



SKYPORTZ AND MICROFLITE TO TRANSFORM MELBOURNE WITH AIR TAXI VERTIPOINTS

News / Business aviation



The operator of Melbourne heliport on the Yarra River, Microflite, has called time on its long-term future running helicopters for tourism use cases. In collaboration with Skyportz, they plan to work with the soon to be elected new Lord Mayor and the Victorian government to explore options for new electric air taxi vertiport sites to access Melbourne, starting with the existing helipad on the Yarra River.

Microflite Chief Operating Officer, Rodney Higgins has plans to replace his fleet of tourism helicopters with clean, green and quiet electric air taxis: "We have been following closely the development of numerous electric air taxi prototypes in recent years and it appears clear that the frontrunners will be available for commercial operations soon. The aviation industry needs to do its bit for the environment and electric aviation will have a place very soon for short range operations. In addition to decarbonising aviation, we expect these aircraft will be much quieter, safer and affordable. Of the many thousands of passengers and tourists that Microflite fly from its Melbourne Heliport each year, an increasing number are asking when the aviation industry will be progressing to sustainable operations."

Melbourne based vertiport developer Skyportz has worked with Contreras Earl Architecture and Pascall+Watson to develop a vertiport concept at Batman Park on the Yarra River to replace the long serving helipad. Under this plan the site would also be a multi modal hub for electric transport, including ferries and hire boats. A cafe would provide an area for people to view the action. All

three leading candidates for Lord Mayor are positive about the concept. Elections will be held this month.

Skyportz CEO Clem Newton-Brown commented: "We want to work with Microflite, CASA, the State Government and the new Lord Mayor to create one of the first purpose built vertiports in the world. Electric aviation is going to be a multi billion dollar industry with significant benefits for those cities that are first movers. Melbourne is perfectly placed to seize this opportunity with its existing heliport site that has been in operation for over 50 years. The key to this industry is breaking the nexus between aviation and existing airports. We need to develop a network of new vertiport sites if the industry is to reach its potential."

The Victorian state government's Advanced Air Mobility Action Plan states: "The AAM Action Plan will remove barriers to industry development and support new investment into the State. It will prepare Victoria's economy to benefit from the range of new clean energy industries, technology and jobs that will strengthen Victoria's capability and supply chain across the aerospace, advanced manufacturing and renewables sector.

Investment in these technologies will unlock new zero-emission capabilities across logistics, service delivery, emergency services, regional connectivity and passenger transport, as well as support Victoria's Climate Change Strategy target of net zero by 2045. The Australian air safety regulator, CASA, is preparing the skies for this revolution in aviation and recently released vertiport guidelines to encourage new landing sites.

Newton-Brown sees the Yarra River vertiport as the first in a network of future landing sites that will be enabled with these new aircraft. He has identified Fishermans Bend or the Port for a larger vertiport base where aircraft will be charged, maintained and hangered. In addition to the existing Batman Park helipad site, Southern Cross Station and the sports precinct have been identified as potential vertistop locations for setting down and picking up passengers, subject to approvals by State and local governments. Skyportz has patented a modular vertipad product to enable private commercial property owners to join the Advanced Air Mobility network.

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