

The Western Sydney Airport site contains Aboriginal cultural heritage values. Archaeological landscape analysis and subsurface investigations are contributing to our understanding of the likely nature and extent of Aboriginal people using the area before European settlement.

The Airport Plan authorises the construction and operation of the Stage 1 development (one runway and up to 10 million passengers a year) and sets out requirements for the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage values across the airport site. This includes the protection of culturally important sites within the 117-hectare environmental conservation zone on the airport site.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Environmental Management Plan

WSA Co, the company building the airport, is required to develop an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Construction Environmental Management Plan for approval by the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities. This plan must address the Aboriginal cultural heritage management necessary for each proposed phase of main construction works for the Stage 1 development. The Airport Plan requires WSA Co to implement this plan.

Further survey and salvage investigations must be undertaken before each phase of major earthworks. The outcomes of this work will help support future interpretation, education and understanding of the Aboriginal cultural values of the airport site and contribute to the archaeological record for the Cumberland Plain.

The plan will also include appropriate induction training for site workers and put in place protocols for unexpected finds of Aboriginal objects and artefacts during construction.



Western Sydney Airport

What will the plan include?

- Managing the environmental conservation zone for the protection and conservation of known and predicted Aboriginal heritage sites and values.
- Archival recording and in situ conservation of the grinding grooves and possible scarred tree.
- Undertaking targeted archaeological surface survey in selected areas of the construction impact zone and, where appropriate, the salvage of surface objects before main construction works commence.
- Undertaking a selective archaeological surface and sub-surface survey and salvage program across landform types to gain a representative sample for scientific analysis and future interpretation and education.
- Undertaking an oral history to gather stories and memories of Aboriginal people relating to the airport site and district.
- A protocol for the management of topsoil assessed as likely to contain a relatively high density of artefacts, which would likely be impacted by main construction works,
- Options for the commemoration of Aboriginal heritage.
- Curation and management of heritage objects that are found or salvaged, including options for reburial or storage above ground for access for cultural purposes, interpretation, education and research.

Consultation and participation with Aboriginal stakeholders

The Aboriginal cultural heritage program for the Western Sydney Airport project seeks direct participation of Aboriginal people in identifying, recording and respectfully managing Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

Aboriginal stakeholder consultation and engagement throughout the design and construction phase will be an important contribution to developing and implementing the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Construction Environmental Management Plan.

Consultation and engagement so far has included a site visit and regular Aboriginal stakeholder forums to discuss:

- how Aboriginal cultural heritage values can be best managed
- the best ways to consult on proposed plans and management approaches
- an initial survey and salvage plan
- Aboriginal stakeholder participation in targeted fieldwork programs that aim to investigate, record and where culturally appropriate salvage artefacts for safe keeping and future interpretation
- a plan for an oral history project to record stories and memories of Aboriginal people
- a topsoil management protocol
- opportunities for commemorating cultural heritage values at the airport site



Consultation on a keeping place

The Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities will consult with Aboriginal stakeholders and relevant government agencies on a proposal for an Aboriginal cultural heritage keeping place.

A keeping place would provide secure storage of artefacts and enable future access for cultural purposes, interpretation, education or research.