

Aircraft parking on the east-west runway



Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

Q: How has the COVID 19 public health emergency affected the aviation industry?

A: The COVID 19 public health emergency has hit global aviation particularly hard. Australian aviation has not been immune.

Our major Australian airlines – Qantas, Virgin Australia and Regional Express (Rex) – have all announced significant reductions in capacity:

- Except for limited repatriation flights to bring Australians home from overseas, all Qantas and Jetstar international flights and more than 90 percent of domestic flights have been temporarily suspended from the end of March.
- Also except for limited repatriation flights, Virgin Australia has announced a temporary suspension of all international services from the end of March, and a significant reduction of around 90 percent in the capacity on its domestic network.
- Regional Express has also significantly reduced its passenger air services.

Other airlines, particularly international airlines, have also been significantly affected.

Q: Why is the east-west runway being temporarily closed?

A: Collectively, Qantas, Virgin Australia and Rex operate several hundred aircraft, up to and including the very largest A380. Typically, most of these aircraft would be in the air at any one time so demand for on-airport parking is limited.

With hundreds of aircraft now grounded, space at airports, including at Sydney Airport, must be found to securely park them.

At the same time, Sydney Airport must also be kept operational for those airlines still flying - be they for the continued movement of essential workers, medical supplies and agricultural exports - and ensure security outcomes are maximised.

Following discussions with federal aviation authorities, the solution for Sydney Airport is to temporarily use sections of the east-west runway to securely park grounded aircraft, while keeping the parallel north-south runways available for continued operations.

Q: Why can't one of Sydney Airport's other runways be closed?

- A:** Besides the east-west runway, Sydney Airport has two other runways:
- the main north-south runway, and
 - the parallel north-south runway.

At almost four kilometres long, the main north-south runway must be kept open because only it can accommodate those few larger aircraft still flying.

The east-west runway and areas adjacent to it provides more space in which to park up to 50 grounded aircraft than the parallel north-south runway. This is why temporarily using the east-west runway for aircraft parking is preferred.

Q: Why can't other airports be used to park grounded aircraft?

- A:** Other airports *are* being used to park grounded aircraft. All of Australia's major airports – Sydney included – need to be part of the solution.

Q: Is the east-west runway being closed permanently?

- A:** No. This is temporary closure only.

We would look to move aircraft back to standard parking bays as soon as is practicable, thereby allowing the east-west runway to be reopened.

Q: What will closing the east-west runway mean for the distribution of aircraft noise in areas around the airport?

- A:** With the east-west runway closed, the change in noise distribution in areas around the airport is expected to be negligible.

With the significant reduction in aircraft movements, all areas close to the airport and under flight paths are experiencing historically low levels of aircraft noise.

Q: Doesn't closing the east-west runway mean an end to noise sharing?

- A:** The east-west runway is typically used when Airservices Australia – which is responsible for Air Traffic Control – implements noise sharing in areas around the airport.

Noise sharing aims to maximise the number of flights over water or other non-residential areas and, where that cannot be achieved, to share the noise as fairly as possible.

With the east-west runway closed, noise sharing will be temporarily affected. However, the priority noise sharing mode of runway operation, which maximises flights over Botany Bay and the uninhabited parts of the Kurnell Peninsula, will still be available because it does not rely on the east-west runway.

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Q: Why is Sydney Airport's need to accommodate freight aircraft so important?

A: Being able to accommodate those aircraft still flying to or from Sydney is vitally important, especially for those carrying freight.

The decrease in passenger flights has had an impact on freight exports and imports, given that 80 percent of freight is typically carried on passenger aircraft.

Some airlines have recognised this and are now transporting freight without passengers, although often using passenger as well as dedicated freight aircraft.

This is consistent with the Australian Government's recent announcement to invest \$110 million to support Australia's international agricultural and seafood exports through these difficult times.

At a time when our economy is under such pressure, keeping freight moving will help keep people in jobs. This will help provide a lifeline to our primary producers, who were also hit hard by the recent bushfires and drought.

Q: Has the Australian Government approved the temporary use of the east-west runway for aircraft parking?

A: Sydney Airport has engaged closely with federal aviation authorities, including the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Airservices Australia and the Civil Aviation Safety Authority.

The announcement made by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, the Hon. Michael McCormack, MP, can be read [here](#).

Q: How can I get further information about the project?

A: Contact Mr Ted Plummer, Sydney Airport's Special Adviser Government and Community Relations:

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