

# The Canberra Times

TO SERVE THE NATIONAL CITY

July 27 2020

## **John Travolta's Boeing 707 on track to complete museum collection of Qantas planes by early 2021**

I'll be back: John Travolta at HARS in November 2019 when the Boeing 707 he is donating to HARS was first planned to arrive. Picture: Sylvia Liber.

COVID-19 has slowed many things but its impact on the travel industry in the US is helping HARS Aviation Museum get essential maintenance work done on John Travolta's 707.

While the timeframe for its arrival at the HARS has blown out the ongoing generosity of Bendigo Bank towards the project means the aircraft will arrive in early 2021.

When that happens it will be the final piece of the puzzle for HARS which will then have every major aircraft type that has served Qantas over the years.

HARS vice-president Maureen Massey said since the COVID-19 Pandemic project team members Dick Elliott, Don Hindle, Reg Darwell, Jim Marshall, Warren Goodhew and Wayne Studdert have been unable to travel to the United States to do any maintenance work and make preparations.

But they have been in constant contact with Stambaugh Aviation at Brunswick who are registered with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to do such work in the United States and have been helping the HARS engineers since the project began.



Teamwork: Project 707 team members Richard Elliott, Warren Goodhew, Maureen Massey, Don Hindle and Wayne Studdert. Reg Darwell is in Queensland. Picture: Greg Ellis.

Ms Massey said Stambaugh will now do more of the maintenance work and HARS and is about to do some important work on the attachment fittings for the pylons that support the heavy engines under the wings.

"We have a quote for that and permission to go ahead ," she said.

"We have the money raised for that part of the program so we are going ahead with it. I am just waiting on them for a commencement date.

"First of all they will drop the four engines, inhibit those and store them.

"Then they will do the actual work on the pylons and will then replace each attachment fitting on each wing".



Travolta plane: The Boeing 707 on the ground in Georgia in the United States where maintenance work is presently underway and due to be completed by November. Picture: Bob De La Hunty.

Mrs Massey said it was a big project that will take about four or five months.

She said with business slowing in the United State because of the coronavirus Stambaugh Aviation was in a position to be able to get more work done on the 707.

"We have asked for a timeframe of how long the work will take," she said.

Ms Massey expects it to be completed by November and that might be enough for the FAA to issue a special flight permit.

If that is the case John Travolta's 707 would arrive at HARS in early 2021, COVID-19 travel restrictions allowing.

"The FFA are involved along with CASA," Ms Massey said.

"It won't be here any earlier than 2021. This is an older airplane and we have to do a thorough job which takes a lot of time, work and money.

"We are very happy with the funding from Bendigo Bank which has been wonderful. We have their backing as the major sponsor which gives us the confidence to proceed with the mission to bring the famous aircraft to Shellharbour".

Ms Massey said growing membership of HARS was also supporting its ongoing work preserving aviation history for future generations.

HARS president Bob De La Hunty told those gathered at an event in honour of final Qantas 747 flight last Wednesday that all attention was now on getting the John Travolta 707 to the aviation museum.

Mr De La Hunty said people could help that happen sooner by becoming members of HARS.

"We are just about to send around \$250,000 to the United States to start the pylon work that needs to be done on that aircraft," he said.

"It is going to cost us, now after two years of researching and doing everything we can to get a special flight permit, about \$1.6 million at this stage to do this work. Connie cost us over \$3 million. People thought that was impossible. But we have no operated the Connie for almost 30 years".

Mr De La Hunty said the 707 had jet engines rather than piston engines like the Connie and HARS was blessed to have so much expertise from people who worked on those engines for Qantas.

"It is their determination and passion to get it here that will succeed," he said.

"Bendigo Bank have been the primary sponsor so far and they have just given us another \$75,000 towards the project "And it is really comforting that so many HARS members have also chipped in to help as well.

"We would like to have a similar occasion for everybody in the not too distant future with the arrival of that ex Qantas 707 which the airline will allow us to keep in their colour scheme as John Travolta has".

[After visiting HARS last November](#) when the 707 was initially meant to arrive Travolta has indicated he still intends to be in Shellharbour when it does land.