway elevation higher than 3.53m AD provides further enhancement of protection against future climate impacts.

In addition to the height of the NPR other climate change impact related measures include construction of tidal channels and the installation of a new sea wall along the northern boundary of the airport, and allowance for a future runway extension to 3600m if it is determined that additional runway length is required for aircraft operations due to temperature increase.

### Updated Research

To further substantiate the proposed runway height to account for newer research, in 2009, BAC engaged the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Collaborative Research Centre (ACE CRC) based in Tasmania Australia to evaluate the runway height specifications using the latest climate and sea level data available. Using a customised sea-level calculator the ACE CRC provided updated assurance of the runway design level (5.2m AD) describing it as 'strongly precautionary'.

### Stakeholder Engagement

Given the profile and complexity of the New Parallel Runway project, a key factor in progressing the design and approval of the project was engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. A 22-month stakeholder engagement process was undertaken culminating in late 2006 when BAC released for public comment the New Parallel Runway Project Environmental Impact Statement and Major Development Plan (EIS/MDP).

At the conclusion of the consultation period BAC had received 196 public submissions. Of the submissions received, three specifically questioned whether the proposed runway design adequately took account of the long-term impacts of climate change and sea level rise. In responding to the climate change issues raised in the engagement process BAC drew upon research and design data applied in the modelling and the final

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design specifications for the runway height and other supporting measures.

#### Implementation Phases

The project has progressed through the usual climate change adaptation phases: Assessment & Research / Engagement / Decision Making / Planning / Construction. The ground preparation works (including the early civil works and dredging and reclamation works) were completed in 2015 and the site is currently consolidating under the placement of nearly 11 million cubic metres of sand and an extensive array of vertical wick drains. The performance of the ground strength and elevation improvements is set to allow pavement and airfield construction to commence in 2017 with the runway targeted to be operational in 2020.

#### How Does the Project Contribute to Reducing the Environmental Footprint of the Sector?

The New Parallel Runway system will be operated to maximise operations over Moreton Bay in order to minimise noise impacts to local communities. Parallel runways provide the best opportunity to maximise the number of aircraft that can fly into and out of an airport. Upon opening the dual parallel runways will be used in a number of ways, commonly referred to as 'modes of operation'. Each mode of operation is allotted a hierarchy of 'preference'. With two parallel runways in operation the preference will be



to use Over Bay operations, in the first instance (see diagram below), particularly in the noise sensitive night hours, then 19 parallel, and then 01 parallel operations respectively.

#### The Way Forward

With the NPR site currently achieving predicted ground settlement rates, commencement of pavement and airfield construction is expected to start in 2017. This will involve the removal of excess sand once final ground settlement levels have been achieved; pavement laying for the new 3300m runway and 12 km of taxiways; installation of airfield infrastructure; and introduction of the new approach and departure paths. The NPR will be commissioned and operational in 2020.

