

Media Release

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International Terminal Upgrade Begins

Contractors are poised to start work on a multi-million-dollar overhaul of Cairns Airport's international terminal, the first major upgrade of the building since it opened more than 30 years ago.

Hutchinson Builders have signed on to deliver the redevelopment, which will be rolled out in stages to minimise passenger disruption.

Cairns Airport Chief Executive Officer Richard Barker said trades would be onsite from March and work was due to begin early in April, starting with the removal of the terminal's distinctive blue carpet, which will be replaced with modern tiles.

"The carpet has certainly been a talking point over the years and while it has served us well, it's time for something new and fresh," he said.

"The terminal will be transformed into a contemporary space that reflects the dynamic atmosphere of our region, from the moment visitors arrive. It will be a space that locals can be proud of, using materials, imagery and design elements that showcase our unique environment and cultural values."

"We are planning a fun farewell to the famous blue carpet, and we are keen to get the community involved – watch this space."

The first stage of the redevelopment will involve a complete refurbishment of the check-in and arrivals areas, including new escalators, elevators, bathrooms, fresh paint, artworks and furnishings. The external façade of the terminal will also be re-cladded.

Four new, state-of-the-art glass airbridges will be installed, giving passengers a panoramic view of the mountains and waterways as soon as they land.

The first raft of upgrades is expected to take about 14 months to complete and will generate up to 100 jobs during the construction phase.

The second stage will focus on enhancing passengers' arrival experience, with new baggage reclaim belts and an expanded area to increase capacity. The departures area will be overhauled during the third phase, with a new layout and seating spaces. Overall, \$40-\$50 million will be invested in the upgrade.

Mr Barker said the renewed terminal would integrate Traditional Custodians' connection to country and prioritise local suppliers and sustainable practices such as reducing water use and waste, and increasing energy efficiency.

"Lighting, materials, furnishing and greenery have been selected to reflect each of Far North Queensland's rich landscapes in different areas of the terminal, from the rainforest to the reef, coast and mangroves," he said.

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“Wherever possible, we will use locally sourced materials, including timbers, stone and furniture, and engage local artists and designers.”

Cairns Airport is Australia’s seventh busiest for international passengers with direct flights from Tokyo, Osaka, Singapore, Bali, Auckland and Port Moresby. The international terminal was officially opened by Premier Wayne Goss in September 1990.

“This redevelopment has come at an ideal time as we continue our recovery post-COVID,” Mr Barker said.

“We are not yet back to pre-pandemic levels; however, our international connections continue to grow, most recently with the addition of the Virgin Australia flights from Tokyo. It is an opportunity to revolutionise the terminal in preparation for increasing passenger levels, while also maximising progress as we gradually return to business as usual.”

Hutchinson Builders Team Leader Kyle Hare said: “This is an exciting project. The Cairns Airport international terminal is the gateway to our iconic region for tourists from overseas. As a local business, we are looking forward to contributing to the contemporary redevelopment of this important space, particularly as the Far North continues its recovery from the pandemic.”

More information about the redevelopment of the Cairns Airport international terminal can be found at cairnsairport.com.au.

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