WSROC Policy Paper: Western Sydney Airport

Key messages:

- **The Western Sydney International Airport (WSI) will bring significant change to the Greater Western Sydney region – both good and bad.**
- **To date, the project has not adequately addressed concerns about noise, transport, economic development, and environmental impacts.**
- **Ongoing consultation with Western Sydney communities is critical to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive outcomes.**

Position summary:

The new Western Sydney International Airport (WSI) will bring significant change to Greater Western Sydney. This includes both opportunities and challenges. It is essential that benefits are maximised and impacts minimised through ongoing consultation with local government and communities across all stages: from design, through construction and operations. Issues of particular concern to WSROC members include:

- **Noise impacts due to 24/7 operations.** The 2024 Flight Path EIS did not follow best practice, using the same substandard methodology as Brisbane Airport's 24-hour runway – a project requiring federal redress.
- **Public transport.** WSROC welcomes the North-South Metro and Liverpool rapid bus corridor, but calls for accelerated delivery of the Metro between Tallawong, Campbelltown, and Leppington as well as links to Camden, Fairfield and Penrith.
- **Economic development.** The airport and surrounding precincts must work with, rather than compete with existing business, commercial and industrial hubs.
- **Community consultation.** The establishment of robust, ongoing consultation structures for both councils and the community is an urgent need.
- **Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.** The impacts on tourism, wilderness areas and the UNESCO heritage listing were not sufficiently addressed in the final EIS.

- **Environmental impacts.** Councils acknowledge efforts to address environmental issues like waste, climate resilience, water quality and biodiversity, however it remains unclear how these outcomes will be achieved.

Background:

WSROC has been closely monitoring the progress of the Western Sydney Airport since the early 1990s. In the airport's current iteration WSROC led two independent technical reviews of Airport impact statements:

- Western Sydney Airport draft Environmental Impact Statement 2015 (draft EIS)
- Western Sydney International Airport EIS Flight Paths 2024 (Flight Path EIS)

These reviews have been jointly funded by Western Sydney councils and have considered elements including: noise, air-quality, emissions, transport and access, human health, aviation planning, social and economic impacts, surface and groundwater, impacts on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and biodiversity.

Key concerns raised by WSROC technical reviews that remain unresolved include:

- Noise impacts
- Transport and traffic
- Socio-economic impacts
- General uncertainty on second runway
- Impacts to the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

WSROC and Western Sydney councils submitted these ongoing concerns to Western Sydney Airport Co. in response to its draft Masterplan in September 2025.

Noise impacts

Ground and aircraft noise impacts were reviewed in both WSROC independent reviews. WSROC's 2015 review was successful in pushing for a change in flight path distribution (away from a single Merge point over Springwood), and development of noise amelioration and property acquisition policies by the Australian Government. WSROC's 2024 review of the Flight Path EIS found significant methodological shortcomings including:

- Assessing night-time noise impacts over a period of 6.5 hours, rather than the 8-hours – the standard international measure (Lnight).
- Sleep disturbance measures do not include an event-based threshold like N60 to understand number of aircraft movements over an impacted residential area.
- Noise sharing arrangements do not consider time of day, meaning that some areas will receive their proportion of noise at more impactful times of day (i.e. deep sleep hours).
- Assessment does not consider differing impacts of aircraft noise in relation to standard background-noise.
- Noise insulation and acquisition policies only reference the 2040, single runway scenario, rather than preparing for the airport's second runway, expected to be required by 2050.
- No consideration of impacts from the planned second runway.
- Inaccurate noise assessment criteria for the Blue Mountains LGA, particularly wilderness areas, which assumes background noise levels for urban areas.

These shortcomings are particularly concerning given the airport's intended 24/7 operation, and demonstrated shortcomings of this methodology when assessing the impacts of Brisbane's 24/7 runway.

Transport

WSROC's 2015 EIS review identified a range of concerns relating to traffic and transport around the airport. These included: noise impacts for communities, congestion due to lack of public transport and local road maintenance concerns created by significant freight operations.

Councils were successful in advocating for NSW Government commitment to a North South Rail link (St Marys to the airport) to support the airport's early operations, but remain disappointed regarding lack of clear timeline or funding for the full link from Tallawong to Campbelltown, and links to Leppington. These links are critical to minimising traffic, reducing emissions, serving the region's housing growth and promoting economic development and job accessibility. The WSROC Board has also

previously resolved to advocate for public transport linking the cities of Penrith, Blacktown and Liverpool.

Councils have raised concerns that interchange-dependent bus solutions may underperform for a 24/7 international gateway. WSROC recommends prioritising high-capacity, direct access options and integrating additional evidence-based corridor assessments into precinct planning.

Council concerns around traffic and transport impacts increased with the release of the WSI Masterplan in 2025, which makes clear the extent of freight and cargo operations at the airport site (approx. 293,800t by 2030 increasing to 546,700t by 2045), and lack of clear planning for the Western Sydney Fuel Pipeline, and confirmed via a federally-led feasibility assessment[1].

Economic impacts

While councils recognise and support the economic development opportunities of Western Sydney International Airport and surrounding precincts, there is a concern that net benefits to the region will only be achieved if Bradfield complements, rather than competes against Western Sydney's existing business, commercial and industrial hubs.

WSROC notes that the Draft EIS acknowledges impact to the wilderness values and visitor experience in the Blue Mountains LGA, however both the EIS and the WSI Masterplan cite economic benefit for the LGA due to airport proximity.

A detailed economic development strategy, developed in consultation with all Greater Western Sydney councils, is required.

Regional Governance and Funding Principles

Strong partnerships with local government will be critical to the success of Western Sydney International Airport (WSIA). Ongoing collaboration with councils will help ensure growth generated by the airport delivers shared benefits across Greater Western Sydney while avoiding unintended financial or infrastructure burdens on councils. Sustainable management of the airport precinct will require appropriate financial

[1] A report prepared by Deloitte for the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities found a Western Sydney Fuel Pipeline is more cost-efficient in supplying jet fuel to WSA than road transportation options in the longer term, and would likely be required by the mid 2030s.
The pipeline has been flagged by TfNSW as priority infrastructure.

arrangements that enable councils to meet increased asset, regulatory and community service demands.

Consultation with local government and communities

The Draft EIS required the establishment of Community Aviation Consultation Group (CACG) and the preparation of a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan by end 2024. In October 2025, Western Sydney Airport Co. announced membership of the WSI Community Aviation Consultation Group (CACG) the role of which is to facilitate dialogue between communities and the airport. Membership includes several Councils (Campbelltown, Wollondilly, Liverpool and Penrith), state MPs, Western Sydney Community Forum and representatives of business, development, NSW Government, universities and community sector. WSROC has previously advocated for a community consultation forum with robust governance to ensure a clear pathway to raise concerns and seek resolution of issues that may arise. It is unclear whether this forum will adequately address this need, and whether other forums will need to be established.

Councils have also expressed concern that engagement on the development of the airport precinct has not been inclusive of all affected LGAs. Western Sydney Airport is a once-in-a-lifetime project with significant, broad-ranging impacts for Greater Western Sydney as a whole. For this reason, consultation on the development of future planning for Bradfield and Western Sydney Airport should include all parts of Greater Western Sydney[2].

Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

Councils believe the impacts of flight paths on scenic and tourism value, wilderness areas and the UNESCO heritage listing were not sufficiently addressed in the Flight Path EIS – despite attempts to minimise these impacts being a condition of consent from the Australian Government. Issues include:

Threat to Outstanding Universal Values of the World Heritage Area

In the Australian Government's original nomination of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWHA) it identified the "aesthetic importance" of the GBMWHA citing "*...It includes a series of large natural areas, remote and hard of access, where the*

[2] Greater Western Sydney as defined by Western Sydney University. https://profile.id.com.au/cws/

influence of modern, industrial society is minimal and a sense of harmony with the environment may be achieved… It is sought for inherent spiritual satisfaction, much as is artistic beauty; in this case through isolation, solitude…"

This sits in contrast to the findings of the flight path EIS that focus on direct physical impacts (e.g. wildlife strike, plane crash, physical damage to cultural heritage), and downplays impacts related to aesthetics of the site.

Threat to Blue Mountains economy, tourism and iconic landscapes

The Blue Mountains is reliant on the visitor economy, with a nature-based recreation and tourism industry dependent on a high level of amenity and tranquillity in natural areas. Removal of the experience of pristine wilderness, peace and quiet, and the dark sky erodes the unique values of the Blue Mountains. The EIS notes moderate to high visual impact at key locations including Walls Lookout and Echo Point (Three Sisters), reduced enjoyment of walking tracks and recreational areas, and potential loss of overnight stays due to noise impacts. However, there is no attempt to consider mitigation measures as required by legislation.

Absence of a Wilderness Area Assessment

The EIS uses background noise levels for urban areas to assess impacts on the GBMWHA wilderness areas using the justification that Australia has no specific aircraft noise criteria for conservation and wilderness areas. This is despite a range of international standards for wilderness areas that could have been used.

Environmental impacts

Climate resilience

The Flight Path EIS (2024) mentions extreme heat as an issue impacting operations and flight noise, but the methodology used (seasonal average temperatures) for assessment of the associated impacts lacks veracity.

The draft Masterplan (2025) acknowledged climate change, urban and extreme heat impacts, and suggests risk management measures including vegetation retention, energy efficient building design, and alternative energy. These measures are supported by WSROC, however, at present, there is a lack of connection between the drivers of heat risk and the response measures proposed to address them. Bushfire and flood mitigation

actions also require further detail, particularly in relation to how the airport site interacts with adjacent bushland, community behaviours, and downstream communities.

Waste management

WSROC supports the draft Masterplan's objectives to prevent litter, illegal dumping and maximise waste diversion from landfill. We note that further detail is required in the draft Masterplan to specify how stated objectives will be met, with links to future operational plans. More broadly, WSI's waste management schemes must be set within the broader context of constrained waste infrastructure in Sydney – further acknowledgement of constrained disposal infrastructure and detail on long term waste reduction strategy for airport operations is required for successful delivery of the stated objectives.

Environmental conservation and enhancement

WSROC welcomes efforts to protect and enhance key environmental conservation zones (ECZ), we would like to see more information released about how this work will be undertaken. WSROC also strongly recommends expanding these plans to other remnant vegetation within the site's immediate vicinity, and collaboration with local communities to identify and extend works to other sites impacted by the airport's operations.

Energy and emissions reduction

Finally, while WSROC strongly supports efforts to lead on emissions reduction and energy efficiency, there is a need to establish clear reporting and monitoring frameworks to support this goal. Further, certain targets relating to building energy efficiency for example represent minimum legal requirements rather than best practice as implied in the narrative of the draft Masterplan.

Previous submissions, reports and advocacy

Reports

- *WSROC - Review of Western Sydney Airport Draft Environmental Impact Statement - Part A Final (26 November 2015)*
- *WSROC - Review of Western Sydney Airport Draft Environmental Impact Statement - Part B Final (19 November 2015)*
- *Western Sydney International Airport Flight Path EIS – Acoustic Peer Review (December 2023)*
- *Western Sydney International Airport Review of the Health Component of the Airspace and Flight Path Design draft EIS (January 2024)*

Submissions

- *Submission to the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development regarding the Western Sydney Airport draft EIS (December 2015)*
- *Western Sydney Airport draft EIS Submission – Waste and Recycling (December 2025)*
- *WSROC Submission to the Western Sydney Aerotropolis Planning Package (March 2020)*
- *Current and Future Transport Needs of Western Sydney (September 2023) – calls for NSRail.*
- *Submission to the Australian Parliament Senate Inquiry – The Impact and Mitigation of Aircraft Noise (April 2024)*
- *Submission In Response to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport Preliminary Flight Paths (January 2024)*
- *WSROC Submission to the Western Sydney International Airport Draft Masterplan (September 2025)*

WSROC programs

- *Western Sydney Electric Vehicle Roadmap 2022 - 2030*
- Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan Compliance Support Team
- *Cool Suburbs NSW* – used by the Bradfield Development Authority to design the Bradfield City Centre Masterplan and First Building.
- *Greater Sydney Heat Smart City Plan* – Bradfield Development Authority contributed to the City Plan's development.

Further information

Publication details				
Version	Author	What	Endorsed date	By
1	Kelly Gee	Initial draft		
2	Kelly Gee	Update following feedback from WSROC Board		
3	Judith Bruinsma	Incorporated Board feedback (stronger reference to GBMWHA)		
4	Judith Bruinsma	Incorporate additional Board feedback (Regional Governance and Funding Principles)	26 February 2026	WSROC Board of Directors