



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Sydney Airport Demand Management Reform

February 2024

Recovery period – movement cap and aircraft noise

Sydney Airport is Australia's busiest airport, with around 35 million passengers arriving and departing during 2022-23 and almost 45 million passengers annually pre-COVID-19. The curfew and the demand management system, including the movement cap, at Sydney Airport play an important role in managing aircraft noise over nearby communities.

The Australian Government has developed a measured package of reforms to the demand management system to help keep passengers moving when there are delays, with community protections at its heart.

The Government is not making any changes to the existing curfew arrangements or the maximum number of flights per day at Sydney Airport.

Demand management framework

The demand management framework imposes a limit of 80 aircraft movements (taking off or landing on a runway) per hour during non-curfew hours (6am to 11pm). The limit is regulated through 15-minute increments ('rolling hour') so that the number of movements does not exceed 80 in any 60-minute period. This generally results in a maximum of 21 flights in any one 15-minute period.

Severe weather or other events like security breaches can cause major delays for passengers. Because of the strict limit of 80 aircraft taking off and landing every hour, later flights may have to be pushed back or cancelled to make room for the earlier delayed flights, meaning more delays for more passengers throughout the day.

Sydney Airport is a critical national transport hub that supports significant economic activity and connects Australians to each other and to the world. A significant weather event in Sydney impacts the entire air network for Eastern Australia (Melbourne, Canberra and Brisbane). The Government recognises that the current demand management framework needs updating so that it better supports operational efficiencies at Sydney Airport.

What the Government is doing

The Government is proposing some modest changes to the movement cap to create a strictly controlled 'recovery period' mode that will help reduce delays when there is severe weather or other major disruptions outside the control of airlines or the airport.

- The recovery period will temporarily allow up to 85 planes to take off or land every hour for a maximum of 2 hours on the same day following the disruption. This will help flights already scheduled for that day to catch up on delays earlier in the day.

- **There will be no increase in the overall number of flights for that whole day.** This is because the scheduling cap of 80 flights per hour will stay in place – only flights that were already scheduled to happen that day will be able to take off or land during the recovery period. For example, during a weather event flights are unable to take off or land. These flights will be able to ‘catch-up’ during the recovery period – as a result, there is no increase in the total amount of flights on that day.
- The recovery period will not extend into curfew hours.
- The law will be designed to ensure that the rules about the recovery period are clear and objective.
- There will be mandatory publication of information about when and why the recovery period is used so that the community can be confident it is being used properly.