National Airports Corporation
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

NEWS RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

AIRPORTS THAT ARE READY FOR THE NEW A220 AIRCRAFT

With the arrival of the first of Air Niugini's new Airbus A220 fleet in September 2025, the National Airports Corporation (NAC) who operates and manages Papua New Guinea's 22 national airports advises that five out of its 13 designated jet airports are currently capable of supporting the regular unrestricted operations of the new A220 and the B737 aircraft.

The Airbus A220, which has a maximum take-off weight of up to 70 tonnes, requires a runway length of approximately 1800 to 2500 metres for take-off at maximum weight, depending on altitude and weather conditions.

The airports that can accommodate the A220 when it commences operations are the ones which have asphalt concrete surfaces and they are:

1. Port Moresby
2. Nadzab
3. Kavieng
4. Momote
5. Gurney

The rest of the jet airports that will not accommodate the A220 in 2025 onwards until their aircraft pavements are surfaced with asphalt concrete. These airports are:

1. Mt. Hagen (procurement of works ready, subject to funding)
2. Tokua (procurement of 2nd asphalt concrete overlay works ready, subject to funding)
3. Vanimo
4. Buka
5. Goroka
6. Hoskins (should accommodate the A220 in 2026)
7. Wewak (should accommodate the A220 in 2028)
8. Madang

The reasons precluding the operations of the A220 and the B737 into the above eight airports, include from a safety perspective, given that these aircraft have low slung engine under the wings and there is a high risk that the engines can easily ingest loose sealing chips from bituminous spray sealed surface and damage the jet engines.

The other reason is that the Fokker 100 which is the current operating aircraft has a maximum take-off weight of 44 tonnes and the bituminous spray sealed surface has been holding up to its operations. On the other hand, the A220 with a maximum take-off weight of 70 tonnes, which is an additional 30 tonnes pressed on the pavement and with the aircraft manoeuvring on its bituminous spray sealed surface can cause the pavement protective seal to break exposing the pavement to nature and undermine the pavement integrity hence accelerate the rate of pavement deterioration.

For the safety of the aircraft and the passengers, it is essential that the runways be surfaced with asphalt concrete as opposed to the bituminous spray sealed surface at the above airports. The asphalt concrete overlay on our runway pavements will also extend the life of the pavement by an additional 15 to 20 years, resulting in lesser cyclic maintenance cost for the runways, as the most important asset at any airport.

The A220 and the B737 cannot operate into Mt. Hagen and Tokua airports until the asphalt concrete surfacing is placed at the former and a second layer of the asphalt concrete is placed at the latter. A second wearing course of asphalt concrete must be placed at Tokua airport as a medium-term arrangement whilst we get a major upgrade of the aircraft pavement under the Civil Aviation Development Program (CADIP) 3 which is anticipated to commence 2028.

Mt. Hagen and Tokua airports need K40m each to lay the asphalt concrete at these two airports to enable to operations of the A220 and B737. The tender for the works at Mt. Hagen has been completed and awaiting funding of K40m to implement. NAC is ready to call for tender for the second layer of the asphalt concrete at Tokua but is again subject to availability of another K40m funding.

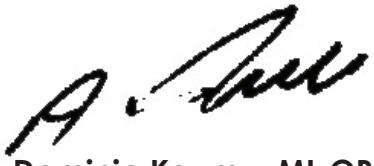
It is important to note that preparedness of airport operations for a major re-fleeting program such as the new Airbus A220, requires early engagement with all key stakeholders to ensure that airport capacity, regulatory compliance, and infrastructure compatibility are aligned with the aircraft's performance, safety requirements and schedules.

This is because infrastructure development, such as asphalt resurfacing, runway and taxiway extensions, installations of runway lights, navigational aids, and rescue firefighting services, is a long-term effort which demand careful planning, substantial funding investment, and regulatory approvals, and cannot realistically be executed within a 12-month or even four-year timeframe without compromising safety or standards.

The announcement of a re-fleeting program in 2024, together with expectations to complete the transition within a four-year window, places undue assumptions and expectations on the National Airports Corporation's capacity to rapidly realign its technical plans, capital investments, and infrastructure planning cycles. Such assumptions overlook the complexity of airport development, which requires long-term planning, rigorous safety compliance, and committed funding frameworks.

Airport infrastructure isn't flexible. It is governed by safety regulations, long design processes, and massive funding and timelines. Without early consultation, critical alignment is lost. End/

Approved for release,



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