



# Ballarat. NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

## Aviation Emergency Services Innovation Hub (AESIH)

### The Ask

\$50 million for the development of an Aviation Emergency Services Innovation Hub (AESIH) at the Ballarat Airport:

- \$43 million for the Aviation Emergency Services Innovation Hub's Stage 1 will deliver a multi-agency innovation centre, runway upgrades, hanger and new aprons to cater for aerial testing and response capability at the Ballarat Airport
- \$7 million for enabling road infrastructure

### Overview

The AESIH will be a national flagship for aviation emergency service innovation excellence, supporting multi-agency interoperability and emergency rapid response, in line with current state emergency management reform.

The opportunity exists to partner with aviation technology and innovation leaders to develop Ballarat Airport into an aviation innovation hub including fire and emergency services.

This will require a partnership with multiple operators and technology companies that will develop concepts, test aviation integration and build new capabilities. To fully achieve its potential a refocused approach building on the value of having uncontrolled airspace as the test environment will be required.

The City of Ballarat has worked with Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) to investigate a broad range of opportunities for the Ballarat Airport to maximise the location's strategic benefits.

### Context

Climate change, and the way natural growth is managed, is increasing the risk, severity and impact of bushfires in Victoria.

Optimal time to impact fires is 30 minutes from their commencement; Ballarat is well positioned for aircraft to reach key hotspots within 30 minutes. The combination of ground crews with air support increases the probability of containing forest fires by up to 50%.

The AESIH will have a dual economic impact; job creation and direct local economy investment.

It will also enable the potential reduction of forest and grass fires' adverse economic impact on agriculture, tourism, property, people and the environment by allowing for the development and testing of technologies which increase the capabilities of emergency service agencies.

The Aviation Emergency Innovation Services Hub at Ballarat Airport will become an aerial firefighting centre for excellence and innovation, with capacity for research and development and aviation training course provision, including increased regional employment opportunities in aviation maintenance and support industries.

The recent night vision pilot exercises flown from the Ballarat Airport were a national first and were hugely successful, illustrating the capacity for a redeveloped airport to play a role of state and national significance in aerial emergency services delivery, training, research and preparedness.



## **An Essential Role**

Aircraft contribute up to 69% of total effort in fire containment and are a critical part of a coordinated bushfire response. The CFA has identified air attack as the fire response future in Victoria for the next 30 years; and there is currently no Victorian multi-agency innovation facility which can accommodate the emergency services air fleet (CFA, SES) to test new technologies.

A dedicated multi-agency aviation emergency services innovation hub is required to provide a strategic location for testing and piloting of new emergency services innovations. The technologies' adoption will further enhance agencies' capabilities to protect the Victorian community and provide for increased future response capacity and capabilities.

The facility's location is critical to ensure optimal response times. Ballarat's geographic location allows aircraft to reach central and western Victoria risk landscapes. It also provides an uncontrolled airspace for testing and trialling innovations.

## **Scope of the project**

The AEISH's establishment will include a testing and innovation facility, runway upgrades, taxiways, a new apron construction and new airport road access. The hub will cater for testing needs of multiple operators and technology companies that will develop concepts, test aviation integration and build new capabilities.

## **Role of the Hub**

- To integrate emergency service organisations and provide a testing facility to allow operators to test innovate technologies and solutions to enhance our emergency services agencies' capabilities.
- To enhance the Ballarat Airport's capacity as a strategic location for use by emergency services in response to fires.

## **The Benefits**

### **Strategic Location**

Ballarat is well positioned for aircraft to reach fire risk landscapes in central and western Victoria within 30 minutes. A combination of ground crews with air support increases the probability of forest fire containment by up to 50%, support bushfire suppression activities, and minimise adverse fire impacts on property, people and the environment.

The Ballarat Airport offers a strategic geographic location with "uncontrolled airspace" allowing for a unique testing environment.

Enhanced response times could potentially reduce direct and indirect tourism and agricultural losses.

### **Economic**

There is a dual economic impact; job creation and direct increases in the local economy and the potential reduction of forest and grass fires' adverse economic impact on agriculture, tourism, property, people and the environment. This reduction is realised through the improved capabilities of emergency service agencies capable of using new technologies and innovative methods to respond to emergencies.

Initial economic impact assessments indicate (Remplan):

- The direct construction phase effect of the AEISH Stage 1 is estimated to be:
- Increase Ballarat's economy by \$16.9 million
- Create 59 direct jobs

The flow-on (industrial and consumption) effects estimated to be:

- Increase Ballarat's economy by \$28.6 million
- Create 216 flow-on jobs

The total (direct and flow-on) effect estimated to be:

- Increase Ballarat's economy by \$45.5 million
- Create 275 jobs



## Community

Benefits of the Aviation Emergency Services Innovation Hub include:

- Improved ability to prevent, respond to, and recover from emergencies, save the lives of Victorians and minimise social impacts
- Provision for current and future emergency services requirements
- Capacity to support various emergency services including fire, police, ambulance and medical
- Minimise disruptions to people's lives in the wake of a bushfire
- Build new capability-human and equipment

## Environmental

Benefits of the Aviation Emergency Services Innovation Hub include:

- Improved dispatch, operation and support of emergency-related aviation services, including optimal emergency response times for identified Victorian fire risk landscapes
- Reduced environmental impact from bushfires including: habitat loss, biodiversity loss, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions

## Strategic Alignment

### Council

- Council Plan 2017–2021
- Ballarat Strategy 2015 (25-year strategic plan)
- Economic Program 2015–2019
- Ballarat Airport Masterplan 2013–2033

### Regional

- Central Highlands Investment Plan 2016
- Committee for Ballarat Strategic Priorities 2017

## State

- Emergency Management Reform White paper 2012
- Emergency Management Act 2013
- Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Report 2014

## Federal

- National Bushfire Mitigation Program 2014–2017

## Potential Partners

- Emergency Management Victoria
- SES
- CFA
- DELWP
- Committee for Ballarat

## Timeframe

- Detailed design to begin once funding secured
- 6–12 month design
- 12–18 month construct
- Completion 2021

## Project Status

- Design and concept underway
- Background feasibility and assessments being updated

## Why voters would like this project

Ballarat has a strong history related to innovation; the AEISH will demonstrate the State Government's commitment to rebuilding this capability in the Ballarat community.

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