Expressions of Interest

Maintenance, Repair & Overhaul (MRO) Facility Operator for the Eastern Aviation Precinct at Cairns Airport

Expression of Interest: Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) Facility Operator for the Eastern Aviation Precinct at Cairns Airport

Issued by: Cairns Airport

In Partnership with: Cairns Aviation Skills Centre (CASC) and Aviation Australia

Date: 31 Oct 2025

EOI Reference Number: CNS-EAP-MRO-2025-01

Closing Date: December 15, 2025

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Cairns Airport, in collaboration with Cairns Aviation Skills Centre (CASC) and key industry stakeholders, invites Expressions of Interest (EOI) from experienced Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) operators to develop, manage, and operate a state-of-the-art MRO facility within the Eastern Aviation Precinct at Cairns Airport. This 10,000m² hangar is a cornerstone of a $60 million precinct development aimed at addressing capacity constraints, enhancing resilience, and positioning Cairns as Australia's leading MRO hub.

The Far North Queensland (FNQ) region boasts a disproportionate concentration of aviation MRO expertise, contributing $36 million annually to the local economy and supporting over 370 direct jobs. However, current facilities are operating beyond capacity, resulting in an estimated $15 million in lost business annually—much of which is diverted offshore. The global aviation MRO market, valued at $123 billion and projected to reach $203 billion by 2032, presents significant growth potential, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region where Cairns holds a strategic advantage.

Drawing from the Strategic Business Case (SBC), this EOI explores flexible operational models to maximise industry alignment: a Common User Facility (CUF) for multi-operator access, a standard single-operator model for exclusive use, or joint venture arrangements for collaborative management. The facility will feature flood-resilient infrastructure above the 1-in-100-year flood level, with potential for advanced capabilities such as composites repair, painting, and integrated training spaces. As a selected partner, you will drive economic diversification across aviation, marine, defense, and tourism sectors, potentially generating up to 400 additional full-time jobs.

We seek partners with proven MRO expertise, a commitment to sustainable growth, and innovative proposals tailored to these models. Shortlisted respondents may advance to a Request for Proposal (RFP) phase. This EOI encourages collaborative, forward-thinking submissions to realise Cairns' vision as a national MRO leader by 2040.

Introduction and Background

Cairns Airport serves as the gateway to Tropical North Queensland, underpinning tourism, trade, and essential services through a robust aviation ecosystem. The region has cultivated a comparative advantage in aircraft MRO, attracting clients domestically and internationally. As home to Australia's leading independent heavy maintenance provider for large turboprop and regional jet aircraft, Cairns Airport generates $36 million in MRO gross value added and supports over 370 jobs, with stakeholders noting substantial growth.

Stakeholder consultations have highlighted critical challenges: capacity bottlenecks causing revenue losses, vulnerability to flooding (as seen in Tropical Cyclone Jasper, 2023), and untapped potential in areas like advanced composites and aircraft painting. The SBC, commissioned by CASC, evaluated these issues and recommended infrastructure solutions to unlock growth, emphasising resilient, purpose-built facilities.

The Eastern Aviation Precinct, a $60 million investment partially funded by the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF), integrates this MRO hangar. This EOI builds on the SBC by inviting proposals across operational models—CUF, single operator, or joint venture—to ensure the best fit for industry needs, economic impact, and long-term viability. As your trusted partner, Cairns Airport aims to foster equitable, innovative collaborations that align with regional goals.

Project Overview: Eastern Aviation Precinct and MRO Facility

The Eastern Aviation Precinct is a transformative development on a cleared site adjacent to Airport Avenue, enhancing Cairns Airport's aviation capabilities. Staged construction targets aeronautical stands by 2027, with full operations contributing up to $60 million annually to the economy.

Key features include:

- Four New Aeronautical Stands: For faster aircraft turnarounds and increased capacity.
- Aeromedical and Emergency Response Facilities: Supporting services like the Royal Flying Doctor Service.
- Dedicated Heliport Zone: Boosting tourism via scenic flights.
- Renewable Fuel and Energy Production Area: Aligning with Cairns Airport's net-zero target by 2025.
- MRO Hangar Facility: A potential 10,000m² structure with shared or dedicated workspaces, storage, administrative areas, and options for advanced features like clean rooms, painting bays, and composites manufacturing.

Prioritising resilience, the precinct is elevated above the 1-in-100-year flood level to ensure continuity amid climate risks.

Precinct Component	Description	Expected Benefits
MRO Hangar Facility	Flexible hangar for heavy maintenance, repairs, and overhauls under various models.	Addresses $15M annual lost revenue; supports 100 construction jobs and 400 ongoing roles.
Heliport and Aprons	Zones for helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft.	Enhances tourism; minimises conflicts.
Training and Support Spaces	Integrated areas for skills development via CASC.	Builds workforce pipelines; meets global demand for 690,000 new technicians by 2042.
Resilience Measures	Flood-proof design and renewables integration.	Ensures continuity; mitigates environmental risks.

The MRO facility design is to support scalability, with operational models determining usage: multi-user for collaboration, single-operator for efficiency, or joint venture for shared expertise.

Operational Models Under Consideration

Informed by the SBC's options analysis, this EOI invites proposals across three models to optimise alignment with industry needs, risks, and opportunities:

- **Common User Facility (CUF) Model:** A multi-user hangar enabling shared access for multiple MRO providers. Managed by a neutral operator, it promotes economies of scale, equitable resource allocation, and collaborative growth. Ideal for addressing capacity constraints while fostering resilience and new capabilities (e.g. composites, painting). Strengths: Scalability and inclusivity; Potential Challenges: Coordination and perceived bias (mitigated via transparent governance).

- **Standard Single-Operator Model:** Exclusive lease or management by one operator, allowing customised operations tailored to specific needs. This mirrors traditional individual hangars but leverages the precinct's resilient infrastructure. Suitable for high-volume providers seeking operational control. Strengths: Clear accountability and efficiency; Potential Challenges: Limited broader access and potential conflicts with regional goals (addressed through alignment incentives).

- **Joint Venture Model:** A consortium or partnership involving multiple entities (e.g. MRO operators, CASC, or investors) for shared ownership and management. This could blend expertise from industry specialists, enhancing decision-making and trust. Appropriate for complex, capability-expanding facilities. Strengths: Diverse input and buy-in; Potential Challenges: Decision-making coordination (managed via defined governance structures).

Respondents should specify their preferred model(s) and demonstrate how it aligns with precinct objectives, including economic diversification and workforce development. Hybrid approaches may be considered.

Strategic Opportunity for MRO Operators

This EOI offers a pivotal role in a high-growth precinct along Australia's northern aviation corridor.

As an operator or partner, you will:

- **Drive Economic Impact:** Capitalise on Cairns' proximity to Asian hubs to attract clients. The Asia-Pacific MRO market, 35% of global activity, grows at 9.2% annually.
- **Address Market Gaps:** Expand into composites ($48.76 billion global market, 9.2% CAGR) and painting ($2.03 billion, growing to $2.27 billion by 2028), diversifying into defence and marine.
- **Enhance Resilience and Sustainability:** Benefit from flood-resilient design and 100% renewable energy by 2025.
- **Build Partnerships:** Integrate with CASC for training, ensuring skilled talent amid global shortages.
- **Generate Returns:** With $60 million annual contributions and 400 jobs, models offer scalable revenue via leasing, services, or shared ventures.

We encourage proposals that leverage your strengths across models, viewing this as a collaborative partnership for sustained regional prosperity.

Scope of Services and Responsibilities

The selected entity(ies) will operate under a lease, management, or joint agreement, ensuring compliant, efficient operations. Core responsibilities, adaptable by model:

- Facility Management: Oversee operations, maintenance, scheduling, and equipment.
- User Coordination (CUF/Joint Venture): Implement fair systems for access and allocation, per CASA/EASA standards.
- Capability Development: Integrate advanced features to expand offerings.
- Training Integration: Collaborate with CASC for on-site upskilling.
- Sustainability and Resilience: Uphold protocols for environmental compliance and continuity.
- Financial Oversight: Manage revenues, report on impacts like jobs and growth.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Build relationships to support precinct expansion.

Initial utilisation is projected at 100%, with scalability key across models.

Eligibility Criteria

Respondents must demonstrate:

- At least 5 years' MRO experience, including facility management.
- Compliance with CASA, EASA, and ICAO regulations.
- Financial stability for investments.
- Commitment to sustainability, resilience, and regional benefits.
- Experience in workforce development.
- Suitability for proposed model(s) (e.g., consortium expertise for joint ventures).

Joint submissions are encouraged for venture models; international firms require local commitment.

Evaluation Criteria

Weighted assessment:

Criterion	Weight	Description
Operational Expertise	25%	MRO management track record, adaptable to proposed model(s).
Strategic Vision and Model Alignment	30%	Fit with precinct goals; innovation in growth, diversification, and model execution.
Financial Capability	20%	Business model viability, projections, and funding.
Risk Management	15%	Approach to operational, utilisation, and model-specific risks (e.g., equity in CUF).
Sustainability and Community Impact	10%	Environmental plans, job creation, and economic contributions.

Shortlisted parties will present and may proceed to RFP.

Submission Requirements

- Cover Letter: Interest, eligibility, and preferred model(s).
- Company Profile: Experience, financials, references.
- Proposal (Max 25 Pages): Address criteria, operating model details, and vision.
- Supporting Documents: Certifications, case studies.
- Format: PDF to [patrick.bellot@cairnsairport.com.au], subject "EOI: CNS-EAP-MRO-2025-01".

Due by December 15 2025 5:00PM AEST.

Timeline and Process

Milestone	Date
EOI Release	31 Oct 2025
Questions Deadline	14 Nov 2025
EOI Closing	15 Dec 2025
Evaluation	30 Jan 2026
Shortlist Notification	1 Feb 2026
RFP Issuance (if applicable)	2 March 2026
Preferred Proponent	Q3 2026

Questions in writing; clarifications to be shared on the basis of 'Commercial in Confidence' to specific parties only.

Contact Information

Contact: Patrick Bellot

Email: patrick.bellot@cairnsairport.com.au

Phone: +61 (7) 4080 6703

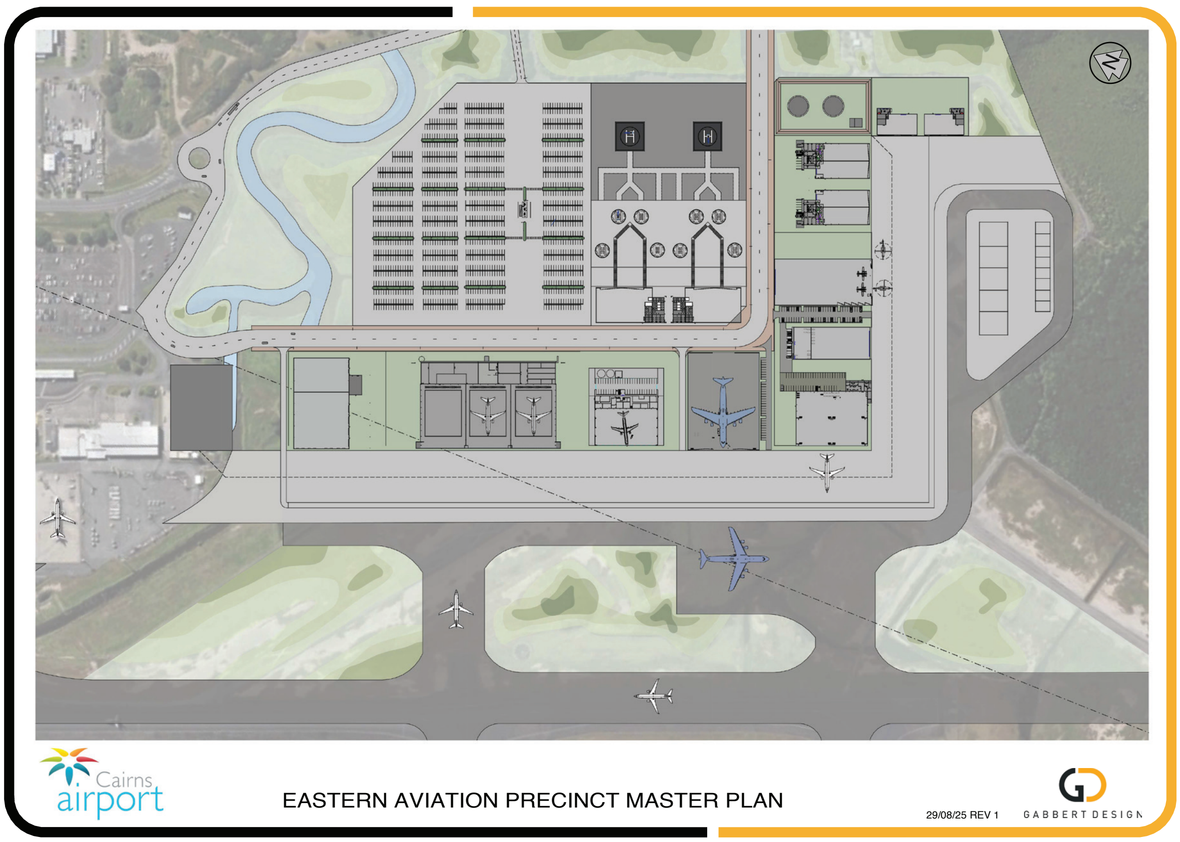
Address: Level 2, Airport Administration Centre (AAC), Caudron Avenue, Cairns Airport, QLD 4870, Australia

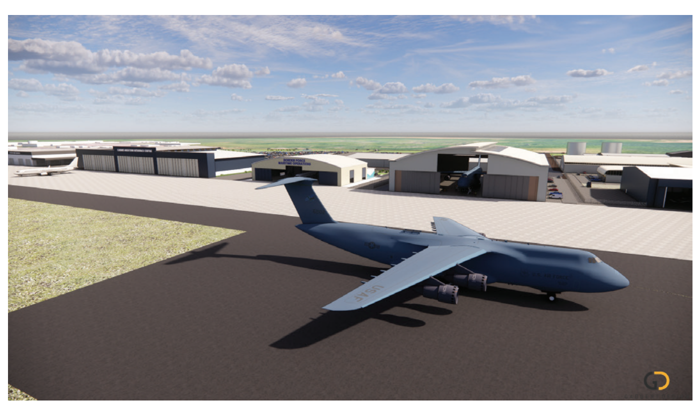
Disclaimer and Confidentiality

This EOI invites interest without contractual obligations. Cairns Airport may amend or cancel without liability.

Information is confidential; submissions become Cairns Airport property. Adheres to Queensland procurement guidelines for transparency.

Master Plan and Renders





Need more information?

For more information and to watch the Eastern Aviation Precinct fly-over video, visit **cairnsairport.com.au/eastern-aviation-precinct**

or scan the **QR code** below.