



Western Sydney Airport: Evaluative community research – August 2016

Research overview

Introduction

Community engagement and consultation is a vital component of the Western Sydney Airport project. Consultation with stakeholders and the community is key in achieving the best outcomes for the project.

To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the communications and stakeholder engagement strategy, the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development has engaged GfK Australia to conduct a research programme to provide both a benchmark and long-term tracking of the activities.

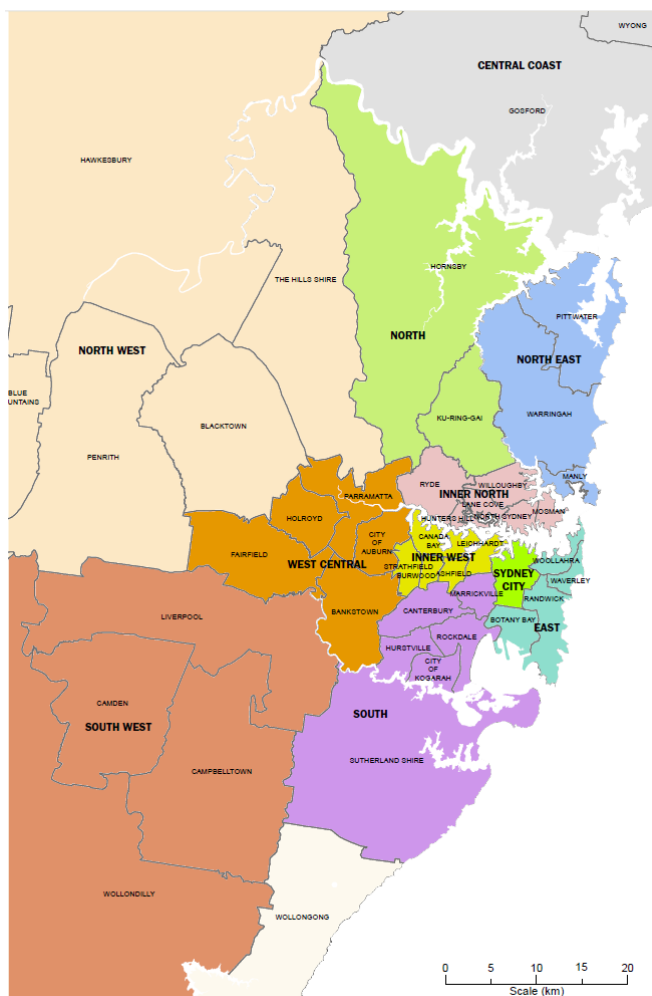
Previous surveys include a benchmark conducted in November 2014 and tracking surveys conducted in July 2015, December 2015 and April 2016.

Research methodology

The online tracking survey included 505 Western Sydney residents (defined as South West, Inner West, North West, West Central, illustrated by Map 1).

Fieldwork for the survey was conducted between 4 and 11 August 2016. Quotas were set (for age, gender and location) during screening to ensure a representative sample was surveyed. Quotas were used to achieve a similar proportion of residents from the broad regions, to ensure comparability between samples.

Map 1: Research area. Participants were from the South West, Inner West, North West and West Central areas defined on the map below.



Source: NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure.



Findings summary

Sentiments and attitudes continue to be relatively stable in the August round of research compared to the previous waves. Agreement with the benefits associated with the Western Sydney Airport project also remains stable.

Noted differences related to residents' perceived level of knowledge of the proposed airport (and associated developments) and their recall of project related media and communications.

Key findings – excerpt

1. Attitudes

A key theme across the research is the stability in the attitudes towards the airport project over time. The majority of Western Sydney residents continue to be in favour of (56 per cent) or neutral towards (26 per cent) the airport project.

Positive sentiment has marginally declined since its peak in December 2015 (61 per cent of residents in favour of the project), returning to levels similar to the benchmark (54 per cent in November 2014).

Figure 1: Agreement with the statement: "I am in favour of the proposed Western Sydney Airport at Badgerys Creek"

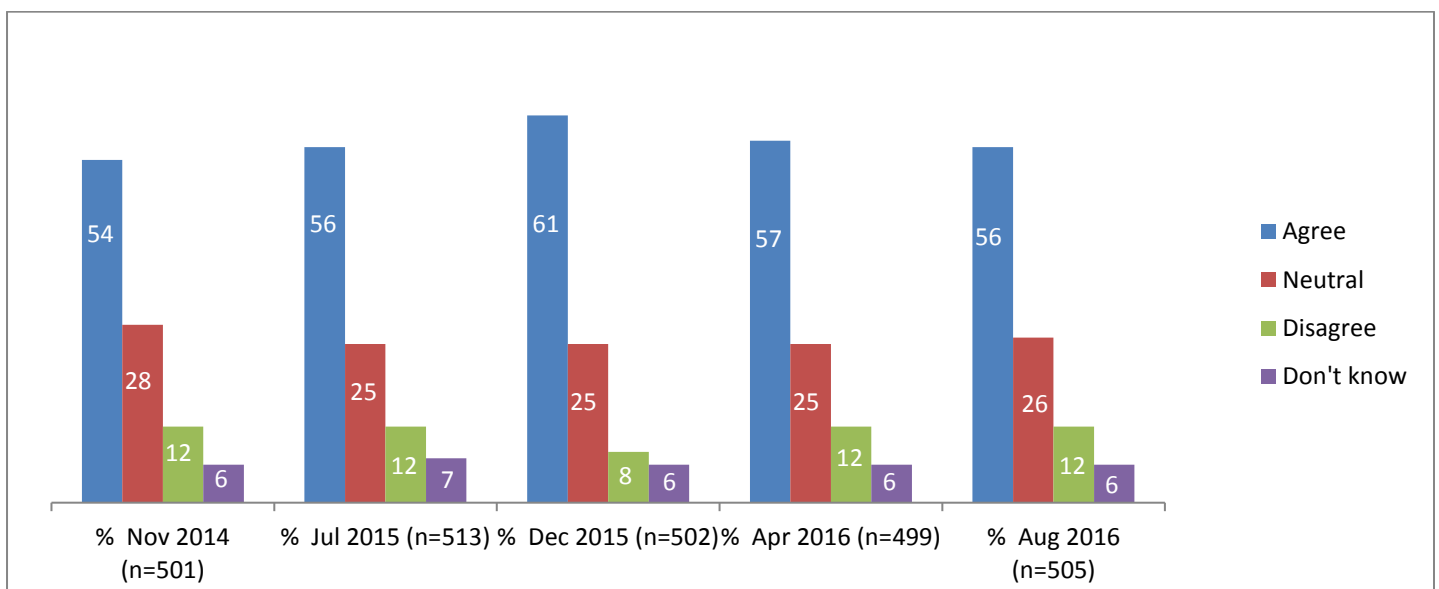


Table 2 provides a breakdown of sentiment in favour of the proposed airport by population group from the August 2016 tracking survey, with largely similar results to the April 2016 tracking survey.

Males are more likely to support the project (61 per cent) than females (51 per cent). While almost half of 18-34 year olds are in favour (49 per cent), they are also the most neutral towards the project (34 per cent). Almost two-thirds of those aged 55 and over (65 per cent) are in favour.

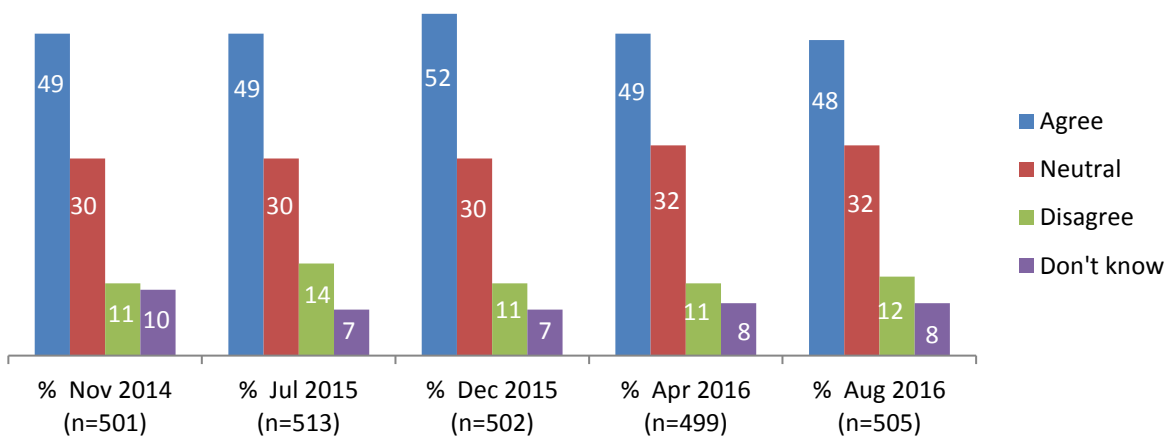


Table 2: Sentiment by population group – in favour of proposed airport

Sentiment towards the airport Column %	Demographic segmentation									
	Total Wave 4	By gender		By age group			By region			
	Wave 4 – August 2016 (n=505)	Male (n=234)	Female (n=271)	18-34 (n=170)	35-54 (n=178)	55+ (n=157)	South West (n=156)	Inner West (n=90)	North West (n=142)	West Central (n=117)
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	12	8-	14	13	14	6-	14	12
Neutral (4-6)	26	24	28	34+	26	19-	23	35+	23	27
Agree (7-10)	56	61+	51-	49-	54	65+	57	49	58	56
Don't know	6	3-	10+	9	7	3-	6	11	5	5

Most respondents continue to agree (48 per cent) that the positive benefits of the proposed airport would outweigh any negative impacts. A further 32 per cent were neutral.

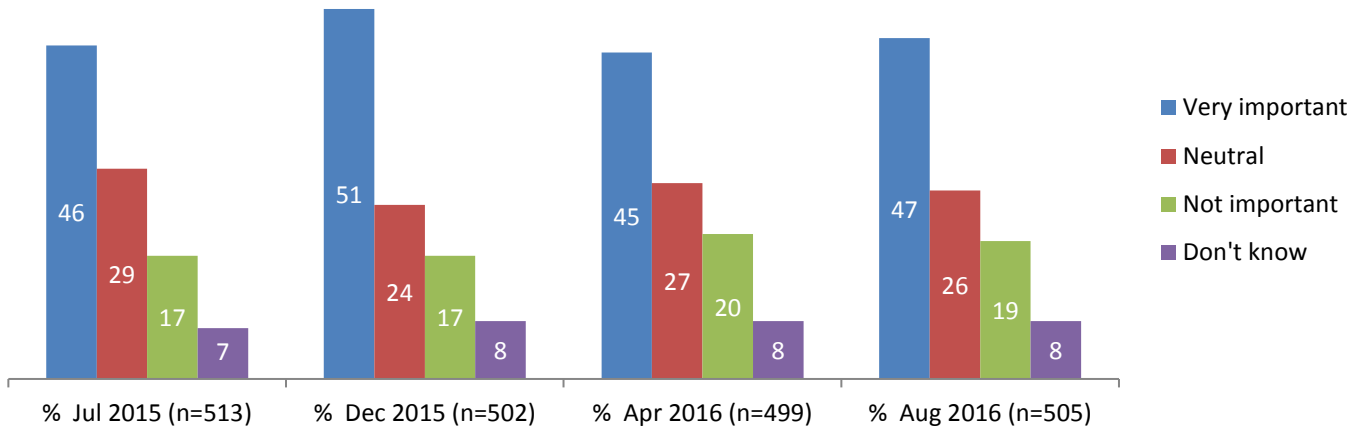
Figure 2: Agreement with the statement: “Overall, the positive benefits of an airport at Badgerys Creek would outweigh any negative impacts”





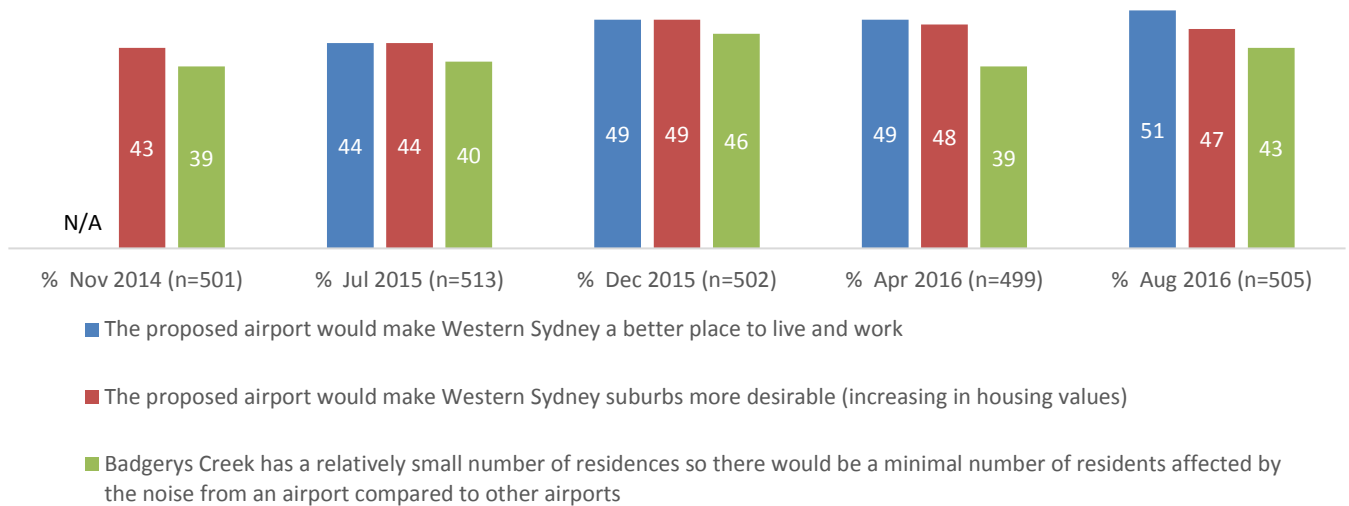
Just under half of Western Sydney residents (47 per cent) continue to think that 24-hour operations are important for a Western Sydney Airport. Again, this percentage has been stable since the question was first asked in July 2015.

Figure 3: Level of agreement with the statement: “It is important that the proposed airport be open for business and operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.”



The responses to the three statements presented in Figure 4 have also remained relatively stable across the five surveys.

Figure 4: Perceptions of the proposed airport (percentage who “strongly agree” and “agree” with the statements) – half or almost half in agreement

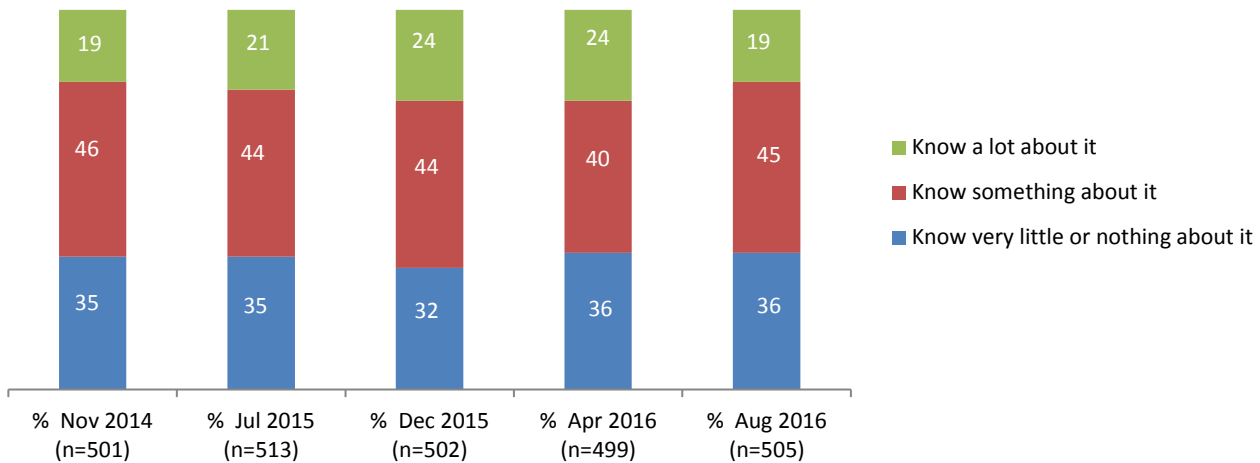




2. Awareness

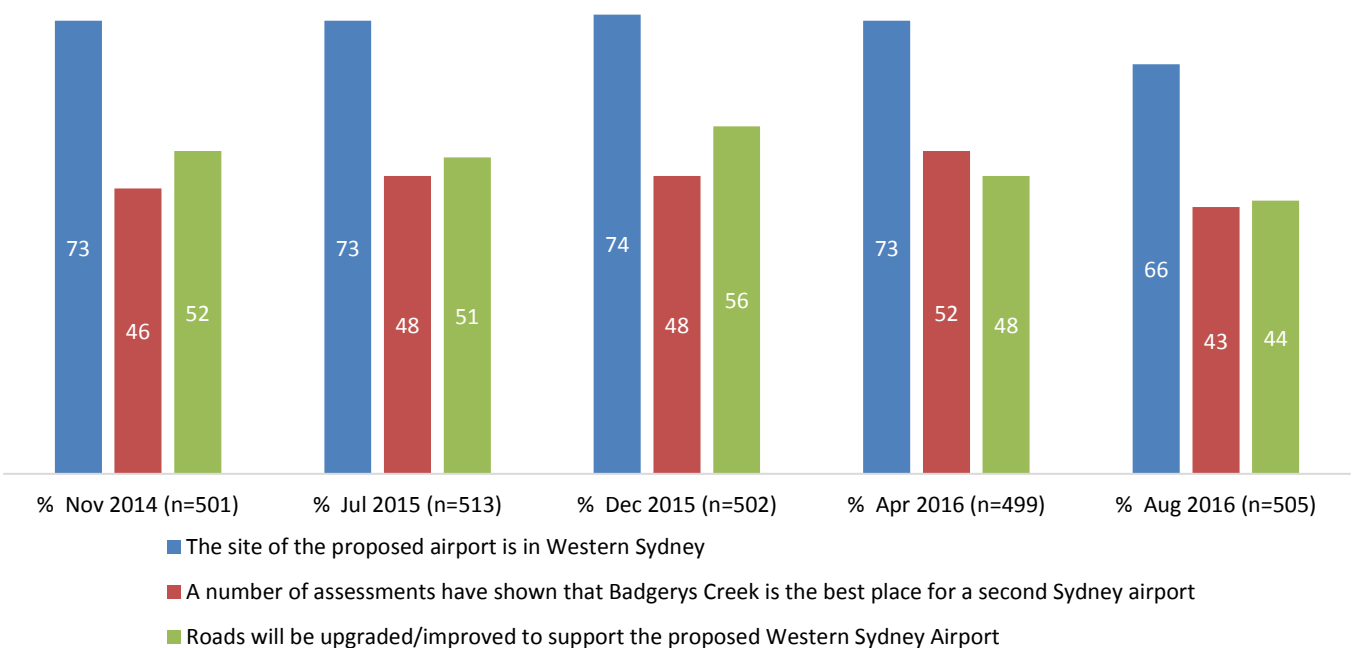
The level of knowledge about the proposed airport has declined from the higher levels of the previous two online tracking surveys. Focus groups showed that levels of knowledge varied between age, gender, and location of residents, though residents from within the Blue Mountains and Penrith local government areas knew more about the project than other areas. When looked at over time, knowledge levels peaked in December 2015 (24 per cent “Know a lot”) and in August 2016 have returned to a level the same as in the benchmark at 19 per cent.

Figure 5: Level of knowledge in answers to the question: “How much do you know about the proposed airport?”



This decline in general knowledge is also impacting knowledge of specific activities/areas related to the proposed airport. There is a noticeable decline against the November 2014 benchmark in the three facts about the proposed airport presented in Figure 4: the site of the proposed airport is in Western Sydney; the fact that Badgerys Creek is the best place for a second Sydney airport; and that roads will be upgraded to support the proposed airport.

Figure 6: Respondents who “definitely knew about this” or “knew something about this but not much” against three different facts about the proposed airport

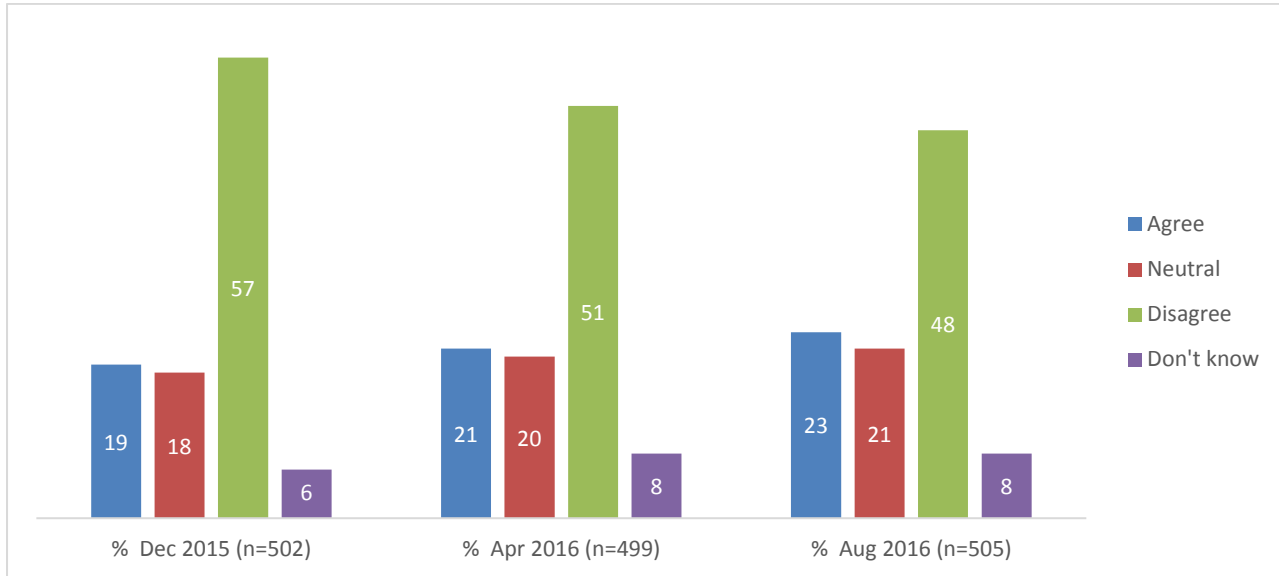




3. Rail transport to the proposed airport

Almost half of Western Sydney residents (48 per cent) feel that a rail service should be in place to the proposed airport the day that the first plane takes off. This view has softened moderately since the question was first asked in December 2015.

Figure 7: Level of agreement to the statement “The proposed airport would NOT require a rail/train service from the day the first plane takes off”





4. Demand for information

Demand for information on the proposed airport’s development continues to be strong although the proportion of Western Sydney residents who say it is “very important” that they be kept informed about the project’s progress has continued to soften slightly (59 per cent in August 2016). This majority, along with those who believe it is “somewhat important” (33 per cent), underlines the importance of communicating the progress of the Western Sydney Airport project.

Figure 8: Answers to question, on a scale of 1-10: “How important would it be that you’re informed about the progress of the proposed Western Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek?”

