

The Australian Government recognises the importance of protecting the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWhA) and its outstanding universal value.

The Western Sydney Airport Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) found that construction and operation of the Western Sydney Airport will not have a significant impact on the World Heritage values of the Greater Blue Mountains Area or result in attributes of the GBMWhA being lost or damaged.

World Heritage values and integrity



The GBMWhA site covers 1.03 million hectares of Australian landscape and is noted for its outstanding and diverse range of eucalyptus trees and habitats. At its closest point, it is approximately seven kilometres from the airport site.

To ensure the ongoing integrity of the GBMWhA, detailed planning and design for the airport will take into account the NSW Government's GBMWhA Strategic Plan, which provides a framework for integrated management, protection, interpretation and monitoring of the World Heritage Area.

The EIS considers attributes identified in the GBMWhA's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value and the complementary values of the areas as defined in the GBMWhA Strategic Plan. The assessment considers noise, air emissions and amenity impacts from overflight of aircraft. The EIS found that construction of the airport will have no direct impacts on the GBMWhA or its World Heritage values. It assessed possible indirect impacts from aircraft overflights and found that the majority of key tourism and recreational attractions would not be impacted, as the height of aircraft from ground level would mean they would not be visually intrusive.

The Airport Plan authorises the construction and operation of the Stage 1 development and includes conditions that have been informed by the EIS. The conditions in the Airport Plan include key principles for the airspace and flight path design to minimise the noise from aircraft flying over wilderness and other areas of the GBMWhA.

Air quality

Air emissions from the Western Sydney Airport and greenhouse gas emissions are not significant in the context of emissions produced from other sources in the region. Fuel jettisoning is a very rare event and has been assessed as very unlikely to impact on the GBMWhA. In 2014 there were only 10 instances of civilian aircraft jettisoning fuel in Australia (of 730,201 air traffic movements), representing approximately 0.001% of all aircraft movements in Australia. If such a rare event does occur, strict regulations are enforced by Airservices Australia governing where it must take place. Any jettisoned fuel vaporises rapidly and disperses widely, meaning it is unlikely to reach the ground.

Western Sydney Airport

Flight paths

Airservices Australia developed indicative flight paths for the EIS to assess impacts and demonstrate that Western Sydney Airport could operate safely within the Sydney basin airspace. These indicative flight paths were for proof testing possible scenarios. Finalising the flight paths for the Western Sydney Airport is a long and complex process. Prior to the opening of Western Sydney Airport, a comprehensive airspace planning and design process will be undertaken, including ongoing community consultation. The Forum On Western Sydney (FOWSA) has been established to ensure the views of the community are taken into account.

Overhead aircraft

For those areas of the GBMWSHA directly under indicative flight paths, the potential noise and visual impacts would not be significant due to the high altitude of operating aircraft. Aircraft are expected to be higher than 5,000 feet, and flying more than 10,000 feet above sea level when passing over wilderness areas of the GBMWSHA. Taking into account topography and aircraft height above ground level, the assessment found that noise impacts at sensitive locations would be below 55 decibels (less than the noise level of an average conversation).

Western Sydney Airport and aerial firefighting

Western Sydney Airport can operate safely in the vicinity of aerial firefighting and hazard reduction services over the Blue Mountains and in the Sydney basin.

Emergency services aircraft and commercial air traffic routinely operate safely and efficiently throughout Australia, allowing aerial firefighting to occur alongside the operation of existing airports.

Fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters conduct firefighting operations at altitudes well below those of regular commercial airline operations. Any passenger aircraft using Western Sydney Airport would operate at much higher altitudes in the vicinity of the Blue Mountains, well away from those performing water drops.

