



Hobart International Airport – A Brief History

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Delfosse Badgery created Hobart's first flight and airport on 12 September 1914 with a landing and take-off at Elwick Racecourse. As aviation grew a more permanent landing area was established at Brighton on the site of the old racecourse.

As regular passenger flights were established between Essendon, Western Junction and Brighton in 1931 by ANA (the airline operated by Charles Kingsford Smith and Charles Ulm), the need for a permanent Government operated aerodrome in the south was apparent. Land at Cambridge was purchased in mid-1934 and the aerodrome was used for commercial air services, including passenger aircraft, from October 1935.

As air travel became more frequent, and the number of flights increased, it was clear that Cambridge airport was only suitable for smaller aircraft. In June 1948, Prime Minister Ben Chifley announced the construction of a new £760,000 airport at Llanherne.

With Australia's continual interest in Antarctica, it was believed the southern-most airport of Australia would serve as an ideal base for heavy aircraft serving the region.

Hobart Airport was commissioned in 1956 as the primary regular public transport airport. It was initially named Llanherne Airport, after the property on which it was built, but the name has since fallen into disuse. In its first full year of operation, the airport processed 120,086 passengers and 11,724 tonnes of freight, ranking fifth in Australia.

By 1957, the airport's infrastructure comprised a small terminal building which remains at the south-eastern end of the current terminal, two freight hangars, a fuel depot, a timber weather station, and the airport administration office and works compound.

In 1964, the Federal Government upgraded and lengthened the runway to cater for jet aircraft. The runway was extended again in 1985 to cater for large aircraft such as the Boeing 747 and Antonov 124 (albeit to a limited operating range). The current domestic terminal building was officially opened in April 1976 and the international terminal building in 1986. The Federal Government corporatized the airport in January 1988 with the creation of the Federal Airports Corporation.

On 11 June 1998, Hobart airport was privatised, with a 99-year lease purchased by Hobart International Airport Pty Ltd, a Tasmanian Government-owned company operated by the Hobart Ports Corporation.

In 2004, the domestic terminal was redeveloped for the first time in its 30-year history. This development involved modernising the terminal, moving the retail shops to within the security screening area, realignment of the car park and moving the car rental facilities to a new building in the car park.



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In 2005, Hobart Airport experienced record annual passenger numbers and it was decided to bring forward plans to upgrade the seating capacity of the airport. This work expanded the domestic terminal building over the tarmac by three metres to provide more departure lounge space.

In December 2007, the Tasmanian Government sold the Tasmanian Ports Corporation-owned subsidiary for \$350 million to the Tasmanian Gateway Consortium, a private consortium made up of Macquarie Capital (one of Macquarie Group's infrastructure funds) and Tasmania's public sector superannuation fund, Tasplan. The sale was in line with other state capital airport sell-offs, and Hobart airport was the last capital city airport remaining under government control. In October 2019, Macquarie Capital sold its stake to Queensland Investment Corporation and Schiphol Group.

Hobart Airport has two passenger terminals. In 2007 the two terminals were connected in a \$15 million development to meet new Commonwealth legislation. The airport currently maintains a combined international, domestic and general aviation apron. Provisions have been made to create a dedicated general aviation apron to the south of the one currently in use.



Early days at Hobart Airport



Early morning Hobart Airport

Hobart Airport has one runway, 12/30, which is aligned north–west to south–east and is 2,727 by 45 m (8,947 by 148 ft). The runway was extended in 2017 by 500 metres comprising a 350-metre extension at the southern end, a 150-metre lengthening to the northern end, and the relocation of the approach lights. The high strength flexible runway is constructed with an asphaltic concrete surface and is suitable for all Code E aircraft operations up to and including Boeing 777/747 aircraft. The current runway length is adequate for unrestricted operations on a Boeing 787-9 to China and Japan. The runway conforms to the Civil Aviation Safety Authority's standards.

In 2009, Hobart International Airport Pty Ltd announced detailed plans for the airport with a new 20-year master plan that was updated in 2015. Currently aircraft have to taxi along the runway and proceed to the parking apron via taxiways in the middle of the runway. This has both capacity and safety implications for the airport, as the runway cannot be used whilst an aircraft is taxiing. The plans provide for a parallel taxiway for the full length of the runway that would allow for greater utilisation of the existing runway. Land purchased in the southern part of the airport would allow for a second runway, either parallel with the main strip or as a short cross runway, however, the second runway is not likely to be developed soon, because the existing runway is still under-utilised.



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Aerial View of Hobart Airport before the Runway Extensions