



# Evans airpark plans taking off

## Museum to be centrepiece in redevelopment of aerodrome

By **SCOTT HARLUM**  
*Casino reporter*

HAVING played a role in the nation's aviation and defence history, the Evans Head aerodrome looks set for a new life as a major tourism drawcard for the area.

Rivalling Longreach's Stockman's Hall of Fame and Temora's Aviation Museum as a tourism attraction, a proposed redevelopment would see the 80-hectare site converted to include a military aviation museum, a boutique motel and convention centre, a 70-lot residential airpark precinct, commercial aviation facilities including 14 aircraft maintenance and support hangers, a wetland conservation area and camping facilities.

The group behind the redevelopment proposal, Evans Head Airpark, which includes former Olympian and champion iron man Grant Kenny, will tender for a decommissioned RAAF DH-4 Caribou to display at the museum, and is also hoping to obtain an F-111 for its collection.

"The inclusion of a flying

RAAF DHC-4 Caribou in the Aviation Heritage Centre would complement the expanding range of exhibits planned," Peter Lynch, director of Evans Head Airpark, said.

"The Caribou has a special place in the hearts of local residents. It played a major role in the relief efforts during the 1967 floods in Grafton and the 1974 floods in Casino," Federal Page MP Janelle Saffin said.

"We are still working our way through the process of obtaining an F-111 as the centrepiece on static display," Mr Lynch said.

State Member for Clarence Steve Cansdell said the museum and aircraft would be a major drawcard for tourism.

Added to the NSW State Heritage Register in 2002, the airfield was constructed in 1936 as an emergency landing strip and was resumed by the Commonwealth in 1937 to be used as a bombing and gunnery school. At the time the aerodrome was home to 70

Fairey Battle aircraft, with Wirraway and Anson aircraft from Amberley airbase west of Brisbane flying in daily. It was one of the largest operational air force bases in Australia during WWII.

The facility was handed over to the Civil Aviation Department in 1947, and then to the Richmond Valley Council in 1992. Commercial use of the aerodrome ended in the 1950s, but the facility has continued to operate for recreational purposes and as an emergency landing strip.

Subject to transfer of the land and development consent from Richmond Valley Council, and approval of the Heritage Council of NSW, construction of the museum and facilities could be completed within 12 months. Existing community facilities, including the Men's Shed, which operates from a hanger on the site, will be retained in the new facility.

*scott.harlum@northernstar.com.au*





**ABOVE:** An artist's drawing showing the proposed Evans Head Airpark Aviation Museum, which will form the centrepiece of the project when it is completed.



**MAIN ATTRACTION:** Airpark supporters are hoping the Evans Head project will rival the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame at Longreach in Queensland as a tourism drawcard.

Picture: AAP



**AIRPARK ALLIES:** Discussing the future of the Evans Head Airpark project are (from left) Clarence MP Steve Cansdell, Evans Head Airpark director Peter Lynch, Richmond Valley Mayor Col Sullivan and Councillor Stuart George.

Picture: JAY CRONAN