

Media Release

NAC MAINTAINS POSITION – FIVE AIRPORTS  
READY FOR UNRESTRICTED A220 OPERATIONS

National Airports Corporation (NAC) congratulates Air Niugini and supports the introduction of the new generation Airbus A220 aircraft fleet and the incremental impact it will have on the traveling public and the economy in general.

As the owner, operator and manager of PNG's 22 national airports, NAC promotes collaboration with all its important stakeholders, to ensure safety and continuity of air transport services throughout our country.

NAC reaffirms its position regarding the operational readiness of Papua New Guinea's airports for the incoming Airbus A220 aircraft fleet as per the table below.

The remaining airports, despite being designated jet airports, do not yet meet the necessary infrastructure standards, particularly in terms of asphalt concrete surfacing, which is critical for aircraft safety and pavement integrity.

Why asphalt surfacing matters

The Airbus A220 has a maximum take-off weight of 70 tonnes and features low-slung engines that are vulnerable to ingesting loose sealing chips from bituminous spray, sealed surfaces. This presents a serious safety risk to passengers and aircraft. Additionally, the aircraft's weight, tyre pressure and turning forces can accelerate surface degradation if pavements are not properly reinforced with asphalt concrete.

NAC as the airport operator, is the primary authority responsible for improving, maintaining, operating and managing the 22 national airports as listed in Schedule 1 of the Civil Aviation Act.

While Airbus has conducted a pavement compatibility study, NAC retains the authoritative knowledge of the actual strength, condition, and safety compliance of its airport pavements. As the operator, NAC is responsible for ensuring that all aircraft operations meet national and international safety stan-

dards.

- NAC, being the airport operator in Papua New Guinea, is legally responsible for the maintenance, safety, and operational readiness of airport infrastructure, including runway pavements and surfaces.
- NAC is responsible for ensuring that the airport's infrastructure including pavements and surfaces continue to be available throughout their design life so that these assets continue to provide services to the public.

We welcome collaboration with all stakeholders, including Air Niugini, but urge caution against assumptions that may overlook the technical and regulatory complexities of airport engineering and operations. NAC remains committed to providing safe and secure airport services.

Aircraft manufacturers provide technical input, not operational authority

- Aircraft manufacturers like Airbus determine the Aircraft Classification Rating (ACR), which indicates how much stress their aircraft impose on pavements.
- While manufacturers may conduct compatibility studies, these are technical assessments and not substitutes for official pavement evaluations conducted by airport authorities.
- Compatibility studies should be collaborative efforts involving both the aircraft operator and the airport operator.

Risks of relying solely on manufacturer studies

- Manufacturer studies do not account for real-time pavement conditions, maintenance history, or environmental factors such as tropical weathering and drainage.
- They may underestimate safety risks, including loose surface materials that could damage sensitive aircraft components, especially low-slung engines like those on the A220.
- Regulatory bodies such as CASA PNG and ICAO emphasize that pavement evaluations

must be based on empirical data, field testing and user experience.

NAC's position is consistent with Global Best Practice

NAC's insistence on being the final authority on pavement compatibility aligns with international best practices. Airport infrastructure is complex, and its safety cannot be guaranteed by third party studies alone. Airlines must refer to the airport operator's assessments, especially when introducing heavier aircraft like the Airbus A220.


Mount Hagen and Tokua Airport Asphalt Concrete Overlay

Port Moresby, Mt. Hagen, Nadzab and Tokua airports account for two thirds of the passenger movement throughout the network of 22 airports in this country. Whilst Port Moresby and Nadzab are surfaced with asphalt concrete, Mt. Hagen does not have asphalt concrete surfacing and Tokua needs another layer of asphalt concrete surfacing for both airports to accommodate the unrestricted operations of the A220 subject to runway length limitations.

We have been working closely with Air Niugini to get them to finance the cost of these two airports' asphalt overlay projects over the last 24 months so that they can accommodate the A220 from September 2025.

We are still waiting for Air Niugini to pay K80m from the K130m that Air Niugini owes NAC so that we can asphalt both airports.

Approved for release,



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NO.	JET AIRPORTS	READINESS STATUS FOR A220	REMARKS
01	Port Moresby	Ready	Ready
02	Nadzab	Ready	Ready
03	Kavieng	Ready	Ready
04	Momote	Ready	Ready
05	Gurney	By End of 2025	Under construction
06	Mt Hagen	By September 2026	Contract Award ready & subject to availability of outstanding funds owed by Air Niugini
07	Tokua	By December 2026	Procurement ready & subject to availability of outstanding funds owed by Air Niugini
08	Hoskins	By December 2026	Under construction
09	Wewak	By December 2027	Under construction
10	Kieta	By December 2028	Under construction
11	Vanimo	By 2029	Under CADIP 3
12	Goroka	By 2029	Under CADIP 3
13	Madang	By 2029	Under CADIP 3
14	Buka	By 2029	Under CADIP 3