Aviation Heritage Centre Upgrade

The $1 million upgrade of Darwin Aviation Heritage Centre is progressing well with the relocation and installation of three historically significant radars on site earlier today.

One dish is a 14.5m-high former Royal Australian Air Force surveillance radar and the other two are decommissioned weather monitoring dishes.

Member for Fannie Bay Michael Gunner said the upgrade to the 20-year-old Centre also includes a new entry and foyer, engine bay and toilets.

“This upgrade is part of the Territory Government’s five-year plan to improve World War II commemorative sites around Darwin,” Mr Gunner said.

“Darwin’s role in World War II has shaped our identity and this Government wants to ensure that heritage is properly preserved for locals and visitors.

“That’s why the Territory Government is upgrading this popular Centre and calling for public comment about the future location of a Defence of Darwin Museum at East Point.

“The Centre is managed by the honorary members of the Aviation Historical Society and houses an impressive collection of aircraft and displays depicting the Territory’s involvement in aviation.

“I congratulate local company GEM Construction and Engineering for being awarded the tender to deliver the upgrade with the project set to support 10 local jobs.

“The relocation and installation of the three radar dishes will become a powerful signage to signal the entrance of the Centre to visitors driving on the Stuart Highway, and it will provide a great new attraction and be part of the interpretation of the Territory aviation history.

“One of the weather dishes was utilised during Cyclone Tracy, and the large red surveillance radar will attract a lot of attention due to not only its size but also its positioning opposite the Hook Road lights on the Highway.

“The new engine bay roofed area will enable the interpretation of historically important aviation engines such as the Rolls Royce Merlin XXIII used in Mosquito Fighter Bombers and the Allison 1710 used in USAAF P-40 Kitty Hawks.

“The new air-conditioned entry foyer will provide a formal entrance to the Centre and house a ticketing, coffee and souvenir shop area and additional exhibition displays.

“The new toilet block will provide better amenities for visitors and patrons attending functions.”

The upgrade began in August and is set to be complete by late November.

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