

Western Sydney International Airport

**Changes to General Aviation Operations in the
Sydney Basin**

Industry Engagement Report

June 2025

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1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of industry engagement activity completed to support changes to General Aviation (GA) operations in the Sydney Basin.

2.0 Background

The Australian Government released the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on 24 October 2024, assessing the proposed flight paths and changes to controlled airspace in the Sydney Basin for the new Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport (WSI/YSWS).

To support these proposed changes, further changes are required to GA operations in the Sydney Basin. The proposed changes are intended to provide continued safe access for both Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) and Visual Flight Rules (VFR) operators to the Sydney Basin after the implementation of YSWS airspace and flight paths.

The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has authorised the preliminary airspace and flight paths for YSWS on 4 June 2025.

Prior to this date, industry engagement activity was led by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport, and the Arts (the department) with subject matter expertise provided by Airservices Australia, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), Department of Defence, and supporting consultants. The department established a Technical Working Group (TWG) to capture subject matter expertise.

Airservices led engagement on the required changes to (GA) operations in the Sydney Basin. Feedback was taken over a public comment period and then returned to the TWG for consideration and inclusion in design work. All feedback was captured in the department 'issues register'.

3.0 Engagement activities

The section summarises the communication and engagement activities completed.

3.1 Communication Material

3.1.1 CASA Aviation State Engagement Forum (AvSEF)

The AvSEF forum deals with aviation matters of regional or national importance. AvSEF is a way to inform the aviation industry about matters affecting Australian airspace, seek feedback from the aviation community, and find out about matters that may affect airspace users. CASA manages the forum. Find further details about the forum and its governance here: <https://www.avsef.gov.au/about-avsef>

Airservices published an AvSEF consultation '*Proposed changes to general aviation operations in the Sydney Basin*' on **14 December 2023**, with a feedback period commencing on this date and closing on **31 January 2024**. A link to the consultation website is available here:

<https://www.avsef.gov.au/consultations/proposed-changes-general-aviation-operations-sydney-basin>

3.1.2 Industry briefing paper

The '*Proposed changes to general aviation operations in the Sydney Basin in support of the new Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport*' December 2023 industry briefing paper provided information on:

- the introduction of YSWS and required airspace changes that necessitate changes in surrounding locations. This was with a view to provide continued safe and equitable access to the Sydney Basin for both IFR and VFR operators.
- a risk assessment workshop and consultation session at Bankstown Airport (YSBK) to explore conflicts of YSWS airspace and flight path design and surrounding Instrument Flight Path (IFP) and VFR flight paths, determine the extent of change necessary, and identify a preferred airspace model for the Sydney Basin.

- the objective of the proposed airspace reclassification to maintain safety in the Sydney Basin following the introduction of YSWs.
- the options considered, including Class G (current airspace classification), Class D+ (Class D requirements supplemented with flight planning and transponder fitment requirements), and Class E.
- the preferred option of Class D+, including justification against Class G or Class E options.
- the proposal to reclassify a volume of airspace north and south of YSWs and between YSWs and YSBK from Class G to Class D+ (lower limit 1000 feet (ft) Above Mean Sea Level (AMSL) and upper limit within 1500-2500ft AMSL to align with Class C airspace of Sydney Kingsford-Smith Airport (YSSY) and proposed Class C airspace of YSWs) and amend the lateral extent of the YSBK Control Zone (CTR) to the west and north by approximately 2 nautical miles (nm) (for YSBK IFP containment).
- the required VFR route additions/amendments (**not the subject of this engagement activity and instead captured/assessed as part of the department-led preliminary design/EIS consultation, VFR routes were referenced to provide context of the holistic operating environment**).
- parallel projects including the CASA-led YSBK Southeast VFR Corridor, Aeria Management Group (AMG) led flight training area relocation proposals.

A link to the December 2023 industry briefing paper that was prepared to support the AvSEF consultation is available here: https://www.avsef.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/documents/airservices_wsia_ga_industry_briefing_paper_dec_23.pdf

3.2 Industry engagement

3.2.1 Participation

The December 2023 industry briefing paper was downloaded **433** times during the feedback period.

A total of **48** responses were received from a variety of airspace users including industry bodies, pilot associations, airport operators, commercial operators, flight schools, sporting, gliding, and recreation aviation operators.

3.2.2 Feedback

All feedback that was received by Airservices was provided to the TWG for consideration and inclusion in the 'issues register'.

Airservices conducted a review of the feedback and segmented the feedback into the following themes:

1. Bankstown CTR expansion and the CASA-led Bankstown Southeast VFR corridor
2. Requirement for a Sydney Basin review
3. Impacts of Class D+ airspace
4. Operations in Class G airspace
5. Impact to gliding operations
6. Airservices Australia resourcing
7. Economic impact
8. Impact to training areas
9. Increased aircraft noise
10. Consultation

4.0 Response to feedback

4.1 Response to feedback themes

4.1.1 Bankstown CTR expansion and the CASA-led Bankstown Southeast VFR corridor

Feedback was supportive of the need to extend the lateral boundary of the YSBK CTR to the west and north for YSBK IFP containment.

4.1.2 Requirement for a Sydney Basin review

Generally, feedback was negative due to the impact that a revised airspace configuration would have on the current operating environment in the Sydney Basin.

A Post Implementation Review (PIR) of the required introduction of airspace and flight paths (including facilitated changes) to support YSWS will be conducted approximately 12 months after airport opening. The PIR will involve further industry engagement activity.

4.1.3 Impacts of Class D+ airspace

Feedback was generally not supportive of the Class D+ airspace concept (Class D requirements supplemented with flight planning and transponder fitment requirements), with feedback citing:

- the naming convention of Class D+ airspace is not supported by International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) documentation
- additional flight planning requirements
- costs associated with transponder fitment
- equitable airspace access
- precedence for use in other locations.

To ensure safe operation in the Sydney Basin, the requirement for controlled airspace remains. Airservices will propose the airspace volume remains as Class D with flight planning and transponder fitment requirements to improve aircraft surveillance.

Airservices has revised the airspace layout and where safety permits, has proposed to reduce the volume of Class D airspace to the minimum extent required to safely operate the Sydney Basin. **Figure 1** on the following page demonstrates the portion of Class D airspace removed from the airspace volume previously engaged via the December 2023 Industry Briefing Paper.

When operating or transiting through Class D airspace, aircraft require a clearance. Pilots must establish and maintain two-way communications with Air Traffic Control (ATC) and receive clearance (either abbreviated or full) prior to entering the airspace.

In Class D airspace, all operators will be provided with an ATC service:

- IFR flights are separated from other IFR as well as special VFR flights and receive traffic information (not separation) with respect to VFR flights.
- VFR flights receive traffic information with respect to all other flights.
- Special VFR flights are separated from other special VFR flights when visibility is less than Visual Meteorological Conditions (VMC).

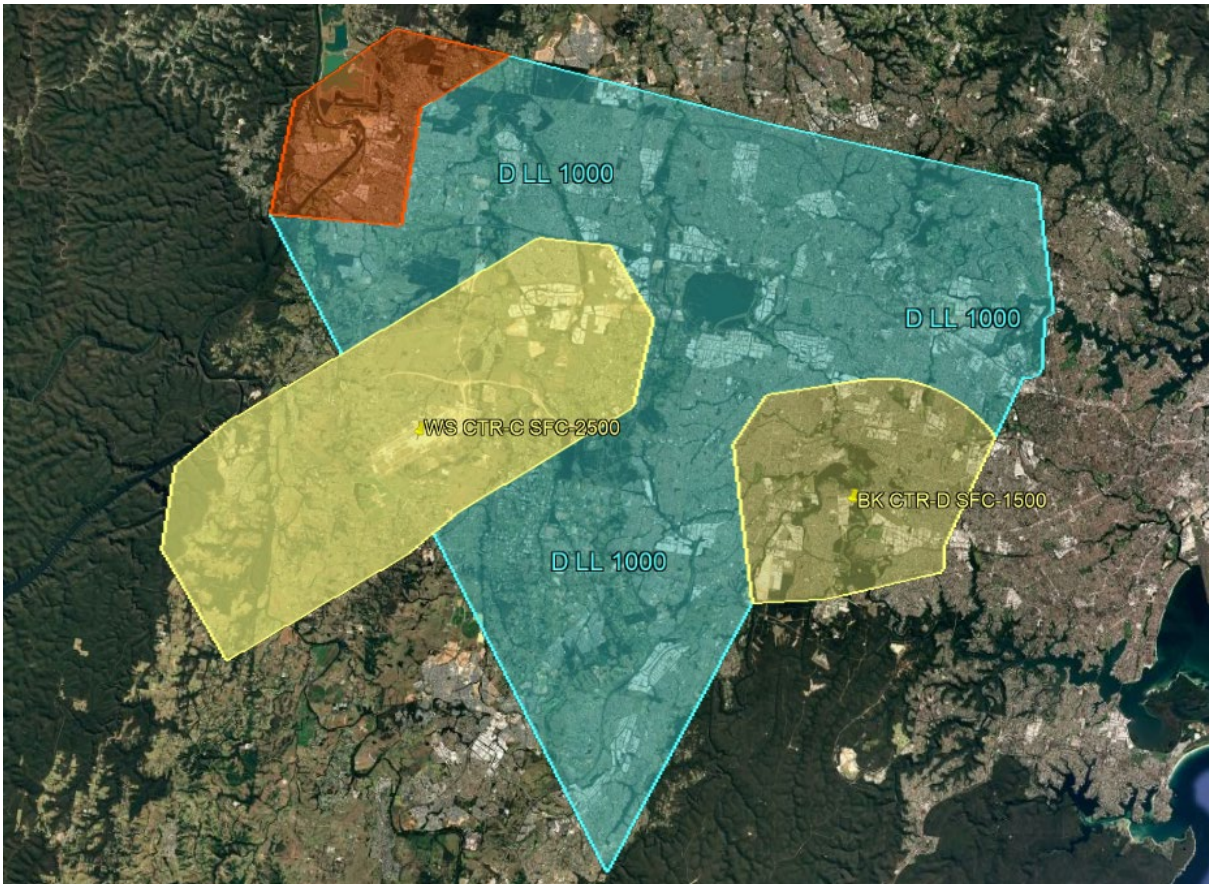


Figure 1: Class D airspace removed from airspace volume proposed in December 2023 Industry Briefing Paper (red), YSWWS and YSBK CTR (yellow), Class D airspace volume (cyan).

4.1.4 Operations in Class G airspace

Feedback noted that there is concern with operations in uncontrolled Class G airspace. With the requirement of additional controlled airspace to support YWSW, the volume of Class G airspace will reduce.

Concerns were raised in relation to congestion and funnelling of aircraft at low level. The addition of Class D airspace in the Sydney Basin will introduce an ATC service, reducing the likelihood of congestion and funnelling.

As stated in **section 4.1.3**, the proposed Class D airspace volume was reduced to the minimum requirement for safe operations in the Sydney Basin. **Figure 1** demonstrates the portion of Class D airspace removed from the airspace volume engaged on via the December 2023 Industry Briefing Paper, thus increasing the volume of retained Class G airspace.

4.1.5 Impact to gliding operations

Feedback was received from gliding operators that the proposed airspace would negatively impact their operations due to the nature of their operations requiring altitude. As stated in **section 4.1.3**, the proposed airspace volume was reduced to the minimum requirement for safe operations in the Sydney Basin.

Airservices acknowledges that despite efforts to reduce the extent of controlled airspace to the minimum required impact to existing gliding operations still exists. Airservices will engage with those operators affected to seek alternative options for their operations, which may include entering into a Letter of Agreement (LoA) for operations within controlled airspace, prior to the opening of YWSW.

4.1.6 Airservices Australia resourcing

Airservices has a dedicated and well-resourced program team to lead engagement efforts during the detailed design and implementation phases. This team will ensure that industry stakeholders are fully aware of the upcoming changes to flight paths and airspace.

More broadly, Airservices is taking all necessary measures to strengthen our service resilience and response capability to unexpected disruptions. Currently, we are undertaking the largest recruitment and training program in Airservices' history.

4.1.7 Economic impact

Demand for aviation services in the Sydney region is forecast to double over the next 20 years. Even if operational restrictions were removed at YSSY, it could not meet Sydney's long-term aviation needs. YSWS will help support this growth and connect businesses to national and international markets. It will deliver world-class transport systems, improve business links and provide economic benefit.

4.1.8 Impact to training areas

The introduction of YSWS airspace will require changes to current GA training areas in proximity to YSBK and Camden Airport (YSCN).

As referenced in the Industry Briefing Paper, AMG as the owner of both Bankstown and Camden Airports, where many flight training operators are based, will continue to lead industry stakeholder engagement on the proposed final locations of these flying training areas.

Airservices will continue to provide support to AMG as the alternative flight training areas are established.

4.1.9 Increased aircraft noise

Airservices manages complaints and enquiries about aircraft noise and operations through the Noise Complaints and Information Service (NCIS). The NCIS is the Australian aviation industry's main interface on aircraft noise and related issues for the community.

Additionally, Airservices recognises that airspace and flight path changes will impact noise outcomes on the community. Airservices has supported and supplemented the department-led community engagement activity for the airspace and flight path changes at YSWS. Airservices has commenced community engagement activity, and this will continue as YSWS opens in 2026, see link: [Western Sydney International \(Nancy-Bird Walton\) Airport | Engage Airservices](#). Additionally, as stated in **section 4.1.2**, Airservices will conduct a PIR of the airspace and flight paths (including facilitated changes) at YSWS, approximately 12 months after opening. The PIR will involve further community engagement activity.

4.1.10 Consultation

To date, industry engagement activity has been led by the department with technical expertise provided by Airservices, CASA, Department of Defence and supporting consultants. Airservices published an AvSEF consultation.

In managing access to a finite airspace resource while enabling long-term industry growth, Airservices will ensure transparent and broad consultation with all those affected.

Airservices recognises the requirement for improved engagement material, including draft Aeronautical Information Package (AIP) charting, and will ensure that this material is made available throughout the Airservices-led detailed design and implementation phases of the YSWS project.