

SUMMARY OF  
"A CASE FOR A CONTINUING RAAF PRESENCE AT POINT COOK "

(BY WING COMMANDER TED ILTON RAAF RTD 1976)

This paper, in putting a case for " A Continued RAAF Presence at Point Cook" has attempted to show that such a case would ensure the continuance of the RAAF Point Cook links of almost 100 years. Additionally :-

- a. the RAAF College still being in situ at Point Cook - (Nov 1999) - provides an opportunity to rethink the relocation of that unit with a view to it remaining at Point Cook and providing the suggested continuity of RAAF presence at the birthplace of the Royal Australian Air Force,
- b. in so doing it also provides opportunities in a supporting role of "RAAF-at-work" ambience for the added interest and stimulus of the local visitor/tourist attendees at the RAAF Museum,
- c. further benefits from RAAF College staying at Point Cook would avoid what might be expensive relocating costs. moreover per capita/per diem costs to RAAF College whether at Point Cook or at a new location would be the same,
- d. it is envisaged that no recurring infrastructure costs would be payable by the RAAF College should they remain at Point Cook,
- e. the continued occupancy by RAAF College of the purpose-built training structures at Point Cook would also enhance the safeguarding and preserving of the heritage aspects of these and other Point Cook structures,
- f. despite a preoccupation of Defence and single Service Managers balancing history and sentiment with financial realty, Government policy makers must accept more responsibility for the long term preservation of aspects of heritage particularly those identified as of national importance,
- g. the Point Cook Operations Company Ltd bears witness to the Federal Government's undertaking of accepting more responsibility for preserving the heritage of the Royal Australian Air Force and in particular that of Point Cook a stance which should attract public acclaim and, finally,
- h. the likely provision of a 99 year lease for the Point Cook Operations Company Ltd will allay fears of the closing of the Point Cook airfield .

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# A CASE FOR A CONTINUING RAAF PRESENCE AT POINT COOK

(AS AT NOVEMBER 1999)

by

Wing Commander Ted ILTON (RAAF ret'd 1976)

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. The title of this paper pre-supposes that the RAAF presence at Point Cook is contra-indicated and of course this is in fact the case having regard to recent Government policy announcements concerning closures of nominated Defence establishments of which RAAF Point Cook is one. The criteria for such closures being part of, what can be described as, economic rationalism with a prioritising for the allocated Defence dollar being spent more effectively.
2. Significant to these writings is Government Defence funding policy which, although pledging no reduction in allocation of Defence funds, has also made quite clear that neither are increases in funds likely. ( This latter fact becomes even more significant with the turn of events in East Timor).
3. The writer hastens to acknowledge that the priorities for retaining operational effectiveness vis-a-vis establishment closures would have been determined by each individual Defence Service. As far as the RAAF is concerned and in particular the Point Cook base - with the exception of the RAAF Museum - RAAF Management identified that all other RAAF assets at Point Cook could be relocated. The accompanying and significant savings from infrastructure maintenance and related expenditure then obtaining at Point Cook would then be spent more effectively elsewhere on Force structure.
4. With this advice from the RAAF, the Federal Government directed the Defence Department accordingly which then flowed on to RAAF management for undertaking a closure implementation programme accompanied by the recommended relocating of the RAAF units involved. All of which, appear now to have been completed except for RAAF College for whom it is understood the new location and timing has not yet been finalised ?.

5. Concomitant with the planned closure of Point Cook as a RAAF base , and the resultant more cost-effective use of the up-until-now annual recurrent Point Cook expenditure, are two side effects each of which in the writer's view - and the view of many others - are not without relative importance i.e:-

. the retention/preservation of the RAAF heritage aspects which \*abound at Point Cook many of which point not only to the RAAF's birthplace but also to national military/civil aviation history and ,

. the future of the Point Cook airfield.

6. Given that the above two considerations were an essential part of the RAAF management study on the effects of withdrawing a RAAF presence from Point Cook , the final decision of this study nonetheless - with the exception of the RAAF Museum - determined that the reality of cost-effectiveness should not be prejudiced by heritage/culture aspects. Accordingly, the closure programme was implemented but at the same time was accompanied with comments re safe-guarding of appropriately identified aviation heritage icons at Point Cook with however, no associated expenditure from RAAF allocated funds.

7. The writer's interest in the subject topic was born out of more than a quarter of a century of his loyal and appreciative service in the Royal Australian Air Force (1947-1976) and an earlier strong affection-by-association i.e. being born at Laverton Victoria when both RAAF Point Cook and RAAF Laverton Stations were in their infancy. He firmly believes that even at this late stage, with only RAAF College remaining at Point Cook , every effort should be made by interested parties for at least a **postponement** of the move of RAAF College while examining other non-RAAF funding options for its retention at Point Cook.

8. Not being shackled with the need for "process-through-proper-channels" and, because of what is perceived by the writer, to be of some considerable urgency for implementing an "on-hold-at-Point-Cook" decision for RAAF College , this paper is being forwarded in the first instance direct to the Prime Minister . A distribution will also be made to the RAAF Commander Training, Premier of Victoria, the Acting Director of RAAF Museum , the Chairman of Point Cook Operations Ltd , the Federal Member for Lalor , and the Secretary of the Point Cook Airfield Preservation Action Group

\*National Trust of Australia (Victoria) National Register No 5572 lists over 50 significant items - ( refer Att. "A").

9. Emphasis is given at this point that Point Cook, being the birthplace of the Royal Australian Air Force and the cradle of Australian civil and military aviation nearly 90 years ago, should be retained as a National heritage site along with a continuing RAAF presence unfettered by any political persuasions of the day.

### INTENTION

10. The intention of these writings, together with the supporting documentation from other bodies with similar interests, is to provide an option when exercised, that would give continuity of not only a RAAF presence at Point Cook in the form of RAAF College - but also provide assurances for the retention and preservation of existing infrastructure - (including the airfield), and, as a flow-on, would add further stability to the RAAF Museum and its prospects for the development of a Heritage Park. Inherent in the option is funding from other than RAAF resources - (**other than that portion of RAAF responsibility that would have applied anyway at a new locale for RAAF College**).

### HERITAGE ASPECTS OF RAAF POINT COOK

#### Heritage - Definitions

11. Some of the many definitions of the word heritage, include legacy, endowment, birthright entitlement, inheritance, ancestry, origin even family and genealogy. Any one - or indeed all - of which can be applied to the structures, the personnel who have been involved and indeed the historical ambience still obtaining at the nearing 90 year-old Point Cook base as well as it being a centre of aviation both civil and military during all of these years.

#### Point Cook Selected for Military Flying Use

12. For the purposes of this paper, the Point Cook heritage began back in 1912 when the then Minister of Defence, Sir George Pearce pushed among his colleagues the importance of a flying wing for the Australian Military Forces. In September of that year an Army Order established the first flight of four officers, seven warrant officers and sergeants and 32 air mechanics.

## The Intervening (88) Years - the Heritage Development

13. A recent article by Mr Mark Pilkington, published in the magazine "Classic Wings Downunder", outlines inter-alia the following :-

*".....Point Cook as well as being the first Military airfield in Australia remains the oldest continually operational base in the world. It is also a unique site world-wide given its intact AFC and World-War I airfield structures on the southern tarmac and the original campsite. Its examples of on-going development through the "golden age" of the 30's, its collection of World-War II buildings on the Northern tarmac and the buildings of the RAAF College and Academy through the 1950's and 60's form a unique time capsule...."*

14. It is the structures - including the airfield - mentioned above, as well as the Australian Flying Corps memorial, that should be retained in RAAF/Commonwealth hands as heritage icons of this nationally and world-wide famous flying base and the birthplace and traditional home of the Royal Australian Air Force since 1921.

## THE RAAF MUSEUM AND POINT COOK

### Appropriateness of Location

15. Was it coincidental or opportune that the RAAF Museum was established at Point Cook in 1952 following an earlier proposal in 1949 by the then Chief of the Air Staff Air Marshal Sir George Jones ?. In any event, and in retrospect, it was more than fitting that the Museum began its now record of illustrious operations, and appropriately remains to this day, at the birthplace of the RAAF.

### Charter

16. The Museum's Charter at that time gave no consideration to a formal display open to public viewing, nor to formal museum operations such as conservation, preservation and research. The Museum was rather, a collection agency and repository of items of significant historical interest such as records, log books, uniforms, technical equipment, aircraft and other memorabilia.

### **Full-time Curator**

17. A full-time Curator - with the rank of Warrant Officer - was appointed in 1966 and it was not until 20 years later that a full-time officer in charge was appointed to coordinate and manage RAAF Museum activity and development. Two years later, in 1988, the RAAF Museum was formed at RAAF Base Point Cook as an independent but integral part of the RAAF, acquiring the role to Preserve and Promote RAAF Heritage.

### **The Role of the Museum**

18. In the words of the current Acting Director, Mr David Gardner,

*"...the role of the Museum today is the Royal Australian Air Force's record and standing in the community, preserved and displayed for all to see; a treasure house of priceless objects, a store of historic artifacts, a testament to past deeds and those who performed them, an archive of words and pictures. RAAF Museum's role is the preservation and display of military aviation heritage. No other authority exists in Australia with this task".*

### **The Importance of the Point Cook Airfield to the Museum**

19. It is pertinent at this stage of these writings to place emphasis on the continuing availability of the Point Cook airfield and the invaluable assistance this has been to the Museum for the fulfilment of the actual flying role of many of its restored and historic RAAF aircraft. Not forgetting the convenience and equal importance of such a facility enabling fly-in aircraft displays.

### **Museum's Role in the Preservation of Point Cook Infrastructure**

20. The Museum's role has not extended to the preservation of Heritage infrastructure at Point Cook. However there is an equal importance for their preservation on the same basis of the Museum's current heritage and cultural treasure-house theme and because they are also registered by the National Trust, (attachment "A") as having been of significant association with the evolvement over the last nine decades of the RAAF's most historic Base. It could well be argued - (but more of that later) - that subject to adequate funding, the Museum's role could be extended to include a preservation role for designated structural heritage "icons" at Point Cook.

## THE RAAF COLLEGE ROLE IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS

### Competing with Information Technology

21. More importantly than ever, in this age of Information Technology, has the retention of public interest in historic places been significantly dependant on actual "things at work" being on display. No better example of this exists than the Sovereign Hill Museum at Ballarat.

22. The fact that the public can visit the RAAF Museum from time to time to witness flying operations and particularly those involving the more historic of the restored aircraft is an important tool for the retention of public interest in the Museum's activities.

### In-Use Structures Creating a Visual Ambience of RAAF Activity

23. Similarly, if the heritage structures - particularly those in the domestic area of the Base - are kept in continual use, there remains opportunities of perception by visitors to the adjoining Museum of an in-use RAAF ambience. And indeed, a use for the purpose-built nature of RAAF Point Cook, and that being a particularly important training role which, in this case, would be reflected by a RAAF College in situ.

24. This then is **the nub** of these writings. If the RAAF College relocates then a continuing active RAAF presence at Point Cook will be lost. Such a loss, following **almost a century of continuing RAAF presence** would undoubtedly break forever this heritage - and cultural - link to the birthplace of the Royal Australian Air Force. Moreover, should the airfield also be closed, the RAAF Museum, despite its collections of "treasures" and with no other signs of RAAF activity at Point Cook, would be in danger of becoming moribund. Furthermore, many of the structural "icons" elsewhere on the Base would soon lose their historical identity and, at worst, be demolished.

**THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON  
POINT COOK'S HERITAGE**

25. The writer's understanding of the Federal Government's policy - (June 1999) - provides some optimism re the likely retention and preservation of some of the Heritage aspects associated with the RAAF at Point Cook and is as quoted hereunder :-

*".....the Department of Defence appreciates the historical significance of Point Cook , particularly regarding the RAAF . No decision has yet been made on the disposal of the facility, and as Point Cook is listed on the Register of National Estate, the Department of Defence must ensure the protection and preservation of the important heritage and environmental value of the property.."*

**DEFENCE DEPARTMENT PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION  
IMPORTANT HERITAGE AT POINT COOK**

**Time Frame**

26. The Department of Defence has earmarked the Point Cook Base for disposal in the year 2002.

**Point Cook Operations Limited**

27. The recent setting-up of Point Cook Operations Limited (PCOL) a non-profit organisation - - (which is assumed to be a Defence initiative?) - suggests this - as well as being a positive approach by the Defence Department for protection and preservation of the RAAF Museum's role at Point Cook for RAAF heritage aspects - might also afford opportunities as might be defined by PCOL for preservation and continuing use of other RAAF heritage aspects at Point Cook. The time-frame indicated in the preceding paragraph suggests that the formulation of PCOL's Business Plan will not be without some degree of urgency if a continuing RAAF presence is still to be a likelihood ! .

28. More will be said about PCOL further on in this paper, suffice to say at this stage that such an organisation with the apparent "blessing" of the Federal Government does provide a "light in the tunnel" for a diversity of avenues which could ensure proper preservation of the RAAF's birthplace at Point Cook .



## THE POINT COOK AIRFIELD PRESERVATION ACTION GROUP

### Petition to Federal Parliament

29. Although not coming specifically within the ambit of the Defence Department's policy mentioned above, this Group has been given exposure to the Federal Government by virtue of a Petition of almost 11,000 petitioners being tabled in the Federal Parliament as recorded in Hansard on 21st June 1999.

### Background.

30. The action Group was formed on 12th December 1998 at a meeting attended by :

- . The National Trust
- . RAAF Association
- . Sport Aircraft Association of Australia
- . Antique Aircraft Association of Australia
- . Australian War Birds Association
- . Aviation Historical Association of Australia and,
- . Interested individuals.

and an Action Group Committee was formed consisting of representatives of the Founder organisations.

### Objectives.

31. The Group's objectives are to :

- a. preserve the Heritage of the RAAF Base at Point Cook,
- b. keep Point Cook as an operating airfield,
- c. keep the RAAF Museum at Point Cook (later extended to also keeping RAAF College at Point Cook), and
- d. encourage the development of Point Cook as a focal point for Aviation Heritage , Aircraft Preservation , Education and Tourism .

32. A Detailed Outline (consisting of 7 pages) of these Objectives is attached to this paper and is titled : "The Point Cook Airfield - Preservation Action Group " .

### Particular Relevance to this Paper

33. As well as the already mentioned importance of retention of the Point Cook airfield, is the Action Group's support of the retention of RAAF College at Point Cook (para 12 of page 4 of the attached also refers). Moreover, with the now establishment of the Point Cook Operations Ltd company an Action Group such as this will be of undoubted and immeasurable assistance to PCOL's formulation of their plans for the "preservation of Australia's military aviation heritage".

### THE POINT COOK OPERATIONS LIMITED COMPANY (A NEW FUTURE FOR POINT COOK)

#### Identified Plans

34. Point Cook Operations Limited, a non-profit organisation, was set up to protect the interest of the RAAF Museum, located at the Point Cook Base and whose Plans include (as understood by the writer, as at 19th October 1999) :-

- a. seeking control of the Point Cook site, including the airfield, via a 99 year Lease which will allow it to preserve and promote Australia's military aviation heritage,
- b. has sought support at a Local, State and Federal level, and already the Directors have secured the backing of Wyndham City Council, the local Federal Member of Parliament Ms Julia Gillard and a host of local interest Groups including the Point Cook Preservation Society,
- c. have established a partnership arrangement with the Royal Australian Air Force and the Company's Directors to ensure a constant flow of information between the two parties,
- d. the Chief of the Air Force has been invited to become the Company's Patron, and

e. the Board's four directors are AVM P Scully (RAAF retd) ,Wg Cdr R Green (RAAF Retd), Sqn Ldr G Westley (RAAF Retd) former CO of RAAF Museum and prominent businessman Mr Gordon Kennett.

In addition to the foregoing, the Company sees the Point Cook Base as an important asset for the local community as well as an important site for domestic and international tourism.

### **RAAF Consent**

35. The RAAF has consented to the objects and powers of the Company meaning that it can secure the future of the site as a heritage precinct as well as investigate the potential for development , which the Company sees as integral to determining its future use.

### **Non-Profit Organisation**

36. **Income for Recurrent Running Costs** - Of particular significance to the intent of this paper is the status of the Company being non-profit. This should greatly facilitate at some stage in the not-too-distant future income derived from its operations being applied to the running costs associated with the management of the Point Cook site. In this regard it is assumed that with the expected status of a 99 year Lessee of the Point Cook site , the Company could arrange sub-leases - at competitive rates - which could include rental from a variety of appropriate tenancy mixes including Defence Industry establishments . Some short-term Government funding (State as well as Federal) could be required in the early stages to meet short-falls in the establishment/running costs of PCOL.

37. **Control of the Airfield.** It is assumed that the Lease to the Company would also pertain to the existing airfield and any current charges - ( RMIT current flying operations for example ) and any future landing, rental, and other fees associated with the management of an airfield.

38. **RAAF College - Income Potential.** Given whether the RAAF College is relocated or stays in situ and given that there will be no element of infrastructure costs as such, there still remains a recurrent per capita/per diem cost which would correctly be debited to the RAAF's Defence fund allocations. It is envisaged that the RAAF College if remaining at Pt Cook would pay these charges to an out-sourced provider and as arranged by PCOL.

## RAAF College - Relocation Costs

39. As indicated in the previous paragraph the per capita/per diem costs will apply to the College budget whether it remains at Point Cook or a new location at . presumably another RAAF Base. On the other hand **likely additional costs** related to relocation - although each admittedly being a "one-of" could still amount to a significant sum, i.e. :-

- a. costs of removal of purpose built equipment not at new site,
- b. costs of removal of furniture and personal effects of staff and other associated personnel reimbursement expenses, and
- c. costs of any purpose built building construction that may be necessary at the relocation site to accommodate the needs of RAAF College.

## HERITAGE VALUE - PROPONENTS/PROTESTERS

### Proponents

40. Universally it will be found that there are divided points of view concerning the question of heritage and values pertaining thereto. However, inherent in all people civilised or not , is a strong tendency to keep/display even use, physical reminders of the past particularly those which prompt strong nostalgic sentiment/patriotism and on which , in the main, there cannot be placed a monetary value.

42. In many cases an intrinsic nature of the physical reminder adds to its value. Antiques of various kinds, historic buildings , ritualistic/nationalistic paraphernalia , i.e military uniforms and weapons. And doubtless, the strongest of all being, the national patriotic emblems of flags , shrines of remembrance of various kinds and original sites/buildings of national historic importance.

43. Many heritage proponents can often lose sight of the practicality/economics of retention. On the other hand there would be cries of protest despite the absence of practicality and cost effectiveness should say, the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne or the War Museum in Canberra ,be put up for demolition !.

## **Protesters**

44. These are more likely to be those without the same national patriotism as the Proponents whether it be in areas of civic pride or military history. Or who are the more pragmatically inclined. In this latter regard economists, developers, accountants and the like are more likely to look at the dollar value associated with the retention or disposal of what could be to them, a sometimes loosely described, heritage item.

## **Economic Rationalists**

45. As well as the "Proponents" and "Protesters" there are also the Economic Rationalists to be considered. It would be too sweeping a statement to say that this category of person is a non-proponent of Heritage. More likely the expression of budgetary reasons has more validity with them than those related to heritage aspects i.e. history and sentiment need to be balanced with financial reality. To quote a recent RAAF retired Air rank correspondent to the writer :-

*".....closures of Defence establishments - particularly those with historic significance are difficult undertakings in these economic times and despite utterings about saving heritage and culture the reality is that most areas are changing so fast and in a way which affects individuals (eg their jobs and personal position) they are not likely to spare a thought or energy about what happened 80 years ago. However it is the responsibility of those who know to instruct and agitate for the longer term and greater good which not an easy task in this environment ....."*

## **Responsibility of those Who Know to Instruct/Guide for the Longer Term**

46. As indicated earlier in these writings, RAAF management did have a responsibility in determining the pros and cons of their subsequent recommendation for the closure of Point Cook Base. In the event, and quite understandably, the "pros" of cost-effectiveness considerably outweighed the "cons" of the Point Cook heritage aspects - (other than those associated with the RAAF Museum). Nonetheless a need was also recognised for the retention/safeguarding of other important RAAF heritage aspects at Point Cook and which now is witnessed by the formation of a Point Cook Operations Limited Company. Who will need continuing resource support from others "who know" during its formative years particularly at Federal (and hopefully State) level and from other associated Agencies committed to Heritage Instruction/Guidance.

## RAAF POINT COOK - PAST AND FUTURE

### Historical Milestones

47. As alluded to earlier in this paper Point Cook has held a continuing link with the Royal Australian Air Force for nearly ninety years. Of all the RAAF Bases currently in existence it is the only one that can claim to be the birthplace of not only the RAAF but also the place where all forms of aviation both civil and military had their Australian beginnings.

48. In addition to being acknowledged as currently (1999) the oldest military airfield in the world with recorded epics of early aerial exploration and proving flights for round-Australia navigation, Point Cook is also remembered for some of the following and notable pre-WWII historic milestones :-

- . 1914 - Central Flying School was formed and Lieut Harrison undertook the first military flight in Australia in March of that year, and first pilot training course also commenced in 1914 and continued for the next 79 years (until 1993) without interruption.
- . 1915 - Australian Flying Corps first (half) flight for service in Mesopotamia. First flight of an Australian - (Point Cook) - built aircraft - Boxkite CFS-8.
- . 1916 - No's 1 and 6 Squadrons formed at Point Cook
- . 1919 - first transcontinental flight to Darwin.
- . 1921 - The Royal Australian Air Force was established on 31 March.
- . 1924 - the first round Australia flight by Goble and McIntyre in a Fairy IID - a distance of 13,784 kms
- . 1925 - the RAAF's first bomber squadron was formed at Point Cook
- . 1928 - first non-stop flight to Perth - the RAAF's Signal School commenced training - the first technical course in Australia.

## Post WWII to 1999

49. **College to Academy to College.** Of particular significance in 1947 was the formation of the RAAF College as a provider for the future leaders of the Air Force which, subsequently in 1961, was renamed RAAF Academy with the same role but offering a tertiary qualification of Bachelor of Science on graduation. RAAF College was reformed at Point Cook by absorption of Officers Training School - for all other officer training. The Academy then moved to Canberra to be part of the Australian Defence Force Academy.

50. **Other Relocations.** Further relocations of Point Cook RAAF units, e.g. School of Languages, Aviation Medicine and Basic Flying Training School took place in the 90's reducing a RAAF presence in 1999 to RAAF College and the RAAF Museum. And as foreshadowed already in this paper, RAAF College is also scheduled for relocation.

### A Future RAAF Presence at Point Cook.

51. **This Paper's Best Case.** Reversing the decision for the relocation of RAAF College would, as well as providing the almost 90 year continuity links of a RAAF presence at Point Cook, add to the safeguards for preserving - by usage - the heritage infrastructures currently in use by RAAF College. At the same time would also provide a "RAAF-at-work ambience as an added benefit for the continuing visitor/tourist expectations of the RAAF Museum.

52. **The Worst Case.** Relocating the RAAF College and closing the Point Cook airfield, would leave the RAAF Museum as very much a static organisation with the resultant likely loss of public appeal being detrimental to tourist/visitor numbers. Moreover, and most importantly from a heritage viewpoint, although the historic Point Cook "milestone records" cannot be disturbed their significance will be considerably diminished by the lack of the RAAF presence that was responsible for their attainment in the first place.

53. **The Compromise Case.** Given that the Point Cook Operations Limited obtains a 99 year lease of the Point Cook property which includes the airfield, there is optimism that income from sub-leases would provide liquidity for both the commitments of RAAF Museum expansion as well as funds for the safeguarding and preservation of the heritage assets. So all would not be lost from a heritage viewpoint.

## Organisational Changes arising from the Best Case

54. **RAAF College.** No structural changes within the Unit are envisaged and, organisationally, the Unit would still be within the ambit of the Commander Training - Air Force. As the College would essentially be a lodger unit/lessee of Point Cook Operations Ltd (similar to 34 Squadron at Canberra with the now civilian owner of Fairbairn), it would not seem appropriate for the CO of RAAF College to remain responsible to Commander Training through OC RAAF Williams. However, some arrangements could be made for utilising the Medical and Dental services of the Laverton Base as well as Chaplaincy welfare matters. An extension of this cutting off from RAAF Base Williams could be a renaming of Point Cook to perhaps RAAF Heritage Centre Point Cook thus allowing in this naming for the RAAF Museum element and its mooted expansion into a Heritage Park.

55. **RAAF Museum.** The writer is unsure as to the current organisation chain for the Museum - or indeed if there are any RAAF personnel still on the Museums strength. However, the question of RAAF College relocating or not relocating should not change any current organisational arrangements that the Museum has at Point Cook. Unless for uniformity purposes the Museum also becomes a lodger/lessee unit of the Point Cook Operations Coy Ltd.

## COMMANDER TRAINING AIR FORCE - INTERESTS

56. The writer in putting this case for the retention of a RAAF presence at Point Cook and the proposition that this presence be represented by RAAF College, is not meant to be presumptuous or a bypassing of the interests of the Commander Training.

57. It is realised that there could be many reasons why the relocating decision in respect of RAAF College cannot be reversed. Or even the one reason of it now being too late for reconsideration. If the latter is the case then so-mote-it-be and the writer's intention becomes irrelevant but nonetheless in good faith.

58. On the other hand and in the event that the writer's proposition has merit, and, from what he now understands about there being a re-location time element which may now be very short, he made a decision to also submit a copy of this Paper to the Prime Minister whom, at his level, could place the RAAF College relocation decision "on-hold" for reconsideration purposes. (a copy of the covering letter to the PM is at annex "c").



### SUMMARISING

59. This paper, in putting a case for “ A Continued RAAF Presence at Point Cook” has attempted to show that such a case would ensure the continuance of the RAAF Point Cook links of almost 100 years. Additionally :-

- a. the RAAF College still being in situ at Point Cook - (Nov 1999) - provides an opportunity to rethink the relocation of that unit with a view to it remaining at Point Cook and providing the suggested continuity of RAAF presence at the birthplace of the Royal Australian Air Force,
- b. in so doing it also provides opportunities in a supporting role of “RAAF-at-work” ambience for the added interest and stimulus of the local visitor/tourist attendees at the RAAF Museum,
- c. further benefits from RAAF College staying at Point Cook would avoid what might be expensive relocating costs. moreover per capita/per diem costs to RAAF College whether at Point Cook or at a new location would be the same,
- d. it is envisaged that no recurring infrastructure costs would be payable by the RAAF College should they remain at Point Cook,
- e. the continued occupancy by RAAF College of the purpose-built training structures at Point Cook would also enhance the safeguarding and preserving of the heritage aspects of these and other Point Cook structures,
- f. despite a preoccupation of Defence and single Service Managers balancing history and sentiment with financial reality, Government policy makers must accept more responsibility for the long term preservation of aspects of heritage particularly those identified as of national importance,
- g. the Point Cook Operations Company Ltd bears witness to the Federal Government’s undertaking of accepting more responsibility for preserving the heritage of the Royal Australian Air Force and in particular that of Point Cook a stance which should attract public acclaim and finally,
- h. the likely provision of a 99 year lease for the Point Cook Operations Company Ltd will allay fears of the closing of the Point Cook airfield .

## CONCLUSIONS

60. If the case of the retaining of a RAAF presence at Point Cook is an acceptable proposition and if that presence is represented by the RAAF College, then with the expected support of Point Cook Operations Company Ltd, each of the writer's (and others) concerns re continuing RAAF linkage at Point Cook; heritage safe-guarding/preservation and the retention of the Point Cook airfield, will have been thankfully allayed.

61. If, on the other hand, it is too late to reverse the Point Cook relocation decision. Or, if the proposition contained in these writings is not acceptable, then regrettably the most important RAAF - Point Cook - linkage history will be lost forever. At least however, expectations of positive management of the area by Point Cook Operations Limited augers well for continued RAAF Museum development as well as heritage safeguarding being part of their Business Plan.

62. Finally, the writer has emphasised that Government's (Federal and State) have a collective and non partisan responsibility for matters of National Heritage and it is heartening to see this being mirrored in the Federal Government's decision to form a Point Cook Operations Company Limited. **It would be even more heartening still if the decision to relocate RAAF College is reversed.**



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Wing Commander (Retired)

Tweed Heads NSW  
30th November 1999

**Annexures :-** "A" National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Register No 5572  
"B" Point Cook Airfield Preservation Action Group  
"C" Letter to Prime Minister - Mr John Howard.

**Distribution :-** The Hon. Mr J W Howard (Prime Minister of Australia)  
Air Cdre D G Chipman (Commander Training Air Force)  
Air Vice-Marshal P Scully (Chairman PCOL)  
Mr D Gardner (Acting Director RAAF Museum)  
Ms J Gillard (Federal Member for Lalor)  
The Hon S Brack (Premier of Victoria)  
Mr M Pilkington (Secretary Point Cook Airfield Action Group)