



Benchmark and evaluation research: Proposed Western Sydney Airport

**A GfK Australia report
(W3 April 2016)**

Prepared for:

The Western Sydney Unit
Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development

April 2016

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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 three tracking waves) with a representative sample of the Western Sydney **community** or public. Additionally, there have been two workshop sessions with local, regional, state and indeed national **stakeholders** such as: industry groups (e.g. Sydney Business Chamber, Tourism and Transport Forum etc.), environment and heritage groups, Western Sydney local government authorities (e.g., WSROC), and others. This involved inviting representatives from these bodies to attend a workshop. The objectives of these sessions was 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 noting the research may be extended to include additional waves of the community survey.

Overall project set-up 	Project Inception		
Community 	Questionnaire development and testing	Benchmark survey	Post Strategy tracking survey (4 waves)
GfK to develop draft questionnaire Cognitive testing (x4) among select demographic and audience groups		Online survey N=500 people aged 18 years and older –10 minutes' duration Stratified sample with quotas set for age, gender and location representation ~ 30% CALD and n=10 Indigenous ➔ Topline debrief and report of benchmark findings	Online survey N=500 people aged 18 years and older –12 minutes' duration Stratified sample with quotas set for age, gender and location representation ~ 30% CALD and n=10 Indigenous ➔ Topline debrief and summary report of benchmark vs. wave findings
Stakeholders 	Workshop discussion guide development	Review of benchmark findings	Post launch workshops (2 sessions)
GfK to develop draft discussion guide		And of other publicly available material leading to the Strategy. No independent benchmark findings re Stakeholders will be collected	Workshops with stakeholders (recruit 15-20 participants) to discuss awareness, response to and fine-tuning of the Strategy ➔ Topline debrief and summary report of session
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 three tracking surveys with community residents and the second stakeholder consultation.

1.2 Notes to reading the report

Sampling error

Because a sample, rather than the entire population of Australians will be surveyed, the percentage results are subject to sampling tolerances. On a question where 50% of the sample responds with a particular answer, in our proposed sample of 500 individuals, there is a 95% chance that this result would not vary more than (+/-) 4.38% from the result that would have been obtained from a census of the entire Australian population of the target age range.

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 2-3 data was weighted to the Benchmark demographic composition for age, gender and location.

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 W2 findings (December 2016)

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.

While encouragingly, there has been no erosion in positive sentiment towards the proposed airport, there does not appear to be any further improvement and DIRD activities have largely gone under the radar. This is not concerning 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 project. Any communications that can counter (or disprove) concerns or myths could help shift those who are 'on the fence' and alleviate continuing concerns.

Given the actual development is some time in the future, the type of community activities being undertaken are important in keeping residents informed of developments, while answering any current concerns. However, as construction and operations commence, or should there be high coverage of contentious issues, broader communication activities (above the line or mainstream media) will be necessary as current activities may not have strong cut-through against widespread negative media coverage or public attention.

4 SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 Sentiment over time

Western Sydney residents remain largely positive (or neutral) toward the proposed airport but there is room for more promotion or evidence of the specific benefits.

Residents continue to be mostly positive (or neutral) towards the airport with nearly 3 in 5 (57%) who are in 'favour of the proposed Western Sydney Airport at Badgerys Creek'. A minority continue to be opposed (12%) – mainly those in the South West regions.

Around half (49%) continue to believe that overall, the positive benefits of an airport at Badgerys Creek would outweigh any negative impacts while around 3 in 10 (32%) have neutral views on this.

- While few believe the reverse (negative outweighing the positives) there is room to further push the benefits or make these more tangible.

Note the improvements observed at the end of last year have not be sustained and it is suggested that for residents, sentiment will be stable until operations commence, or more announcements about the progress are made.

Interestingly, while most are in favour, there is a gap between those in favour and those who feel it will provide more benefits than drawback, suggesting an opportunity to provide more education and evidence about the benefits.

Sentiment towards the airport				
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014 (n=501)	Wave 1 - June 2015 (n=513)	Wave 2 - December 2015 (n=502)	Wave 3 – April 2016 (n=499)
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 ▼	12 ↑
Neutral (4-6)	28	25	25	25
Agree (7-10)	54	56	61 ▲	57
Don't know	6	7	6	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	11
Neutral (4-6)	30	30	30	32
Agree (7-10)	49	49	52	49
Don't know	10	7 ↓	7	8

Residents believe that a new airport is necessary and many are excited by the prospect of it.

Two in three (66%) believe that Sydney really needs a new airport to support the current airport at Mascot and over half (54%) say they are excited about the proposed airport in Western Sydney as it would bring jobs and improved roads to the region. It is a minority (34%) that are concerned that an airport in the area would compromise living standards although interestingly this has increased over time.

Attitudes towards the proposed airport				
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014 (n=501)	Wave 1 - June 2015 (n=513)	Wave 2 - December 2015 (n=502)	Wave 3 – April 2016 (n=499)
Q 11. What is your level of agreement with the following statements? Showing those who agree 7-10 out of 10				
Sydney really needs a new airport to support the current airport at Mascot	63	64	66	66
I am excited about the proposed airport in Western Sydney as it would bring jobs and improved roads to the region	56	57	58	54
I'm worried that an airport in Western Sydney would make it harder to live and work in the area	27	29	28	34 ↑▲

Nearly half (45%) feel that the airport should run 24 hours, 7 days a week with around 1 in 5 (20%) who don't think this is necessary.

Importance of a 24 hr airport				
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014 (n=501)	Wave 1 - June 2015 (n=513)	Wave 2 - December 2015 (n=502)	Wave 3 – April 2016 (n=499)
Q101. What is your level of agreement with the following statement - It is important that the proposed Western Sydney airport be open for business and operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week				
0-3 Not at all important	NA	17	17	20
4-6		29	24	27
7-10 Very important		46	51	45
Don't know		8	8	8

4.2 Sentiment by population groups

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

There is higher advocacy among males (63% in favour of), residents aged 55 year olds and older (64% in favour of). Indicatively, those in the North West were more in favour while those in the Inner West were indicatively less likely to be in favour of the proposed airport (61% vs. 50% in favour of). A higher proportion of residents in the South West were opposed to the proposed airport (17% NOT in favour of). Females and younger residents (18-34 years) were more likely to be neutral to the proposed airport.

These same patterns are observed when looking at the proportion who believe the positive benefits outweigh negative impacts. Males and those aged 55 years and older (59% and 56% respectively) were most likely to believe the positive benefits outweigh any negative impacts. Regionally, these perceptions were largely similar.

Sentiment towards the airport Column %	Wave 3 – April 2016 (n=499)	Male (n=229)	Female (n=270)	18-34 (n=156)	35-54 (n=188)	55+ (n=155)	South West (n=139)	Inner West (n=96)	North West (n=137)	West Central (n=127)
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	13	10	12	15	17+	10	13	6-
Neutral (4-6)	25	23	27	34+	24	16-	25	31	19-	29
Agree (7-10)	57	63+	50-	49-	57	64+	54	50	61	58
Don't know	6	3-	10+	7	7	5	4	8	7	7
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	10	12	10	10	12	14	11	10	7
Neutral (4-6)	32	27-	37+	35	34	26	30	30	30	39
Agree (7-10)	49	59+	40-	45	47	56+	49	50	52	44
Don't know	8	4-	12+	10	9	6	6	9	8	10

South West residents were also more concerned.

In line with the above, those in the South West area were also more concerned about potential negative impacts (48% concerned).

Concerns about the proposed airport Column %	Wave 3 – April 2016 (n=499)	Male (n=229)	Female (n=270)	18-34 (n=156)	35-54 (n=188)	55+ (n=155)	South West (n=139)	Inner West (n=96)	North West (n=137)	West Central (n=127)
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)	24	32+	16-	17-	24	32+	20	20	29	26
Neutral (4-6)	35	32	38	39	36	29	30	42	35	35
Agree (7-10)	37	34	40	39	37	36	48+	33	32	34
Don't know	4	2-	6+	5	3	4	2	6	4	5

4.3 Perceived benefits

The perceived benefits of a proposed airport have returned to previous levels. Employment and jobs remain the most compelling benefit.

The most salient benefits for residents are the potential for more jobs (66%), world class infrastructure for global competitiveness (61%), improved travel and logistics for tourism and business (60%) as well as general support for the local economy (57%).

Nearly half (48%) believe that the proposed airport would make Western Sydney a better place to live and work.

Perceptions of the proposed airport				
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014 (n=501)	Wave 1 - June 2015 (n=513)	Wave 2 - December 2015 (n=502)	Wave 3 - April 2016 (n=499)
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	66
The proposed Western Sydney Airport is important because a city like Sydney needs world class infrastructure to maintain our global competitiveness	63	61	64	61
The proposed Western Sydney Airport would allow a greater number of people to come and go, which is critical for business and tourism in Western Sydney	61	61	62	60
The proposed Western Sydney Airport is necessary to support Western Sydney's growing population and economy	56	58	60	57
The road upgrades to support the proposed airport for Western Sydney would improve travel time within the area	56	56	58	54
The proposed airport would make Western Sydney a better place to live and work	NA	44	49	49
The proposed airport would make Western Sydney suburbs more desirable (increase in housing values)	43	44	49▲	48
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▲	39↓

4.4 Concerns

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

There is some indication, albeit only a small increase, of growing concern about what the negative impacts could be with 37% who are concerned, indicatively up from 33% in the Benchmark wave at the end of November 2014.

While only 4 in 10 (37%) say they are concerned, residents are not necessarily naïve to the negative potential impacts. Around 3 in 4 (76%) expressed some concerns about the potential impacts at the benchmark wave – mainly around traffic, noise pollution and environmental impacts. As of April 2016, there has been little change to the types of concerns residents believe to be associated with the development of the airport. Interestingly, though this wave saw a lift in the proportion who believe it could negatively impact housing prices (44%).

While residents can identify potential negative impacts, there has been no significant 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)	Wave 3 – April 2016 (n=499)
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	24
Neutral (4-6)	37	38	41	35 ↓
Agree (7-10)	33	36	34	37
Don't know	5	4	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	76
Busier roads because of an airport	55	54	58	58
Noise pollution once an airport is running	53	56	54	53
Worse traffic due to road upgrades during the construction phase	55	55	54	53
Noise at night and early in the morning if an airport was operating 24 hours a day	55	55	51	56
Environmental impact once an airport is running	49	49	48	48
Environmental impact from the construction of an airport	48	48	46	47
Need to close or move public services such as schools / cemeteries	42	43	39	40
Impact on the desirability of the area (decrease in housing values)	41	42	37	44 ↑

4.5 Knowledge of the proposed airport

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

Compared to the Benchmark, a higher proportion feel they **know a lot** about the proposed airport (from 19% up to 24%). The most common belief (held by 37%) is that an airport has been proposed, 12% believe planning has started.

Q5. How much do you know about the proposed airport?				
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014 (n=501)	Wave 1 - June 2015 (n=513)	Wave 2 - December 2015 (n=502)	Wave 3 – April 2016 (n=499)
0-3 Don't know anything - know nothing about it	35	35	32	36
4-6	46	44	44	40
7-10 Very knowledgeable – know a lot about the proposed airport and what is going on	19	21	24▲	24▲
Column n	501	513	502	499

This general lack of knowledge is evident in the low levels of knowledge about specific activities around the proposed airport, beyond knowing that the proposed airport will be in Western Sydney (73% definitely know or know something about this). Specific knowledge about government consultation is low (37% were aware in April 2016 that the government is consulting with business, community and councils) and there was even lower knowledge of the release of the draft Airport Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement as well as Sydney Airport Corporation having the right of first refusal.

- A third (35%) knew that a draft Airport Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement have been released, providing information on the impacts of the proposed airport at Badgerys Creek.
- Three in 10 (28%) were aware that Sydney Airport Corporation has the 'right of first refusal' to develop and operate a second Sydney airport.

This supports the idea that residents generally are not aware of the specific activities or information releases around the proposed airport.

Q 12. Which of the following describes what you know about the proposed airport?				
Column % Definitely knew about this / Know something about this but not much	Benchmark - November 2014 (n=501)	Wave 1 - June 2015 (n=513)	Wave 2 - December 2015 (n=502)	Wave 3 – April 2016 (n=499)
The site of the proposed airport is in Western Sydney	73	73	74	73
The development of the proposed airport means some residents will be required to move	56	58	57	56
A number of assessments have shown that Badgerys Creek is the best place for a second Sydney airport	46	48	48	52
Roads will be upgraded / improved to support the proposed Western Sydney Airport	52	51	56	48↓
The government is consulting widely with local businesses, the community and councils about the proposed airport	37	37	42	37
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	35
Sydney Airport Corporation has the 'right of first refusal' to develop and operate a second Sydney airport	28	27	27	28
Column n	501	513	502	499

4.6 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 continues to decline (59% as of November 2014 down to 43% in April 2016). Meanwhile since the Benchmark (November 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.

There has also been indicatively more discussion in private and public conversations and social media, albeit this is still a minority.

Q6. In the last 3 months, have you heard / seen / read anything about this proposed airport?				
Column %	Benchmark - November 2014 (n=501)	Wave 1 - June 2015 (n=513)	Wave 2 - December 2015 (n=502)	Wave 3 – April 2016 (n=499)
Yes heard about this	59	53	49▼	43▼
Not heard anything about this	31	37↑	33	41↑▲
Can't remember	10	10	18↑▲	16
Column n	501	513	502	499
Q8. Where did you see, read or hear about the proposed airport? (channels) among those who had heard / seen / read anything about this proposed airport				
Media coverage (TV, Radio, Internet news or current affairs)	70	65	67	64
Newspaper advertising	39	43	22↓▼	18▼
In private conversations (with people you know)	17	25↑	21	23
On the internet (articles but not news)	14	17	14	18
Through my local council	6	7	11▲	10
Information provided by my local MP	3	7↑	8	6
Social media posts or blogs	8	10	8	13
Direct Mail	1	3	8↑▲	5▲
In public conversation (other people you don't know)	7	10	7	10
State Government websites	3	9↑	7	6
From local community groups	6	5	6	8
Commonwealth Government websites	3	3	4	5
Website dedicated to the proposed airport	1	4↑	3	3
Information stands at local events	1	2	4▲	4▲
Through attending community forums	2	1	3	1
At an information session	0	0	4↑	1↓
Can't remember	3	2	3	3
Column n	294	272	246	216

4.7 Prompted recognition of DIRD communications or initiatives

Overall prompted recognition of communications and activities has actually increased indicatively but remains relatively low.

Around a third (32%) of residents recognised any of the shown DIRD communication collateral. Local residents continue to be most aware of the airport and infrastructure map, the summary pamphlet, fact sheets however these are registering for less than 10%.

Around 7% had heard that there was announcement of the joint scoping study of rail needs for Western Sydney.

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	Wave 3 – April 2016
Aware (total)	NA	26	28	32
Western Sydney Airport and infrastructure map		11	14	9 ↓
Summary pamphlet		NA	3 ↑	9 ↑
Fact sheets		5	7	8
Western Sydney Airport website		8	8	7
Postcard		0	3 ↑	7 ↑
Newspaper advertising		0	8 ↑	7
Community update newsletter		10	10	7 ↓
Community information stand / Information stand at a local event		8	8	4 ↓
Poster		NA	3 ↑	3
Environmental referral		6	6	NA
Preparing for take-off conference		4	3	NA
Information session		NA	2 ↑	NA
Draft Environmental Impact Statement		NA	3 ↑	NA
Out There Summit		NA	NA	3 ↑
Western Sydney Airport information session		NA	NA	5 ↑
Draft Airport plan		NA	NA	5 ↑
The announcement of the joint scoping study of rail needs for Western Sydney		NA	NA	7 ↑
None of these		74	72	68
Column n		513	502	499

There continues to be a desire for information about the proposed airport (60% in early 2016).

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	Wave 3 – April 2016
0-3 Not at all important	9	7	7	6
4-6	33	29	31	34
7-10 Very important	58	64↑	62	60
Column n	501	513	502	499

4.8 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 (51% feel it should be). Additionally, the vast majority (75%) believe rail services are necessary as soon as the airport is open to the public, although interestingly this has dropped since December 2015 while there has been an uplift in the proportion who believe rail operations should commence when there is sufficient passenger demand (18%).

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	Wave 3 – April 2016
Agree (7-10) – NOT REQUIRED	19	21
Neutral (4-6)	18	20
Disagree (0-3) – REQUIRED	57	51
Don't know	6	8
Column n	502	499
Q103A. When do you think the proposed airport will require a rail / train service?		
Column %	Wave 2 - December 2015	Wave 3 – April 2016
As soon as the proposed airport opens to the public	84	75 ↓
When there is sufficient passenger demand to warrant a rail service	11	18 ↑
Another time (specify)	2	3
It is not necessary for rail / train services	3	4
Column n	502	499

When asked, the majority of residents want to see a railway available from day one (70% agree at any cost), that the rail link should connect the proposed airport with the Sydney CBD (78%) and that it should also connect with Western Sydney suburbs (78%).

Q103. What is your level of agreement with the following statements?			
Column % Wave 3 2016 (n=499)	A rail link to the proposed airport should be available from day one of airport operations at any cost	A rail link should connect the proposed airport with the Sydney CBD	A rail link should connect the proposed airport with suburbs in Western Sydney
Agree (7-10)	70	78	78
Neutral (4-6)	20	15	16
Disagree (0-3)	4	2	1
Don't know	7	5	5

4.9 W3 Conclusions

While perceptions and sentiment towards the proposed airport remain largely positive, there has been little change over time. DIRD communications continue to be flying under the radar – only a minority of residents are aware of specific activities or progress around the proposed airport (such as the draft Airport Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement).

Only those ‘very engaged’ with some vested interest in the Western Sydney Airport and its impact (i.e. those in advocacy or community representatives, stakeholders) will be likely to be seeking and engaging with DIRD communications. The majority of residents are likely to be reached via mainstream coverage and announcements

Fewer have heard or seen updates or communications about the proposed airport generally since November 2014 (the Benchmark wave) which is likely to be the result of lower media coverage (and limited progress of the development activity) rather than DIRD efforts.

It is likely that until more concrete announcements are made or more tangible outcomes come about from the proposed airport, residents will continue to hold largely positive, but also relatively generic knowledge about what the airport could bring. While most are in favour of the proposed airport, less believe the positive benefits outweigh the negative. This points to an opportunity to build further knowledge, but this is likely to require communications about specific and measurable benefits to the community from legitimate sources and stakeholders on mainstream media.

While the current DIRD community activity and information is important to keep residents informed of developments, it needs to be recognised that the typical resident may not be accessing this more technical information. It is more likely that residents will engage with information relating to the development and community specific benefits. When key milestones occur (such as the announcement of an airport operator, physical operations commencing) it will be necessary use public media to gain attention and coverage.

5 STAKEHOLDER FINDINGS APRIL 2016

The following eight organisations were represented at the second workshop held in Parramatta on 6th April 2016:

- Mountains Combined Chamber of Commerce
- Planning Institute of Australia
- Tourism and Transport Forum
- University of Western Sydney
- Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC)
- Western Sydney Parklands
- Badgerys Creek Airport Taskforce (established by Liverpool Council)
- TAFE NSW

5.1 Benefits and drawbacks of the proposed airport

It was clear that the proposed airport was seen a positive amongst stakeholders. It is felt to be a huge opportunity for Western Sydney and for Sydney itself to become more of a competitor globally; a chance to be truly innovative and offer something that stands Sydney apart. The fact that operations could be 24 hours was an important part of becoming globally competitive city (comparable to Changi and Schiphol). It was felt to be a positive for tourism, economic development and employment, and crucial to the broader Western Sydney development. Creating a second 'go to' city and building hub around the airport was important.

In combination with broader investment in the Western Sydney area, the proposed airport could provide growth and sustainability for future generations of Australians to find employment with the creation of more skilled and unskilled jobs in Western Sydney. In particular, it provides a brighter future for youth in Western Sydney.

Stakeholders see the proposed airport to be a catalyst for other developments, especially the Western Sydney rail project. There was a sense that there has been a great deal of talk about the rail project and that the proposed airport has created momentum behind it.

There was also excitement about the idea of an 'aerotropolis', despite the fact that most were aware that this was no longer a possibility. For some, this idea showed '*vision*', which generated excitement and also provided more tangible ways to imagine what the airport could be – beyond just an airport.

Potential negatives around the proposed airport were associated with development related issues around the airport site (or lack of). Importantly (as was the case in the previous workshop), a key issue with the project to date for stakeholders is what will happen and when.

Again they feel that timings have been changed or not been given, and getting clear and definitive answers is difficult. They are looking for more openness and honesty. While they understand that timings can change, rather than being given potentially false dates, they would prefer more 'fluid' timelines or that a range of dates be provided.

Two important issues they would like early timing clarification around are:

- who will operate the airport? Sydney Airport or an overseas organisation?
- when something will be 'started'?

There is the belief that once the decision has been made as to the operator of the airport, more concrete plans can be made around the airport itself. For example, what the airport will look like?, how it will be structured?, what are the jobs that will be created? Will there be a need for rail and what will it look like? etc. In turn this means that communities can also start to get excited. They can then start to see more how the positives will outweigh some of the negatives by having a more definitive understanding of what opportunities (transport, jobs etc.) could exist. However, currently, the timings around this keep moving and there are no concrete dates given.

There was also a feeling that there is a lack of vision for the airport with many who felt that the new Airport should help to create a new city in its own right (rather than just be a suburb of Sydney).

When discussing the Airport project, it is generally considered alongside other Western Sydney development issues, with many of these stakeholders also having an interest and involvement with this wider development. The Airport is also often discussed alongside broader Western Sydney development at different meetings/conferences (the Out there summit for example). Therefore, negative perceptions around the development of and investment in Western Sydney can be wrongly attributed to the Airport. For example, if there are felt to be issues with rail development, the perception of the airport development is also affected.

There is also some concern for the readiness of the city to take more visitors, particularly in the Blue Mountains. There is the belief that the current infrastructure is not yet in place nor are there plans to be able to sufficiently accommodate the potential tourism: *“I am all for the airport, but my concern is that we just haven’t got the hotels, the right accommodation in that area to deal with the potential tourism increase. So that’s something that also needs considering”*.

5.2 Awareness and communications - unprompted

Stakeholders get much of their information and updates from emails (from Western Sydney Airport updates, Business Chamber for example) and from conversations, conferences and networking. Media releases are also a large source of information. There was a sense of *“information overload”* - that there was a lot of information delivered/given to them from different sources.

While the quantity of information was vast, there were issues. The reliability, consistency and substance of the information is a larger issue than the dissemination. There is a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities of different Government Departments and between federal, local and state. There is a lot of misinformation (as was felt last year) and that multiple Government Departments were talking about different aspects in different ways:

“There is federal, state and local all saying different things”.

There was felt to be contradicting information between Departments and levels. And this was not felt to be just regarding the airport:

“There are currently 7 different definitions of what Western Sydney rail means depending on the source”.

The fact that there is not one term used by all parties can be confusing (and they believe even more so for the community than stakeholders).

There was felt to be a great deal of generic information given, rather than tailoring it to a specific organisation’s interests. Everyone receives all information from a variety of sources and it can be hard to sift through what is relevant to them (and therefore not all of it is read/kept). There was a sense that some of this information was what stakeholders referred to as *“tick and flick”*. That information is only

being sent out of obligation and to ‘tick a box’ rather than really thinking about the information needs of each specific audiences.

“You get so much information, and it’s not all relevant to you, they (the Government) have to send out information but it’s just tick and flick, they have to tick a box to say that it’s been sent but they don’t necessarily think about who they are sending it to and what we need”.

5.3 Awareness and communications - prompted

There was mixed knowledge and engagement with the various DIRD communication activities and deliverables.

- **Community update newsletters** – Some awareness and use of these. Whilst these newsletters are seen to be useful, there can be too much information and they are generally archived for later use than read immediately. *“The newsletter gave 22 different links to click on – it’s too much and there is no direction/tailored links for me, I am not sure where I should be looking”.*
- **Western Sydney Airport website** – There appeared to be higher awareness of the website than in the last workshop. Everyone was aware of it and sometimes using it, however not very often. It is seen as a useful source of information however there is the belief that awareness of the website is low amongst the general population.
- **Western Sydney Airport Summary booklet** – Limited/no awareness.
- **Exhibition period for draft EIS and draft Airport Plan** – All aware of the plan and the exhibition period. However there was felt to be too little time for submissions - participants cited only 28 days (despite a 60 day review period). as well as feeling there was a lack of justification as to why this was so short (especially given the extensive wait for this to begin). There was some negativity around the actual draft EIS itself. It was felt to be *‘functionally deficient’*, in that it *“turned its back on public transport”*. It was felt to be written only for the professionals involved not for the ‘common man’ – there was too much technical information for the layperson. *“People don’t really understand it; it needs to be broken down into easy to understand pieces”*. Again there was a sense that it was done to ‘tick a box’.
- **Community drop in sessions** – They were aware of information sessions/community consultations, however for one stakeholder this was ‘an oxymoron’. It was felt that those who ran the sessions could not answer questions and community members were left feeling confused.
- **Joint Scoping Study into rail needs of Western Sydney** – Most were aware of this. However for some it seemed confusing as there was an awareness of a State Government study that had already looked into this and now Federal were repeating or doubling up on work already done. However they were aware for the need for this to be done in general as the rail is seen to be *“even more important than the airport for the future of Western Sydney”*.
- **Community pop ups** – No awareness (even amongst the Western Sydney University representative, where a pop-up has taken place.)
- **Out There Summit** – Limited awareness. One stakeholder did attend but felt that it was more of a PR piece than anything of substance in terms of informing people of facts and specifics.

5.4 Future communications – needs and preferences

DIRD is seen as providing the 'gold standard' of information to date. It is recognised that DIRD have the main responsibility of the airport planning process and therefore information from DIRD is potentially seen as more accurate and trusted than other sources. A number of clear requirements around future communications from the Australian Government were voiced both directly and indirectly during the stakeholder workshop:

- **Consistent messaging and terminology is important** – There are mixed messages coming from different levels of Government which can cause confusion and negativity. Therefore there is a greater need for clarity around the lines of responsibility – who is responsible for what aspect of the proposed airport and who should be communicating what. Stakeholders are aware that it is not the job of the Department to communicate everything but they want to know who is doing what.
 - There was a suggestion to develop a committee or central nucleus of trusted information akin to the communications committee at the time of the Olympics which stakeholders believed worked well. In an ideal world they would want a similar central nucleus of information which can be trusted.
- **Engage the right spokesperson who can also engage directly with stakeholders** – Having the right spokesperson (such as Peter Robertson) was seen to be an important and effective way to build trust and engagement. One stakeholder had witnessed several speeches/talks that he felt could have been improved by using the right spokesperson: *“Politicians delivering commercial information and commercial business people selling a political message does not work”* – it is key that the appropriate 'voice' is chosen for the job in order to be credible and motivational. Additionally, stakeholders would welcome opportunities to talk directly with an informed representative (from DIRD).
- **Information on the timing of decisions or at least broad timeframes** – There needs to be clearer and more consistent indication on what will happen when. Ambiguity needs to be managed and managing expectations upfront is important. This includes an announcement of who will be operating the airport – as a pivotal milestone in planning and decision making updates on this are seen to be essential.
- **Engage the broader community including residents** – There was a sense that TAFE and universities also have a responsibility, as does the community itself to create a better engagement with the airport and its benefits. Stakeholders believe that the community needs to be motivated into feeling a sense of ownership and responsibility.
- **Getting the right messages out to the community** – Stakeholders believe that the community aren't aware of the true opportunities of a new airport in terms of manual or trade as well as skilled employment opportunities. Therefore there is a need to communicate to community residents including parents what the opportunities are for their children and grandchildren. There is a sense that the more visual the information can be for communities the better. Examples were given about the Sydney Metro, where models were exhibited in shopping centres and achieved excitement around the project. There was no awareness of any social media around the airport project, and some felt that this would facilitate more community engagement and improve information dissemination. However, this would need to be managed sensitively and properly as they recognise the pitfalls of this method of communication (trolls, negativity, the need for resourcing).