

Plan to make Western Sydney Airport city 'green' is at odds with flight safety, Government report says

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The site for Sydney's long-awaited second airport in Badgerys Creek. *(Supplied)*

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A report used for the draft master plan of a new sustainable city surrounding the Western Sydney Airport has warned of the increased risk of bird strikes because of 'green' initiatives planned across the region.

Key points:

- There are tens of thousands of bird strikes with planes every year around the world
- The plans included a proposal to increase tree canopy around the airport by 40 per cent
- The Department of Planning wouldn't comment on which green initiatives would be scaled back

Designs are underway for the construction of the Western Sydney Aerotropolis at Badgers Creek, which is set to grow to a city roughly the size of Adelaide in the coming years.

But a Wildlife Management Assessment report, commissioned by the NSW Government for its draft master plan said some elements of the design were "at odds" with protecting aircraft from bird strikes.

"Safeguarding the 24/7 operations of the airport and the vision of the Western Sydney Aerotropolis are essentially at odds," it stated.

"If left unmanaged this may result in an unacceptable number and type of birds moving through aircraft airspace, compromising aircraft safety."

Such strikes have accounted for the loss of more than 600 aircraft and 532 lives internationally, according to data compiled by the report author Avisure, an aviation risk consultancy.

Tens of thousands of incidents are reported around the world every year — like the bird strike blamed for bringing down [US Airways Flight 1549, which landed in New York's Hudson River in 2009.](#)



The plan allocated 11,200 hectares of green space around the airport.(ABC News)

The NSW Government is promoting the Western Sydney Aerotropolis as a low carbon city featuring next-generation waste and water infrastructure with natural "urban cooling" systems, increased tree canopies and biodiversity corridors.

The Draft Aerotropolis Precinct Plan is currently open for public submissions until the end

of next month.

But several elements were identified in the assessment report as problematic, including plans to increase tree canopy cover across the area to 40 per cent, enhance rivers, streams and wetlands and maximise biodiversity.

It said design proposals for the greater region, known as the Western Parkland City clashed with air safety if left without mitigation strategies.



An illustration of a proposed parkland area near the airport.(Supplied)

"Landscaping to satisfy the Western Parkland City vision contradicts the principles of airport safeguarding against wildlife hazards and has not been adequately addressed in some of the key Aerotropolis landscaping and planning documentation to date."

It listed about 20 species of birds which posed a moderate or high risk to the threat, as well as concerns about seven known flying-fox colonies in the area.

It recommended developing a management program to identify and monitor wildlife, other landscaping mechanisms to scale back the expanse of green-space as well as keep some trees to a certain height and prohibit other species that attract wildlife.

The Draft Aerotropolis Precinct Plan did not elaborate on specifics in the Wildlife Assessment Report, other than stating wildlife attraction would have to be considered when "determining the location of new land uses within the Aerotropolis to manage the

risk of collisions between wildlife and aircraft".

Opposition calls for clear mitigation strategy

State Opposition MP Greg Warren said the public deserved a clear plan for a safe development, given the size of the project.

"This is like another instalment of Utopia where you've got one department of government saying 'This is what it needs to be' and you've got another department saying 'Well that just can't happen and that's not the way it's going to be'," he said.

"They need to get serious and sit down at the table so that we don't see an imposition on the success of the Aerotropolis."

A NSW Department of Planning spokeswoman said mitigation factors would be included in further planning.

"The findings of the report were used to inform the Draft Aerotropolis Precinct Plan... as well as the land uses allowed around the Airport under the statutory planning controls finalised in October 2020.

"The aim of the report was to safeguard the airport whilst not compromising on the vision for the Western Aerotropolis and the Western Parkland City.

"The Department of Planning, industry and Environment welcomes feedback from the community, which will inform the final plan."

[The complete set of plans open for public comment can be found here.](#)

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