

CASE STUDY

**CAPA**  
CENTRE FOR AVIATION

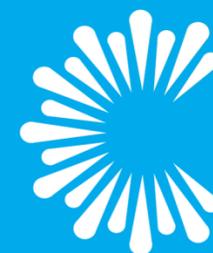
**From Capital Cities to Cairns: CAPA Airline Leader Summit Redefines Regional Event Potential**



australia



Meeting Rooms  
M9 to M11



CAIRNS  
CONVENTION  
CENTRE

## CASE STUDY



Claudia Kunz, Events Director addressing CAPA Airline Leader Summit 2025 in the Trinity Room at Cairns Convention Centre



Trade on the Mezzanine Exhibition Level at Cairns Convention Centre

# FROM CHANCE ENCOUNTER TO HOST CONSIDERATION

The journey to securing the **CAPA Airline Leader Summit 2025** began with a serendipitous moment. Following IMEX Frankfurt 2024, Wayne Smith, Business Development Director at Cairns Convention Centre, found himself seated next to Claudia Kunz, Events Director at CAPA – Centre for Aviation, on a flight. A casual conversation about aviation momentum, airport upgrades, and the Centre’s capabilities sparked interest in Cairns as a potential host city. Reflecting on the moment, Smith noted, “You never know who you’re sitting next to. A genuine conversation, not a pitch, can lead to something incredible.”

This anecdote highlights the importance of authentic engagement and relationship-building, where informal moments can lead to transformative outcomes. Kunz echoed this sentiment, “Working with the Centre from arranging the contract through to the delivery has been phenomenal.”

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Claudia Kunz, Events Director, CAPA - Centre for Aviation

## CASE STUDY

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360

GLOBAL DELEGATES

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23

COUNTRIES

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~\$1.2m

DIRECT SPEND

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## STRATEGIC WIN FOR QUEENSLAND

In a bold and forward-thinking move, CAPA was staged in Cairns, marking the first time the globally recognised aviation forum had been held outside a capital city. Choosing regional Queensland over traditional hosts such as Sydney or Brisbane reflected growing confidence in Cairns' ability to deliver world-class conferences. While considerations around accessibility, infrastructure, and delegate uptake were part of the planning process, the decision ultimately paid off — with strong attendance, seamless delivery, and overwhelmingly positive feedback confirming the Summit's success.

The conference attracted **360 delegates** from **26 airlines** across **23 countries**, generating an estimated **\$1.2 million** in direct economic impact and approximately **1,020 visitor nights**, reinforcing the tangible benefits of hosting high-profile conferences in regional destinations. Kunz acknowledged this, stating, "It was our first time outside a capital city and of course there was some risk, but numbers held firm and the experience has been a huge success."

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Claudia Kunz, Events Director, CAPA - Centre for Aviation

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Airline Leader Summit  
Australia Pacific



Opening Plenary Session at CAPA Airline Leader Summit 2025



(L-R): Mark Olsen, CEO TTNQ; Marco Navarria, Senior Director – Content & Marketing at CAPA; Andrew Powell, Minister for Tourism; Bree James, Assistant Minister for Tourism; Richard Barker, CEO Cairns Airport; and Craig Davidson, CEO TEQ.

# CRITICAL CONNECTIVITY AND STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

Cairns secured the Summit through a competitive global bid, strategically leveraging its aviation connectivity, proximity to two UNESCO World Heritage-listed sites, the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics Rainforest, and unified destination support. Cairns Airport, Queensland Government, Tourism and Events Queensland, Tourism Tropical North Queensland, and the Centre underpinned the bid. As Kunz reflected, “The collaboration has been phenomenal. I want to say one of the very best.”

At the forefront of this effort was **Cairns Airport**, whose leadership and continuous engagement with CAPA decision-makers over 12 months proved instrumental in building confidence to host this prestigious conference and ensuring the Summit’s success. This influence underscores the Airport’s broader role as a critical enabler of regional connectivity. Cairns Airport services an extensive network of international and domestic routes, including vital links to remote communities. As the gateway to Cape York, the Torres Strait Islands, the Tablelands, and the Cassowary Coast, Cairns is among Australia’s most aviation-dependent communities—with more than three times as many passenger movements per resident compared to capital cities.

Reflecting on the Summit, Richard Barker, Chief Executive Officer at Cairns Airport, highlighted the strategic value of hosting CAPA, noting that it fostered “valuable new connections and exciting opportunities for the wider region.” He explained that Cairns’ proximity to Asia’s growing aviation markets, combined with the rise of long-range narrowbody aircraft, positions the city as an attractive proposition for airline partners. “These aircraft can fly directly to Cairns from a range of Asian markets, but do not have the range to service many other Australian airports,” Barker said.

He further emphasised the lasting impact of the conference, observing that delegates left with “a clear understanding of our region’s potential and renewed passion for growing Cairns as Australia’s northern hub.” Conferences like CAPA often act as catalysts for tangible outcomes, including new airline partnerships, tourism investment, and collaborative policy development for regional aviation.

## CASE STUDY

# ENVIRONMENTAL LEGACY IN MOTION

A standout feature of the Summit was its partnership with Reforest, a local organisation dedicated to rainforest restoration. In a first for CAPA, 300 trees were planted, restoring 540 m<sup>2</sup> of the Daintree Rainforest and removing 23.4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. Delegates were invited to engage with the initiative by scanning QR codes to view the location of their trees, while centrepiece trees at the gala dinner reinforced the sustainability message.

“Sustainability is fundamental to every one of our events,” Kunz explained, “but working with a local partner like Reforest gave it real meaning. Delegates were genuinely moved—it created a unique, positive impact.” This initiative not only aligned with CAPA’s sustainability values but also delivered a tangible legacy for the region.



“*Working with a local partner like Reforest gave it real meaning. Delegates were genuinely moved—it was a unique, positive impact*”

Claudia Kunz, Events Director, CAPA - Centre for Aviation

Gala Dinner in the Trinity Room at Cairns Convention Centre, featuring a Reforest tree as the centrepiece.

## CASE STUDY



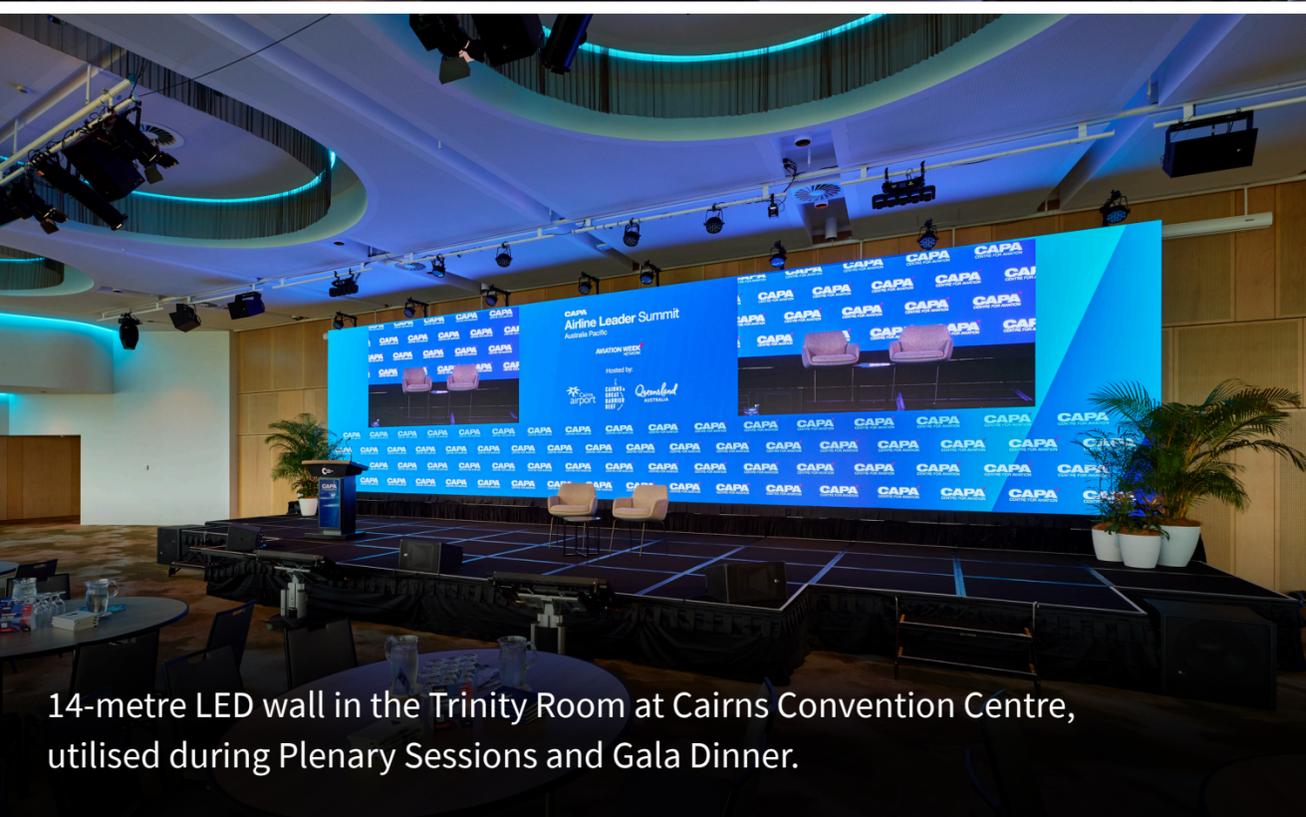
# TECHNICAL INNOVATION AND PRODUCTION EXCELLENCE

The Centre's advanced technical capabilities were instrumental in the Summit's success. A striking 14-metre-wide LED screen transformed the Trinity Room for plenary sessions and the gala dinner. Using Vectorworks, a powerful 3D design tool, CAPA was able to preview sightlines, staging, furniture layouts, and content on the LED canvas well before the conference.

This visual planning tool facilitated stakeholder alignment and enabled efficient refinement of production elements. Christine Sroba, Senior Event Manager at CAPA – Centre for Aviation, praised the Centre's AV team, noting, "Mark took the time to understand our audience and production expectations, offering tailored room options and helpful renders. After refining the setup, we chose a 14-metre LED wall that perfectly suited the space and delivered the wow factor we wanted."

“After refining the setup, we chose a 14m LED wall that perfectly suited the space and delivered the wow factor we wanted”

Christine Sroba, Senior Event Manager, CAPA - Centre for Aviation



14-metre LED wall in the Trinity Room at Cairns Convention Centre, utilised during Plenary Sessions and Gala Dinner.

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# SEAMLESS DELIVERY AND DESTINATION SUPPORT

From contracting through to delivery, CAPA described the experience as exceptional. The Cairns Convention Centre team's responsiveness and operational precision contributed to a highly professional, stress-free conference. Kunz emphasised Cairns' appeal, stating, "From the moment you arrive at the airport, it's a short transfer to the city where everything is within walking distance. With a wide range of four- and five-star hotels and the Convention Centre's outstanding facilities, it offers everything needed for a seamless, high-quality event experience."

**Bree James, Assistant Minister for Tourism, Queensland Government,** stated: "Hosting the CAPA Airline Leader Summit in Cairns sends a powerful message about the capability and appeal of regional Queensland. It's a testament to our world-class business events infrastructure and supplier networks, including the strength of our partnerships across government and industry."

**Mark Olsen, CEO of Tourism Tropical North Queensland,** added: "Aviation experts from around the globe now understand that Cairns is well positioned as the northern gateway to Australia. Cairns Airport is just 10 minutes from the CBD, where hotels, the waterfront, and the city's business events infrastructure are all within walking distance. Connectivity is everything in the business events industry, and Cairns has proven to be a well-connected, sophisticated regional city with the stunning backdrop of two World Heritage areas as an enticer for delegates wanting to be part of an event to remember."

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Claudia Kunz, Events Director, CAPA - Centre for Aviation

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PASSION IS IN OUR NATURE