



News Release

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COUNCIL STUDY FINDS AIRPORT NOISE ON NATURAL AREAS OVERLOOKED

The findings of a study commissioned by Blue Mountains City Council reveal the impact of Western Sydney Airport flight paths on the Great Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, and the lack of standards regarding aircraft noise management in natural areas.

Council commissioned the study after the Australian Government's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the Western Sydney Airport stated that the airport will not have a significant impact on World Heritage values or the actual World Heritage Area.

Mayor, Cr Mark Greenhill said the Council rejects this statement, particularly as the final airspace arrangements are not known.

"The potential impacts on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area have been seriously overlooked with potentially disastrous consequences on its World Heritage values and the regional economy of the Blue Mountains", he said.

"The City of the Blue Mountains is a special place of unsurpassed natural values which the draft EIS has failed to take into consideration. It's one of only two cities in the world within a World Heritage listed National Park and it's also our nations' most visited National Park, attracting over 3 million visitors every year."

Acoustic consultants, Marshall Day Acoustics (MDA) undertook the study. MDA is familiar with the Western Sydney Airport from their work on the draft EIS as part of the WSROCs peer review team.

The study highlighted a number of limitations in the Australian Government's EIS relating to the noise impacts in the Blue Mountains. For example, the EIS noise metrics and threshold levels in isolation may not wholly consider the impact on tranquil settings such as the National Park.

It also illustrates the method used to assess noise impacts in wilderness areas, using simple comparisons between natural and artificial sounds, is inappropriate. It is recommended that the impact of lower levels of noise needs to be assessed due to the existing low background levels in the National Park. The aircraft noise is audible for a longer duration than the period when the highest noise level is reached.

"A key concern is the duration and frequency of noise rather than maximum noise level of any single overflight", said the Mayor.

"The study demonstrates how the cumulative effect of increased aircraft overflights, and therefore noise events, could significantly diminish the amount of time in which the natural soundscape is experienced", said the Mayor.

Currently, there is no existing Australian legislation, standards, policies or practice regarding aircraft noise management in natural areas.

The protection of natural soundscapes in other countries is seen as an important consideration, where they are recognised for their inherent value as a natural asset as well as for the enjoyment of visitors.

The Mayor said, "The Australian Government has not taken into account current international trends in the management of aircraft noise in national parks when proposing to operate a 24 hour flight path over the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area."

"The US is trying to restore peace and tranquillity across their National Parks including the Grand Canyon, one of their most prized World Heritage Listed locations", he said. "Let's learn from their mistakes and not introduce aircraft noise here from the outset".

The Council intends to present the findings of the study to the Forum on Western Sydney Airport (FOWSA) and has requested a briefing with Australian Government's Airservices Australia.

Photo: Mayor, Cr Mark Greenhill is concerned the duration and frequency of aircraft noise from the Western Sydney Airport is not being taken into consideration and will impact the natural quiet of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

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