



# Cairns Airport Pty Ltd Standard Operating Procedures

## Apron Parking Protocols (Domestic / Link / International / IGAA)

**Reference No: 1007 TO**

**Any alterations to this SOP must be approved by  
the: General Manager Operations and Commercial**

**The current copy of this SOP is held on  
SharePoint.**

**It is your responsibility to ensure you hold the  
current copy of this SOP.  
Version 5 – July 2026**

## Document Control

| Reference No | Version | Status   | Sponsor                                   | Author                      |
|--------------|---------|----------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1007 TO      | 5       | Approved | General Manager Operations and Commercial | Terminal Operations Manager |

| Amendments                                                                                                 | Date       | By whom    |
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| Summary                                                                                                    |            |            |
| Document created to capture Apron Parking Protocols (DTB/LINK/ITB/IGAA) – SOPs for Cairns Airport Pty Ltd. |            |            |

Cairns Airport Pty Ltd  
Standard Operating Procedures

Apron Parking Protocols  
(Domestic / Link / International / International General Aviation)

**1. PURPOSE**

To provide an overview of general protocols in place for aircraft operators using the domestic, link, international and IGAA aprons.

To define a priority order of bay allocation for aircraft operators using the domestic, link, international and IGAA aprons.

**2. REFERENCES AND RELATED PROCEDURES**

- Airport Operations Manual
- Terminal Operations Manual

**3. DETAILS**

A draft indicative parking plan will be prepared by Cairns Airport Pty Ltd (CA) prior to each seasonal schedule change i.e. March for Northern Summer (NS) schedule period and October for Northern Winter (NW) schedule, and as required whenever there are schedule changes that impact the overall allocation. CA prepares separate International and Domestic parking plans.

Aircraft parking bays are allocated by the CA Airport Coordination Centre (ACC) in accordance with the Airport Service Agreement (ASA) and the CA Standard Operations Procedures for Apron Parking Protocols.

The parking positions are operated in accordance with the Domestic and International Apron Usage Charts compiled by CA. These usage charts are issued to all airlines. A Resources Management System, (RMS), ensures aircraft are parked in accordance with CASA Manual of Standards Part 139.

The control and safe movement of all passengers between an aircraft and the terminal shall be the responsibility of the airline operator or their agent. Each operator is required to submit for CA approval a Standard Operating Procedure for Ramp Operations covering passenger safety.

## Overview

The Domestic Apron (Bays 13-23) has eleven (11) primary aircraft parking positions including a freighter bay on Bay 23. Five (5) positions, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22 are serviced by aerobridges. Aerobridge position 21 and 22 are full code C compliant and 18/19/20 are code E compliant. Bay 19 is the preferred Code “E” parking position. The remainder are standoff code C positions. Bays 13-15 and 18-22 also have a secondary alpha position.

The Link Apron (Bays 8-12) has five (5) primary aircraft parking positions and various combinations of secondary positions, all positions are stand-off.

The International Apron (Bays 1-7) has 7 primary aircraft parking positions, with five (5) aerobridge positions located at Bays 1 through to 5. All International Apron Bays are Code E compliant and also have secondary positions.

The International General Aviation Apron (IGAA) located at the eastern end of the International Apron, has three (3) positions 1C, 1D and 1E and provides parking for:

- 1 x Dash 8 -400
- 1 x Dash 8 – 300 / ATR72
- 1 x GA aircraft (maximum wing span 17 metres)

The majority of domestic regional activity will primarily be allocated to Bays 10 through 14 inclusive, with the majority of domestic RPT jet operations to occupy the Aerobridge Bays plus stand-off Bays 15, 16, and 17.

International light aircraft and activity will primarily be allocated to Bays 1C, 1D, and 1E, the IGAA, with overflow to other international stand-off bays. International RPT jet operations will generally occupy the aerobridge bays plus stand-off Bays 6, 7 and 8.

If an airline requests an aerobridge position that is compatible to that aircraft type, and a slot is available without conflict, CA will accommodate that service on the aerobridge position.

## Prioritising

When conditions permit, a 15 minute buffer will be provided between the expected “off blocks” and the expected “on blocks” arrival time of the next aircraft to be allocated that parking position. This rule is to be interpreted to cover planning for the allocation of bays and will not have the effect of denying a bay to an arriving aircraft.

Priority of Aerobridge allocation is determined on a number of criteria:

- Turnaround versus layover;
- Aircraft size/capacity;
- Operational requirements;
- “On Schedule” versus “Off Schedule”; and
- RPT “versus” Charter or Itinerant.

RPT aircraft required to use a non-aerobridge position will be allocated the nearest available position to the terminal that is suitable for that aircraft type. If an aircraft is “off schedule” to the point where it will impact another aircraft’s operation then the priority of bay allocation will go to the “on schedule” aircraft.

It is the airline’s responsibility to notify the CA ACC as soon as possible of any expected delay in the arrival or departure of an aircraft.

It is an airline operator / agent responsibility to check the Staff FIDS for bay changes prior to the arrival of an aircraft. The Airport Coordinators will use best endeavours to communicate bay changes directly to operators when within 20 minutes of ETA.

An aircraft shall be considered “on schedule” if arriving or departing within ten (10) minutes of the scheduled arrival / departure time. Where two (2) or more aircraft of a similar size are “off schedule” and competing for resources, the aircraft operating closest to schedule will be given priority.

CA may invoke a “Commercial Allocation” to ensure disembarking and embarking passengers are exposed to retail outlets. This priority would not overrule any existing operational protocol.

Where the same aerobridge facility is sought by more than one operator at the same time, then the following criteria shall apply:

- The larger aircraft will be given priority on the aerobridge, but not as to displace an operator granted priority at that position.
- Priority of access to an aerobridge may be granted to smaller aircraft where no other aerobridge is capable of accommodating that aircraft type i.e. F100’s on A/B 1.
- Priority of allocation may also be granted to specific operators because of their requirements for specific terminal processing i.e. US airlines pre-boarding secondary screening of passenger or biosecurity measures in place at an aerobridge.

### **Domestic / Link Apron**

Arriving aircraft with a planned turnaround time or transit time of 90 minutes or less on the domestic apron will have priority over a terminating or layover service with an on ground time in excess of 90 minutes.

### **International Apron**

Arriving aircraft with a planned turnaround or transit time of 120 minutes or less on the international apron will have priority over a terminating or lay over service with an on ground time slot in excess of 120 minutes.

Where aircraft of a similar type competing for resources, priority will be given to the aircraft with the highest inbound passenger load. Should a passenger head count not be provided to CA, CAPL will assume a zero count.

If an aircraft is assigned an aerobridge position and arrives early, it will not necessarily be offered an alternative aerobridge position and may be requested to wait until the designated aerobridge position becomes vacant or be allocated a non-aerobridge

position if there is one available. Where an RPT aircraft is “off schedule” to the extent that its arrival or departure at an aerobridge position will impact on another RPT operator operating “on schedule”, the “off schedule operator” may be required to accept an alternative bay to that planned.

If an airline is allocated a non-aerobridge position it shall be the responsibility of the airline operator / agent to ensure the control and safety of their passengers during disembarking or embarking whilst on the apron.

Where an aircraft’s departure is delayed due to a technical / mechanical fault and the bay is required for another aircraft, the operator of the delayed aircraft may be directed to relocate the aircraft to another bay, within a specific time.

Where an aircraft type is not shown on the usage chart or has no apron marking or Advanced Visual Docking Guidance System (AVDGS) entry for that aircraft, prior to the aircraft using the apron, the operator / agent will contact the ACC for parking advice.

#### **Aircraft Tows**

The CA ACC shall, where possible and with prior notice to the airline affected, provide the following access times on aerobridge positions for tow in / out aircraft:

| <b>Aircraft Type</b> | <b>Arriving Aircraft to tow-off</b> | <b>Tow-on of Departing Aircraft</b> |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Code C               | 45 Minutes                          | 45 Minutes                          |
| Code D               | 45 minutes                          | 60minutes                           |
| Code E               | 60 minutes                          | 75 minutes                          |

#### **Advanced Visual Docking Guidance System (AVDGS) or Nose In Guidance System (NIGS):**

Each aerobridge position is equipped with an Advanced Visual Docking Guidance System (AVDGS) . The system provides accurate guidance to the pilot for the correct parking position for the aircraft at the aerobridge. Airlines must ensure their pilots are familiar with the system.

Airlines and/ or ground handling agents staff are required to be qualified in the operation of the AVDGS system. They are required to enter data associated with their aircraft type prior to its arrival onto the parking position. Either airlines or their nominated agent must be present for each aircraft arrival.

The AVDGS directory is available on the apron usage chart.

CA will train and authorise a nominated airline staff trainer or handling agent nominate staff trainer in the safe operation of aerobridges and the AVDGS system. It is requirement that all staff training records for both the use of aerobridges and the AVDGS system are supplied to the Airport Duty Manager initially and on a regular basis.

## **General**

CA may seek to have particular international aircraft use the Domestic Apron on occasions (such as facilitating aerodrome works on the International taxiways or apron). In such cases, disembarking/embarking passengers would usually need to be transported airside to and from the International Terminal for normal passenger processing and baggage reconciliation.

Itinerant aircraft operators wishing to operate on the Domestic Apron will need to contact the Airport Coordinator for approval and bay allocation. CA will consider requests for parking only from bona fide operations involving passenger or freight operations. Contact details are in the CA Airport Operations Manual

Itinerant and non-RPT operators of aircraft or their agent using the Aprons are required to liaise directly with the CA Airport Coordinator for confirmation of their designated parking position.

Details provided by the major airlines (e.g. daily “port operating plans” and advance details for schedules) are to be entered into the RMS and Flight Information Display System (FIDS) at least 12 hours prior to bay usage.

Bay allocations are issued daily using RMS and may be altered as necessary if late changes to aircraft type or arrival / departure times are advised.

Bay allocation details are displayed through the FIDS or passed directly to the pilot upon arrival using airline company radio although late changes may be notified by Air Traffic Control (ATC) staff. Although ATC, have access to the FIDS, the Airport Coordinator is responsible for notifying ATC directly (phone) of any last minute changes.

Airline operators or their agents are responsible for advising the CA ACC of all non-scheduled or itinerant aircraft movement details, and any variation from that detail, of aircraft parked or requesting the use of an apron position. Unless otherwise indicated on the apron usage chart, all bays are “power in, push back”.

## **Aircraft Refueling**

Hydrant or tanker JetA1 refueling is available at all apron parking positions except on the IGAA. Avgas is only available on the Domestic / International Apron by prior arrangement with refueling agents from the General Aviation side and CA ACC.

## **Engine Start and Push-back**

Start-up and push-back approvals are provided by ATC.

The aircraft operators and / or ground handling agents are responsible for ensuring appropriate wing tip and jet blast clearances are maintained during push-backs and any subsequent pull forward.

### **Aircraft Engine Run-Ups**

Prior permission is required from the Airport Coordinator and Air Services Australia for any type of engine run on the Aprons (other than normal engine starts prior to taxi / push back).

All Engine Runs must be conducted in accordance with CA Aircraft Engine Runs Standard Operating Procedure. Further information is available in CA Airport Operations Manual.

#### **4. REVIEW**

Review of this document will be continual in line with operational requirements and terminal, apron and operator changes.

#### **5. AUTHORITY**

General Manager Operations and Commercial