

Upgrading Bonya airstrip

Bonya is located about 400km from Alice Springs. The airstrip is looked upon as providing an important link between the community and the outside world for mail services and also for emergency medical evacuation if and when the need arises.

The airstrip is classified as an Aircraft Landing Area (ALA) which means that it is unregulated. The airstrip did not meet many of the Royal Flying Doctor Service's minimum requirements and a plane would only land at the pilot's discretion. Having a safe and reliable airstrip therefore, was a high priority for the community.

To improve its suitability for emergency evacuations, the airstrip needed a number of improvements. The main priority was to put a fence around it to keep cattle out. As Bonya is surrounded by Jervois Station, the biggest issue for pilots was having three cattle pads going across the strip linking grazing fields in the east with the nearest watering point on the western side of the airstrip.

Through consultation with the community and the station owner an agreement was made to work in partnership to fence the airstrip. ITS would assist by providing some resources such as design expertise, equipment, labour and transport. In turn, the community would provide some local labour, materials and the use of heavy machinery to assist with clearing, loading and carting of materials, as well as their local expert knowledge. This sharing of resources kept costs to a minimum.

The local Essential Services Officer was able to borrow a grader from the nearby cattle station and cleared the proposed fenceline so we could run out barbed wire without entanglements. In addition to the fencing and gateways, two cattle bayonets were installed on the western side of the airstrip. This allows any cattle trapped inside the fence to get out without perishing, or needing someone to let them out through the two gateways. This was a request from the station owner that was easily met. The community really want to keep him happy as he has been good to the them for a long time, and has provided assistance in the past where possible.

Other on-site works that were completed included:

- relocating an existing disused shelter from old Bonya to provide shade and protection from the weather, and with a rainwater tank and guttering, to provide a water supply
- developing a signal area to provide warning of closure



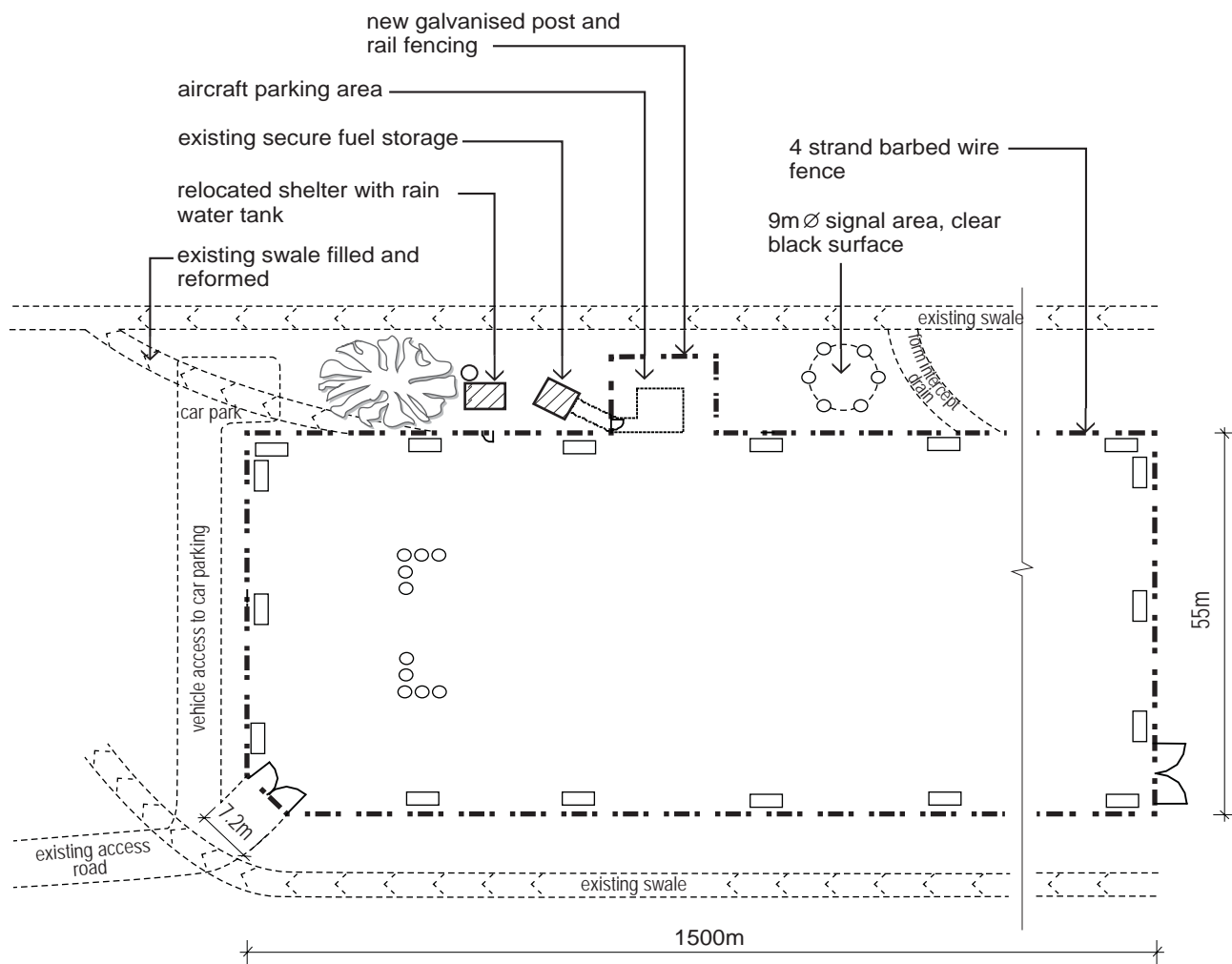
- painting the existing gable markers and placing these around the perimeter of the airstrip
- providing cone markers to define the runway

To ensure the airstrip remains in good condition a maintenance schedule has been established which will be managed by the Community.

The benefits of working in partnership include the cost savings achieved through sharing machinery, materials and equipment; the opportunities for skill development and local employment; and the ability to move efficiently from the identification of need to achieving practical outcomes. None of this would have been possible without the strong relationship building, goodwill and trust shown by all participants. This project has demonstrated one way of achieving better service delivery for a remote Indigenous Community.

The outcomes and impact of this project include:

- enhanced safety for aircraft and passengers
- improved access for emergency evacuations
- stronger working relationships within the region
- improved infrastructure



Bonya airstrip, plan view (not to scale)