



Australian Government

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

# Sydney Airport Demand Management Reform

February 2024

## *Protections for regional NSW communities*

The Australian Government will continue to ensure strong protection in the Sydney Airport demand management framework so that regional NSW communities and businesses can stay connected to the wider Australian community and to the world. The Government has developed a measured package of reforms to the demand management system to improve efficiency and promote competition while also ensuring strong protection for regional communities.

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 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.

A 'slot' is permission for an aircraft to either enter or leave an airport gate at a particular time ('gate movement'). The Sydney Airport Slot Manager allocates slots to airlines on a half-yearly seasonal basis (Northern Summer and Northern Winter scheduling seasons). In general, airlines that meet the requirements for using a slot in one season gain the right to re-use that slot in the following equivalent season (known as historic precedence).

Additional requirements currently apply to how slots can be used in the peak periods (6-11am/3-8pm weekdays). In particular, regional NSW services generally cannot use a peak period slot unless it has historically been used only for regional NSW services (permanent regional service series (PRSS) slots).

## What the Government is doing

*Regional NSW services can apply for any peak slot*

- Regional NSW services will be able to apply to use any slot during the new peak period hours (7-11am/5-8pm), not just the slots that are set aside for priority access for regional NSW services (PRSS slots).
  - At the moment, regional NSW services cannot access non-PRSS slots in the peak period.
- If approved, these new regional NSW service slots will not gain PRSS protection. This will make sure that enough slots remain available for domestic and international flights in the future if they are no longer used for regional flights. This will benefit consumers travelling across the aviation network.
- Where slots in the peak period have already been set aside for priority access by regional NSW services in the new peak period hours, they will retain this PRSS protection.

*Regional air services to receive priority consideration*

- When allocating slots to airlines, the Sydney Airport Slot Manager will have to consider giving priority to regional NSW flights asking for peak period slots (7-11am/5-8pm). The Slot Manager will also need to balance this with other priorities like giving slots to larger aircraft. The Minister for Transport will be able to direct the Slot Manager as to how these priorities are balanced.

*Protections are being maintained, with public reporting to promote transparency*

- Existing protections for PRSS slots during the new peak period hours of 7-11am/5-8pm will remain unchanged.
- Where airlines are using their current PRSS slots during 6-7am/3-5pm, these slots will keep their PRSS protections. This will help maintain regional NSW access during these times.
- As part of regular public reporting on how all of the slots are used by airlines, details about how slots are used for regional NSW services will be published. This will help the community have confidence that regional NSW access is being maintained.