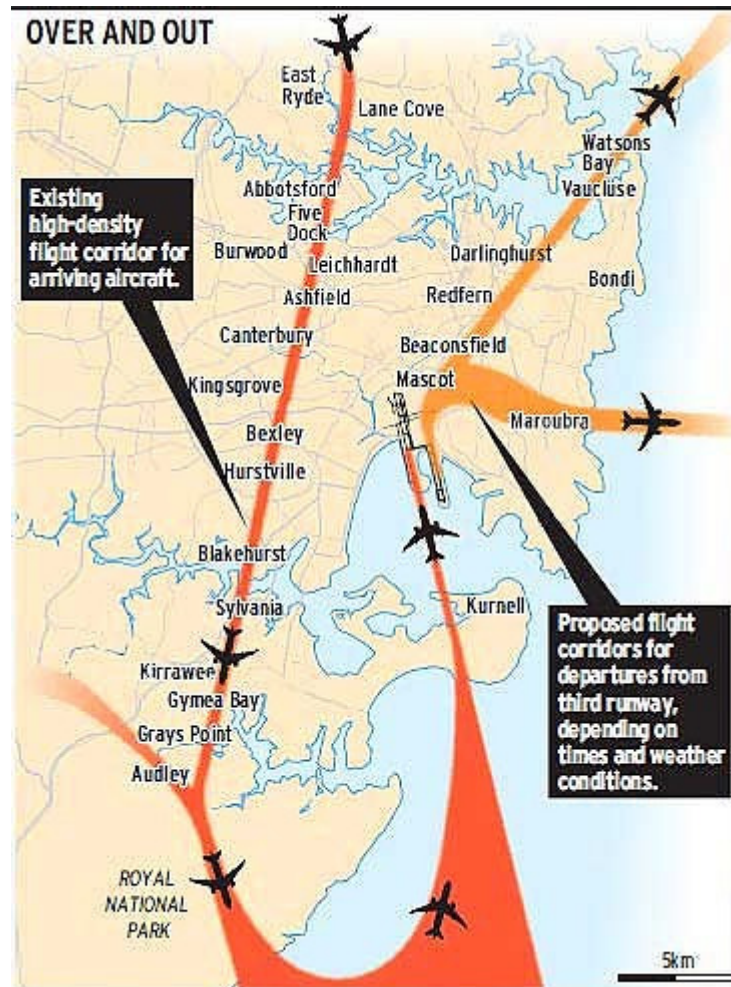


# Get ready to start sharing the noise

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## EXCLUSIVE

TENS of thousands of Sydneysiders face a dramatic concentration of air traffic over their homes through the greater use of pinpoint navigation technology.

The revelation comes as Federal Transport Minister Anthony Albanese prepares to inspect the completed \$100 million safety upgrade to the east-west runway tomorrow. The reopening of the runway marks the full return of flight corridors across the city for the first time in 18 months.

Airservices Australia, the body responsible for air traffic movements nationally, said yesterday the use of the navigation technology was being investigated to "assist noise-sharing, reduce aircraft pollution and reduce fuel consumption". It refused to answer questions about its plans for the technology, which narrows flight corridors from kilometres to just a few hundred metres wide, placing more flights over a concentrated area.

Airservices also said it was examining if almost all northerly departing flights from Sydney Airport would be directed over the eastern suburbs, depending on the time and weather conditions. This use of the runways, known as Mode 15, was regarded as a temporary measure during the safety upgrade. If the mode is adopted permanently, departing flights will be directed away from the Grayndler electorate of Transport Minister Anthony Albanese towards Vaucluse, Watsons Bay, Maroubra, Eastlakes and Pagewood.

Airservices advised the Sydney Airport Community Forum last year that this proposal would require referral to Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett to determine if any action should be taken on potential impacts. His Kingsford Smith electorate would bear the brunt of these flights.

For 18 months, the east-west runway has been mostly closed for the construction of a mandatory 90 metre safety area for planes overshooting or landing short.

The complexities of extending the safety area over the M5 East tunnel and the city's largest sewer pipeline had meant the runway had to be closed or restricted from October 2008 until April 1 this year. Costs blew out by almost 20 per cent.

Controversially, the closure resulted in a dramatic increase in daily plane movements above suburbs such as Marrickville, Sydenham,

Leichhardt, Ashfield, Canada Bay and Kurnell.

It was during this period the use of navigation technology to narrow flight corridors emerged. Residents in a line of suburbs from Five Dock to Miranda reported a tenfold increase in the concentration of aircraft movements over their homes.

While aircraft have used this route for a number of years, Airservices' track density maps showed fewer than 180 movements in a 200-square-metre area before the procedures were introduced and more than 1800 by the end of 2008, and the flight path corridor has been narrowed from 6.8 kilometres to just 200 metres.

At the time, Airservices said there had been an increase in flights because of the east-west runway works.

Liberal member for Cook, Scott Morrison, has sought assurances from federal authorities that the reopening of the east-west runway would end this practice. But when he asked what mitigation measures could be undertaken, "I was told they could give me no guarantees".

Mr Albanese was unavailable for comment.

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