

MEDIA RELEASE

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Mackay launches bid to be home of Qantas Pilot Training Academy

Greater Whitsunday Alliance will this week launch Mackay's bid to be the preferred Australian regional city to host the \$20 million Qantas Group Pilot Training Academy.

Greater Whitsunday Alliance Manager for Development and Innovation Ms Kylie Porter said the opportunity to Mackay is enormous.

"Qantas is looking to establish a regionally based pilot academy to open its doors in 2019, with an initial intake of 100 pilots, but once fully established it is expected to train up to 500 pilots a year," said Ms Porter.

"Not only is the facility expected to cost \$20 million to establish but will inject millions of dollars annually into our region from an operational perspective and enhances our already thriving education sector.

General Manager of Mackay Airport Mr Rob Porter said Mackay was an ideal location for the training academy.

"One of the biggest advantages of Mackay Airport is that it includes a main and cross wind taxiway which reduces congestion on the main runway for pilot training and our weather easily allows for more than 300 flying days per annum," said Mr Porter.

"In addition, the Mackay Airport footprint comprises approximately 273 hectares of land with ample space for continued construction and development."

Mr Porter also says that our location is also a strong attribute.

"We have a number of smaller airports of Whitsunday Coast and Hamilton Island within close flying proximity to further enhance training opportunities for trainee pilots.

"Additionally, our location in North Queensland will also make the facility very attractive to Asian students wanting to undertake pilot training as there is significant demand from Asia for fully qualified pilots," said Mr Porter.

Qantas is expected to release the full Expression of Interest document in the coming days and Ms Porter said Mackay was well advanced in EOI planning.

"Mackay has the full support of Mackay Regional Council, both state and federal members and key industry groups. This project is a game changer for the region and all proponents are working closely together to submit a compelling tender that Qantas cannot possibly overlook," said Ms Porter.

The bid will be launched by Mackay Regional Council Mayor Cr Greg Williamson on Thursday April 12 at Regional Air, 14 Mike Jones Street, Mackay Airport from 11.30am

Greater Whitsunday Alliance is the region's peak, independent economic development body committed to making the Mackay, Isaac, Whitsunday region strong for generations.

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For more information please contact Kylie Porter on 0417 705 245.