



Benchmark and evaluation research: Proposed Western Sydney Airport

A GfK Australia report (W2)

Prepared for:

The Western Sydney Unit
Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development

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GfK Australia Pty Ltd
ABN 70 128 786 041

Sydney
L7, 107 Mount Street, North Sydney
NSW 2060 AUSTRALIA

Tel +61 2 9900 2500
Fax +61 2 9900 2828

Melbourne
L4, 126 Wellington Parade
East Melbourne VIC 3002
AUSTRALIA

Tel +61 3 8415 9555
Fax +61 3 8415 9599

www.gfk.com

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1 THE RESEARCH APPROACH

1.1 Overview of approach

GfK developed a program involving four waves of online surveys (one benchmark and 3 tracking waves) with a representative sample of the Western Sydney **community** or public. Additionally, there will be 2 workshop sessions with local, regional, state and indeed national **stakeholders** such as: industry groups (e.g. Sydney Business Chamber, Western Sydney Airport Alliance etc.), environment and heritage groups, Western Sydney local government authorities (e.g., WSROC), and others. This will involve inviting representatives from these bodies to attend a workshop. The objectives of these sessions will be to understand their recall and perceptions of Strategy initiatives and their response to the communications and /or consultations to date.

The full research program plan is outlined below.

Overall project set-up 	Project Inception		
Community 	Questionnaire development and testing	Benchmark survey	Post Strategy tracking survey (4 waves)
Stakeholders 	Workshop discussion guide development	Review of benchmark findings	Post launch workshops (2 sessions)
Overall Strategy evaluation 	Final Evaluation		
Full campaign evaluation with process and outcome evaluation analysis of stakeholders and community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal report in MS Word • Web or teleconference presentation of results 			

This report includes findings from the Quantitative online benchmark and first two tracking surveys with community residents.

1.2 Notes to reading the report

Significance testing

For the benchmark wave, significance testing has been conducted to compare sub-groups such as different demographics or segments. Statistically significant differences have been denoted using the following symbols:

↑↓ Significantly higher / lower at a 95% confidence interval compared to previous waves.

▲ ▼ Significantly higher / lower at a 95% confidence interval compared to the benchmark wave.

+ / - Significantly higher / lower at a 95% confidence interval compared to comparable sub-groups in the population (i.e. higher than females).

Weighting

Wave 1 and 2 data was weighted to the Benchmark demographic composition for age, gender and location.

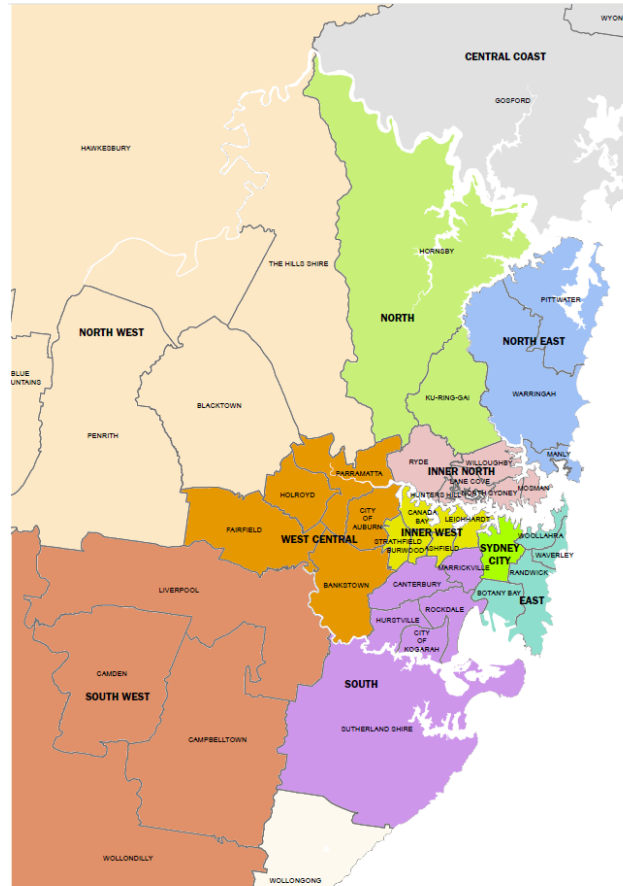
2 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

To qualify for the research, screened participants were shown an image of a map (shown below) and asked to indicate the region they lived in. Only those from South West, Inner West, North West or West Central were eligible to continue.

The suburbs corresponding to the qualifying regions were as indicated by the map:

- **Southwest** (Camden, Campbelltown, Wollondilly, Liverpool)
- **North West** (Blue Mountains, Penrith, Hawkesbury, Blacktown, The Hills Shire)
- **Inner West** (Canada Bay, Leichardt, Strathfield, Burwood, Ashfield)
- **West Central** (Fairfield, Bankstown, City of Auburn, Parramatta, Holroyd).

Note, regional assignment in the research is based on respondent self-classification.



Across all waves, an even spread of males and females across age groups were recruited for the survey (minimum quotas set to reflect the benchmark achievements). There were also quotas set from Wave 1 onwards to achieve a similar proportion of residents from the broad regions. Weighting was also applied post-data collection to provide further comparability between samples as mentioned above.

Column %	Benchmark - November 2014	Wave 1 - June 2015	Wave 2 - December 2015	Sample %
Male	250	251	238	50%
Female	251	262	264	50%
18-34	160	171	166	32%
35-54	184	187	182	37%
55+	157	155	154	31%
South West	143	129	143	29%
Inner West	90	70	77	18%
North West	156	163	158	31%
West Central	112	151	124	22%
Column n	501	513	502	-

3 RECAP OF PREVIOUS FINDINGS

3.1 Recap of benchmark findings

In the benchmark wave, the research found that:

- While most Western Sydney residents are aware the airport has been proposed and a site selected, they don't believe they know much about the development of the proposed airport.
- Overall, there is more support for the proposed airport in Western Sydney than dissent or questioning.
- It is a minority view that the negative impacts of the proposed airport would outweigh the benefits.
- Residents believe that the proposed airport would result in economic benefits.
- There are concerns (when prompted) about the impact both during construction and when the airport starts operating.
- There is a demand for more information about the development.

3.2 Recap of W1 findings

- There was an indicative drop since the benchmark wave in exposure to overall communications.
- Only 26% recalled seeing or hearing the Department's activities and communications. Residents indicated a desire to be informed about the progress of the proposed airport.
- With little change in the proportion which has heard or seen anything about the proposed airport, and low recall of the Department's initiatives, it is unlikely that there would be significant change to the attitudes toward the proposed airport (which was even at the benchmark wave, relatively positive).
 - As of June 2015, there has been no change in the largely positive (and neutral) attitudes towards the proposed airport, with support for an airport that operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The proposed airport is seen to carry many positive benefits in supporting the growth of the local economy and infrastructure.

Around half, 46% agreed that it is important that the proposed Western Sydney airport be open for business and operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with only 17% who did not feel it was important. The key benefits of this were that a 24 hour operating airport would:

- Create more jobs in Western Sydney
- Make the proposed Western Sydney airport more commercially-viable by allowing NSW to open for business at key times and trade with global partners
- Allow Sydney to compete with Melbourne and Brisbane, delivering more international visitors and imports and exports.

While sentiment and attitudes toward the airport continues to be positive, residents still do have concerns about the proposed airport, in particular around noise pollution, traffic and potential environmental impact. These concerns remain on par with the benchmark wave. Three quarters of residents (76% in Wave 1 and 74% at the benchmark) have some concerns about the proposed airport.



While encouragingly, there has been no erosion in positive sentiment towards the proposed airport, there does not appear to be any further improvement and Department's activities have largely gone under the radar. This is not a problem given the largely positive disposition of residents; however, continued communications about the developments and benefits are necessary to keep residents informed and assured during the development. Any communications that can counter (or disprove) concerns or myths could help shift those who are 'on the fence' and alleviate continuing concerns.

4 SENTIMENT TOWARDS THE PROPOSED AIRPORT

4.1 Sentiment over time

Encouragingly, since the benchmark wave, there has been further improvement in the largely positive (or neutral) attitudes toward the proposed airport.

There has been a **significant increase in advocacy of the proposed airport** compared to the benchmark from 53% who agreed they were in favour of the proposed airport to 61% in favour as of December 2015. This improvement has come from both those opposing the airport as well as fence sitters (a significant reduction of 4% points from 12% down to 8% who disagreed with the statement and an indicative decrease from 28% down to 25% for those who had neutral views). As such, residents were mostly positive or neutral with a shrinking minority who oppose the proposed airport.

Furthermore, there are **indicative gains on the already large proportion who feel the positive benefits of an airport at Badgerys Creek would outweigh any negative impacts** (from 48% in the Benchmark wave in November 2014 up to 52% in December 2015). While not a significant increase, there is a trend towards growing recognition of the benefits of the airport (see below).

Sentiment towards the airport			
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014 (n=501)	Wave 1 - June 2015 (n=513)	Wave 2 - December 2015 (n=502)
Q 11. In this question we would like to know in more detail how you feel about this proposed airport in Western Sydney. Using a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 means Strongly Disagree and 10 means Strongly Agree, please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. <i>I am in favour of the proposed Western Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek</i>			
Disagree (0-3)	12	12	8 ▼
Neutral (4-6)	28	25	25
Agree (7-10)	54	56	61 ▲
Don't know	6	7	6
Q 10. Using a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 means Strongly Disagree and 10 means Strongly Agree, to what extent do you agree with the following statement? <i>Overall, the positive benefits of an airport at Badgerys Creek would outweigh any negative impacts</i>			
Disagree (0-3)	11	14	11
Neutral (4-6)	30	30	30
Agree (7-10)	48	49	52
Don't know	10	6 ↓	7

The perceived benefits of a proposed airport are trending upwards, reflecting the positive shifts in sentiment.

There have also been **indicative gains on the perceived benefits associated with the proposed airport** across most measures tested: that an airport in Western Sydney could create new jobs, that it is necessary to support the growing population and economy that road upgrades will improve travel time and that it will make Western Sydney a better place to live and work.

Over time there has also been increasing support for a 24 hour operation and fears about noise disruption have also reduced.

Since the benchmark wave, **more residents agree that there are economic benefits of operating 24 hours a day** (from 39% in the benchmark up to 46% in December 2015) and that the proposed airport would make local suburbs more desirable (from 43% in the benchmark up to 49% in December 2015).

There has also been **significant shifts that suggest residents are less concerned about the noise impact for those living around the airport** (from 39% to 46% who agreed that 'Badgerys Creek has a relatively small number of residences so there would be a minimal number of residents affected by the noise from an airport compared to other airports').

Perceptions of the proposed airport			
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014 (n=501)	Wave 1 - June 2015 (n=513)	Wave 2 - December 2015 (n=502)
Q 14. What is your level of agreement with the following statements? Showing those who agree 7-10 out of 10			
An airport for Western Sydney would create thousands of jobs - from accountants and gardeners, to drivers, mechanics, and IT	64	63	68
The proposed Western Sydney airport is necessary to support Western Sydney's growing population and economy	56	58	60
The road upgrades to support the proposed airport for Western Sydney would improve travel time within the area	56	56	58
The proposed airport would make Western Sydney suburbs more desirable (increase in housing values)	43	44	49▲
The proposed airport would make Western Sydney a better place to live and work	-	44	49
The proposed airport would maximise the economic potential of Western Sydney if it operated 24 hours a day	50	52	57▲
Badgerys Creek has a relatively small number of residences so there would be a minimal number of residents affected by the noise from an airport compared to other airports	39	40	46▲

There is also stability in concerns about the potential negative impact of the proposed airport.

In December 2015, a third (34%) were concerned about the negative impact building an airport would have on Western Sydney which has not changed since the benchmark wave. There have also been indicative shifts in the proportion who are neutral on this point.

While only a third say they are concerned, residents are not necessarily naïve to the negative potential impacts. Around 3 in 4 expressed some concerns about the potential impacts at the benchmark wave – mainly around traffic, noise pollution and environmental impacts. As of December 2015 there has been little change to the types of concerns residents believe to be associated with the development of the airport.

While residents can identify potential negative impacts, there has been no further erosion from a year back and it appears residents can rationalise the benefits over the negatives.

Concerns about the proposed airport			
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014 (n=501)	Wave 1 - June 2015 (n=513)	Wave 2 - December 2015 (n=502)
Q 11. In this question we would like to know in more detail how you feel about this proposed airport in Western Sydney. Using a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 means Strongly Disagree and 10 means Strongly Agree, please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.			
<i>I'm concerned about the negative impact building an airport would have on Western Sydney</i>			
Disagree (0-3)	25	22	21
Neutral (4-6)	38	38	42
Agree (7-10)	33	36	34
Don't know	5	4	4
Q 15. And how concerned, if at all, are you about the following potential impacts due to the proposed airport in Western Sydney? Showing 7-10 Concerned			
Concerns total	74	76	78
Busier roads because of an airport	55	54	58
Noise pollution once an airport is running	53	56	54
Worse traffic due to road upgrades during the construction phase	55	55	54
Noise at night and early in the morning if an airport was operating 24 hours a day	55	55	51
Environmental impact once an airport is running	49	49	48
Pollution from road works / road upgrades	47	45	48
Environmental impact from the construction of an airport	48	48	46
Need for people to move from homes due to the proposed airport	46	45	42
Need to close or move public services such as schools / cemeteries	42	43	39
Impact on the desirability of the area (decrease in housing values)	41	42	37

4.2 Sentiment by population groups

There is significant variability between sentiment across demographic and geographic groups.

In terms of favourability or advocacy of the proposed airport there is higher advocacy among males (68% in favour of), 55 year olds and older (69% in favour of) and those in the North West (69% in favour of). Meanwhile, Females and 18-34 year olds were more likely to be neutral (31% and 38% respectively).

These same patterns are observed when looking at the proportion who believes the positive benefits outweigh negative impacts.

Sentiment towards the airport Column %	Wave 2 Dec 2015 (n=502)	Male (n=238)	Female (n=264)	18-34 (n=166)	35-54 (n=182)	55+ (n=154)	South West (n=143)	Inner West (n=77)	North West (n=158)	West Central (n=124)
Q 11. In this question we would like to know in more detail how you feel about this proposed airport in Western Sydney. Using a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 means Strongly Disagree and 10 means Strongly Agree, please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.										
<i>I am in favour of the proposed Western Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek</i>										
Disagree (0-3)	8	8	8	4-	9	11	11	4	11	5
Neutral (4-6)	25	19-	31+	38+	22	15-	23	34+	15-	35+
Agree (7-10)	61	68+	53-	52-	61	69+	61	53	69+	56
Don't know	6	4	8	6	7	4	6	9	5	5
Q 10. Using a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 means Strongly Disagree and 10 means Strongly Agree, to what extent do you agree with the following statement?										
<i>Overall, the positive benefits of an airport at Badgerys Creek would outweigh any negative impacts</i>										
Disagree (0-3)	11	9	13	10	12	12	11	4-	16+	11
Neutral (4-6)	30	26-	35+	41+	28	22-	32	36	22-	35
Agree (7-10)	52	60+	43-	44-	49	62+	49	49	55	52
Don't know	7	5-	9+	5	12+	4	7	11	7	3

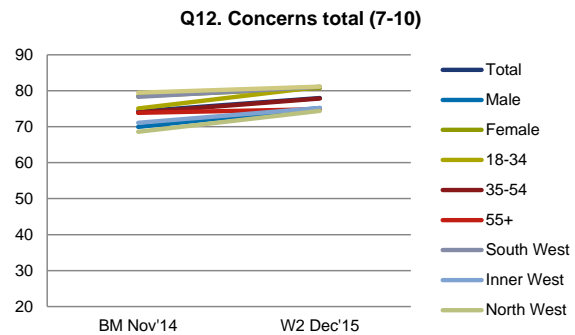
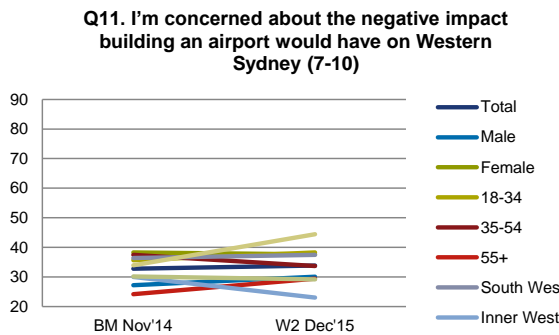
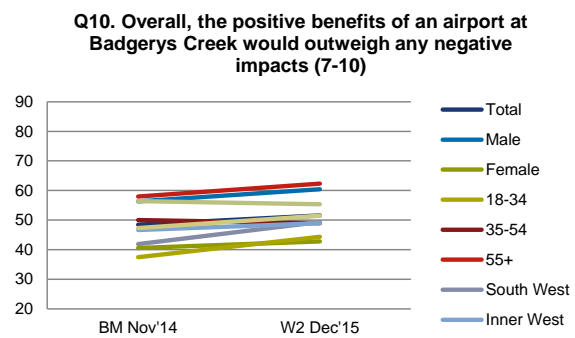
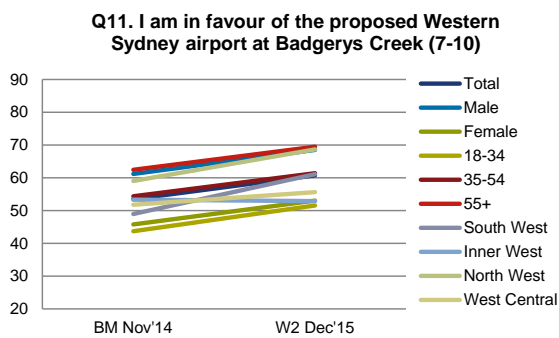
In line with the above, there were also indicative suggestions that females were more likely to be concerned about the negative impact building an airport would have on Western Sydney. Those in the West Central area were also more concerned about negative impacts.

Concerns about the proposed airport Column %	Wave 2 Dec 2015 (n=502)	Male (n=238)	Female (n=264)	18-34 (n=166)	35-54 (n=182)	55+ (n=154)	South West (n=143)	Inner West (n=77)	North West (n=158)	West Central (n=124)
Q 11. In this question we would like to know in more detail how you feel about this proposed airport in Western Sydney. Using a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 means Strongly Disagree and 10 means Strongly Agree, please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.										
<i>I'm concerned about the negative impact building an airport would have on Western Sydney</i>										
Disagree (0-3)	21	23	19	17	18	27+	18	15	30+	17
Neutral (4-6)	42	44	39	40	42	42	39	57+	38	37
Agree (7-10)	34	30	38	38	34	29	37	23-	29	44+
Don't know	4	3	5	4	6	1	6	5	3	2
Q 15. And how concerned, if at all, are you about the following potential impacts due to the proposed airport in Western Sydney? Showing 7-10 Concerned										
Concerns total	78	75	81	81	78	75	81	75	74	81

4.3 Shifts in population groups over time (Benchmark vs. W2)

In terms of which sub-group in the population are driving change in sentiment, there appears to be small gains across all groups when comparing the benchmark wave to the December 2015 results. While most changes are not statistically significant (due to smaller sample sizes and only incremental changes) there is an indication that the growing positive sentiment that is observed overall has come from all the different audiences – that is no one group is driving this change. For both advocacy, and perceptions that the positive benefits outweigh the negative, there are indicative gains across gender, age and geographic regions.

There are also small increases in the number of potential concerns however when it comes to a generalized concern about the negative impact of the airport on Western Sydney, there is no indication that this group is growing.



Column %	Total		Male		Female		18-34		35-54		55+		South West		Inner West		North West		West Central	
	BM	W2	BM	W2	BM	W2	BM	W2	BM	W2	BM	W2	BM	W2	BM	W2	BM	W2	BM	W2
Column n	501	502	250	238	251	264	160	166	184	182	157	154	143	143	90	77	156	158	112	124
Q11. I am in favour of the proposed Western Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek (7-10)	53	61▲	61	68	46	53	44	52	54	61	62	69	49	61▲	53	53	59	69	52	56
Q10. Overall, the positive benefits of an airport at Badgerys Creek would outweigh any negative impacts (7-10)	48	52	56	60	41	43	37	44	50	49	58	62	42	49	47	49	56	55	47	52
Q11. I'm concerned about the negative impact building an airport would have on Western Sydney (7-10)	33	34	27	30	38	38	36	38	37	34	24	29	36	37	30	23	30	29	34	44
Q12. Concerns total (7-10)	74	78	70	75	79	81	75	81	74	78	74	75	78	81	71	75	69	74	79	81

5 RECALL OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INITIATIVES

5.1 Exposure and recall of communications or initiatives (general)

Overall communications recall has declined however this could indicate lower levels of public media activity rather than paid DIRD input.

Over time, recall of communications has declined (59% as of Nov 2014 down to 49% this December). The drop in communications recall appears to be driven by lower levels of newspaper advertising recall which suggests more about lower public media attention than DIRD communication efforts.

Meanwhile since the Benchmark (Nov 2014), there has been an uplift in general recall of information from local council, direct mail and info stands - activities and channels used by DIRD.

Those who recall seeing / hearing communications about the proposed airport, were most likely to attribute it to NSW Government and increasingly local councils or neighbourhood groups. This is likely to reflect some of the DIRD activities which are community based initiatives.

Q6. In the last 3 months, have you heard / seen / read anything about this proposed airport?			
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014	Wave 1 - June 2015	Wave 2 - December 2015
Yes heard about this	59	53	49▼
Not heard anything nothing about this	31	37↑	33
Can't remember	10	10	18↑▲
Column n	501	513	502
Q8. Where did you see, read or hear about the proposed airport? (channels)			
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014	Wave 1 - June 2015	Wave 2 - December 2015
Media coverage (TV, Radio, Internet news or current affairs)	70	65	67
Newspaper advertising	39	43	22↓▼
In private conversations (with people you know)	17	25↑	21
On the internet (articles but not news)	14	17	14
Through my local council	6	7	11▲
Information provided by my local MP	3	7↑	8
Social media posts or blogs	8	10	8
Direct Mail	1	3	8↑▲
In public conversation (other people you don't know)	7	10	7

State Government websites	3	9↑	7
From local community groups	6	5	6
Commonwealth Government websites	3	3	4
Website dedicated to the proposed airport	1	4↑	3
Information stands at local events	1	2	4▲
Through attending community forums	2	1	3
Can't remember	3	2	3
Other - please specify	4	4	6
Column n	294	272	246

Q9. So far as you know, where has the information about the proposed airport come from?

Column %	Benchmark - November 2014	Wave 1 - June 2015	Wave 2 - December 2015
The Australian Government	45	37	43
The NSW Government	52	59	63▲
Local councils	15	24↑	27▲
Neighborhood groups	10	12	18▲
Business groups	5	4	7
Local businesses	2	5↑	5
Other (specify)	5	3	3
Can't recall	18	16	10↓
Column n	294	272	246

5.2 Prompted recognition of DIRD communications or initiatives

Overall prompted recognition of communications and activities remains level with June 2015.

Local residents continue to be most aware of the airport and infrastructure map, community update newsletter, information stands and now newspaper advertising (overall 28% stable from 26% in June 2015). New additions such as such as postcards, posters and information sessions had relatively low recognition. In June 2015, those who recognised the above tended to be male and from the inner West however in December it was more evenly spread geographically – perhaps demonstrating the broader community based activities.

C1. To date, which of these initiatives and communications from the Australian Government have you seen or heard?			
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014	Wave 1 - June 2015	Wave 2 - December 2015
Aware (total)	NA	26	28
Western Sydney airport and infrastructure map		11	14
Community update newsletter		10	10
Community information stand / Information stand at a local event		8	8
Western Sydney airport website		8	8
Environmental referral		6	6
Fact sheets		5	7
Newspaper advertising		0	8↑
Preparing for take-off conference		4	3
Postcard		0	3↑
Summary pamphlet		0	3↑
Draft Environmental Impact Statement		0	3↑
Poster		0	3↑
Information session		0	2↑
None of these		74	72
Column n		513	502

There continues to be a desire for information about the proposed airport (62% in December 2015).

Q13. How important would it be that you're informed about the progress of the proposed Western Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek?			
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014	Wave 1 - June 2015	Wave 2 - December 2015
0-3 Not at all important	9	7	7
4-6	33	29	31
7-10 Very important	58	64↑	62

5.3 Knowledge of the proposed airport (significant shifts observed)

Since a year back, there is evidence of increasing knowledge and residents keeping up to date with the developments of the proposed airport.

Compared to the Benchmark, a higher proportion feel they **know a lot** about the proposed airport (from 19% up to 24%). Over time, knowledge of the stages of the airport have changed reflecting progress in the development...more now believe it is in planning stages.

A third had heard about the draft Airport plan and EIS report:

- 35% aware that a draft Airport Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement has been released, providing information on the impacts of the proposed airport at Badgerys Creek,
- 32% aware that a draft Airport Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement has been released, providing an opportunity for public consultation.

Q5. How much do you know about the proposed airport?			
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014	Wave 1 - June 2015	Wave 2 - December 2015
0-3 Don't know anything - know nothing about it	35	35	32
4-6	46	44	44
7-10 Very knowledgeable – know a lot about the proposed airport and what is going on	19	21	24 ▲
Column n	501	513	502

Q3. Before today, what (if anything) have you seen / heard / read about the development of a new or second airport in Sydney?			
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014	Wave 1 - June 2015	Wave 2 - December 2015
Heard something (total)	93	92	90
The draft Airport Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed airport have been released	NA	NA	12
The government has started planning work towards a proposed new airport in Sydney	NA	21	15↓ ▼
The government has proposed a new airport in Sydney AND a site / location has been selected	59	37↓	31↓ ▼
The government has proposed a new airport in Sydney be built BUT a site / location has not been decided	6	4	4
The government is considering the development of a new airport in Sydney but no decision has been made	7	7	6
The government has decided against developing a new airport in Sydney	0	0	1
Heard some talk but don't really know anything about it	20	22	22
Not heard anything	7	8	10
Column n	501	513	502
Q12. Knowledge - Definitely knew about this / Know something about this but not much			
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014	Wave 1 - June 2015	Wave 2 - December 2015
A draft Airport Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement have been released, providing information on the impacts of the proposed airport at Badgerys Creek	NA	NA	35
A draft Airport Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement have been released, providing an opportunity for public consultation	NA	NA	32

6 DEMAND FOR RAIL SERVICES

The majority do believe trains are necessary when the proposed airport is in operation. Most feel rail services need to be in place on the first day that a plane takes off (57% feel it should be). Additionally, the vast majority (84%) believe rail services are necessary as soon as the airport is open to the public.

Q103. What is your level of agreement with The proposed airport would NOT require a rail/train service from the day the first plane takes off?	
Column %	Wave 2 - December 2015
0-3 Disagree	57 - REQUIRED
4-6 Neutral	18
7-10 Agree	18 – NOT REQUIRED
Don't know	6
Column n	502
Q103A. When do you think the proposed airport will require a rail / train service?	
Column %	Wave 2 - December 2015
As soon as the proposed airport opens to the public	84
When there is sufficient passenger demand to warrant a rail service	11
Another time (specify)	2
It is not necessary for rail / train services	3
Column n	502

7 W2 CONCLUSIONS

Despite DIRD communications flying under the radar, there have been positive shifts in awareness and sentiment towards the proposed airport. In fact, there has been an 8% point increase since the benchmark in the proportion in favour of the proposed airport (from 53% agreeing that 'I am in favour of the proposed Western Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek' up to 61% in December 2015). This suggests while paid DIRD activities are not necessarily top of mind they have had an influence on local mindsets and support for the development. There continues to be acceptance of the proposed airport with benefits outweighing perceived negative impacts.

Given the actual development is some time in the future, this type of community activity is important to keep residents informed of developments and answer any current concerns. However should actual physical operations commence or any high coverage of contention, it will be necessary to take on broader actions (above the line or mainstream media) as the current activities may not have strong cut-through should there be widespread public media attention or coverage.

APPENDIX A: STAKEHOLDER FINDINGS (W1)

The following nine organisations were represented at the first workshop held in Parramatta on 18 June 2015:

- Sydney Business Chamber
- Urban Taskforce
- DHL
- Tourism and Transport Forum
- University of Western Sydney
- WSROC
- Western Sydney Parklands
- Badgerys Creek Airport Taskforce (established by Liverpool Council)
- TAFE NSW

Benefits and drawbacks of the proposed airport

There was a clear view that the proposed airport would be 'good', especially for Western Sydney. Even those initially opposed to the idea had changed their view and there was a view also that the community had become more accepting and supportive of the idea. The economic benefit was the primary driver of positive attitudes, especially in the context of high unemployment among youth in Western Sydney.

The only concern was that government was not planning 'big enough' and that the airport could 'turn into another Avalon' – a freight-port only. The hope is that this will be an airport with an international capacity, future-proof, and something of which Western Sydney can be proud.

Stakeholders were uniformly excited about an 'aerotropolis' concept and the many opportunities this would provide for the people of Western Sydney. The fear is that ownership of the airport by the Southern Cross Airport Corporation (SCAC) may lead to a limit in its capacity and/or size as the corporation seeks to maximise use of its current Kingsford Smith Airport asset.

The main issue with the project to date for stakeholders is **what will happen and when?** These timing issues are what they are grappling with and feel they cannot get any clear answers on from the Department or indeed anyone. Even if 'fluid' timelines or a range of dates is provided, they would like greater certainty around the process and the future of the project. Two important issues they would like early timing clarification around are:

- Runway finalisation, because its finalisation and the timing of this decision is important for most, especially local residents; and
- The end point / cut off for SCAC deciding whether to take up the option.
- Councils are awaiting the release of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and indicate this may sway their view on the airport, pending its outcomes. On this, there was also a popular call to extend the exhibition period for the EIS to 90 days from the currently planned (or assumed) 60 days.

Awareness and Communications - unprompted

When asked what communications about the proposed airport they had heard or seen that came from the Australian Government, stakeholders insisted that they 'had not seen or heard anything'. Many of the communications were misattributed to the NSW Government, though some did say that they often received emails/information from 'Kim', referring to the Australian Government contact.

There was **no awareness of the dedicated Australian Government website** and they were all asking for one – a site that covered all topics of interest and was fully up to date with the latest information.

In the absence of this information from the government, myths and misinformation arise to fill the gap about what is happening, when decisions will be made about the number and direction of runways or hours of operation, size of the airport, etc. This is an oft talked about issue, rife with gossip and myths in the western suburbs of Sydney.

The view is that the information is available 'here and there' but is not being pushed to you by the Australian Government or anyone and it's more that they have to consciously search and look for it.

The one community representative felt quite the opposite, however, saying that there was far too much information from 'government' and that it should be more streamlined and focused on **updates only** instead of repeating previously released information. Even from this more involved stakeholder, there was considerable confusion with different levels of government and which one was sending the information to the organisation.

The volume of information was also seen as sometimes unintentionally 'hiding' important information around the consultation/information sessions for example.

This indicates the importance of highlighting:

- new information in any updates that do go out,
- the Australian Government branding; and
- the opportunities for face-to-face information sessions.
 - The latter are seen as particularly important for the community to know about and more of these are requested by community-based stakeholders.

Rather than a 'maze' of links, stakeholders feel it is better to have only one per email so it's more focused and simpler to follow and pass onto others. (Communications from NorthWest Rail Link are said to be a good example of how to keep stakeholders informed and up to date.)

Ideally, stakeholders would like different levels of government to talk to one another and coordinate how and when information is communicated to them about the proposed airport. While stakeholders realise this is unlikely, it would be their ideal model. That is, they would love some clarity around the lines of responsibility – who is responsible for what aspect of the proposed airport (Federal vs. State) and who is communicating what – i.e., coordinated communications. The stakeholder view is that this is something the State government should lead given that it is 'closer to the ground' – that is, more closely aligned with impact on jobs, transport and local issues.

Awareness and Communications - prompted

- Community information stand/s – there was no awareness at all
- Community update newsletters – just the community representative was aware of this (March and June editions only)
- Western Sydney airport website – no awareness at all
- Environmental referral – widespread awareness an EOI was pending
- Fact sheets – no awareness at all
- Western Sydney airport and infrastructure map – very limited awareness and where encountered (at Liverpool Council Chambers) a request was made for a \$100 payment to receive a copy of the map
- Deputy Prime Minister's address to the "Preparing for take-off conference" - there was widespread awareness of the conference and some resentment that not all key stakeholders were invited.

Future communications – needs and preferences

A number of clear requirements around future communications from the Australian Government were voiced both directly and indirectly during the stakeholder workshop:

- Information on the timing of decisions or at least broad timeframes – what will happen when?
- This is especially around runway location, airport flight capacity and capacity for retail and freight operators.
- A need for clear and frequent promotion of the Western Sydney airport website.
- Promotion of the Community Update Newsletter – its availability and content.
- An 'overview document' of progress in decision making around the proposed airport, updated as necessary and ideally presented in a graphic/tabular form so it was easy to follow and pass onto others.
- The need to ensure that more than one stakeholder per organisation is informed about developments /updates / changes / newsletters
 - this is to take into account the often chaotic nature of internal communications, as well as staff absences and turnover within stakeholder organisations.

APPENDIX B: USING THIS RESEARCH

It is important that clients should be aware of the limitations of survey research.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research deals with relatively small numbers of respondents and attempts to explore in-depth motivations, attitudes and feelings. This places a considerable interpretative burden on the researcher. For example, often what respondents do not say is as important as what they do. Similarly, body language and tone of voice can be important contributors to understanding respondents' deeper feelings.

Client should therefore recognise:

- that despite the efforts made in recruitment, respondents may not always be totally representative of the target audience concerned
- that findings are interpretative in nature, based on the experience and expertise of the researchers concerned

Quantitative Research

Even though quantitative research typically deals with larger numbers of respondents, users of survey results should be conscious of the limitations of all sample survey techniques.

Sampling techniques, the level of refusals, and problems with non-contacts all impact on the statistical reliability that can be attached to results.

Similarly quantitative research is often limited in the number of variables it covers, with important variables beyond the scope of the survey.

Hence the results of sample surveys are usually best treated as a means of looking at the relative merits of different approaches as opposed to absolute measures of expected outcomes.

The Role of Researcher and Client

GfK Australia believes that the researchers' task is not only to present the findings of the research but also to utilise our experience and expertise to interpret these findings for clients and to make our recommendations (based on that interpretation and our knowledge of the market) as to what we believe to be the optimum actions to be taken in the circumstances: indeed this is what we believe clients seek when they hire our services. Such interpretations and recommendations are presented in good faith, but we make no claim to be infallible.

Clients should, therefore, review the findings and recommendations in the light of their own experience and knowledge of the market and base their actions accordingly.

Quality Control and Data Retention

GfK Australia is a member of the Australian Market and Social Research Organisations (AMSRO) and complies in full with the Market Research Privacy Principles. In addition all researchers at GfK Australia are AMSRS members and are bound by the market research Code of Professional Behaviour.

GfK Australia is an ISO 20252 accredited company and undertakes all research activities in compliance with the ISO 20252 quality assurance standard

Raw data relating to this project shall be kept as per the requirements outlined in the market research Code of Professional Behaviour.