

Brisbane Airport to be world leader for biojet fuel

Queensland Government Tuesday 3 October 2017



Media release

JOINT STATEMENT

Premier and Minister for the Arts
The Honourable Anastacia Palaszczuk

Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines
The Honourable Dr Anthony Lynham

Brisbane is set to become one of a handful of hubs around the world for sustainable aviation fuel, under an agreement supported by the Palaszczuk Government between Virgin Australia and US-based biofuel producer Gevo.

Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk said the biojet trial was yet another show of confidence in Queensland's growing biofuel industry.

"Biojet is a proven fuel source, one that is already bringing Virgin Australia flights into Brisbane from Los Angeles," the Premier said.

"By establishing Brisbane Airport as a biojet refuelling port, we can help open another key market for our cane farmers and biofuture pioneers alike."

The Palaszczuk Government has already signed a biofuel agreement with the US Navy as part of its Great Green Fleet initiative, which is a commitment by the US to source 50% of its fuel needs from renewable sources by 2020.

"The biorefinery projects currently under development across Queensland have the potential to create 1100 jobs when they are operational," the Premier said.

"To get up and running, industrial-scale biorefineries need a critical mass of customers to supply.

"That's why it's vital to get big industries like aviation and defence on board as potential customers."

State Development Minister Dr Anthony Lynham said biojet can be produced from a range of organic materials, including sugarcane bagasse, molasses, wood waste and agave.

"Some of the existing refinery projects being developed in Queensland will have the capability to produce biofuel for commercial aviation," Dr Lynham said.

"This partnership between the Virgin Australia Group and Gevo, Inc. has the potential to draw even more proponents into the industry, as demand for biofuels grows.

"That means more demand for sugar cane, and more jobs in agriculture and biofutures across our regions."

Bioenergy in the news

Work on using biojet as a complementary fuel source to conventional jet aviation fuel has been underway for more than a decade, and the fuel is now being supplied at airports at Oslo and Los Angeles, including on Virgin Australia's services from Los Angeles to Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

Dr Lynham said that the project showed the Queensland Government's Biofutures Roadmap was paying dividends.

"Queensland has a vision for a \$1 billion biofutures sector by 2026," Dr Lynham said.

"Since the launch of our Biofutures Roadmap in June 2016 we have directly supported 15 new biofutures projects, including today's announcement.

"Queensland's bio-industrial revolution is here, and the dividends it's going to pay our state in jobs and economic growth will mean a greener and more prosperous future for all Queenslanders."

Virgin Australia Group CEO John Borghetti said this initiative built on Virgin Australia's commitment to be a leader in the commercialisation of the sustainable aviation fuel industry in Australia.

"The agreement announced today is critical to testing the fuel supply chain infrastructure in Australia to ensure that Virgin Australia and Brisbane Airport are ready for the commercial supply of these exciting fuels," Mr Borghetti said.

Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC) Acting CEO Stephen Goodwin said the initiative was clearly aligned with BAC's strategy to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions produced as a result of airport operations.

"Energy efficiency and increased use of renewable energies are the foundations of BAC's emissions reduction program, so we are enthusiastic supporters of this initiative as it will help reduce Brisbane Airport's carbon footprint even further by assisting the airlines to reduce their emissions," Mr Goodwin said.

"We applaud the Queensland State Government, Virgin Australia and Gevo Inc for their foresight and commitment to sustainability and we're pleased to be affiliated with this exciting partnership and the home base for this world-first initiative."

CEO of Gevo, Inc., Dr Patrick Gruber, said that although his company would initially supply jet fuel from its hydrocarbon plant based in Texas, and derived from isobutanol produced at its commercial isobutanol plant located in Minnesota, there would be significant opportunities for production in Queensland.

"When I visited Queensland last year for the Biofutures Industry Forum, I discovered the depth and diversity of your agriculture sector," Dr Gruber said.

"We believe Queensland offers huge potential for low-cost sugar feedstocks to produce biofuels. It really opened our eyes to Queensland's potential for sustainable aviation fuels based on Gevo's alcohol-to-jet technology."

The partnership has received positive recognition from the aviation sector's global peak body, the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Bioenergy in the news

"We applaud the policy vision of the Queensland Government to support aviation's desire to advance the deployment of sustainable jet fuel," said the CEO of IATA, Alexandre de Juniac, from the IATA offices in Switzerland.

"Effective collaboration between airlines, producers, airports and policy makers is crucial to accelerate the deployment of sustainable jet fuel and this project is a great example that can benefit the entire industry."

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