

SODPROPS and its limitations Questions for AAB

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Background

SODPROPS operations are subject to several weather-related constraints, including:

- Cloud ceiling of no less than 2500 ft (762 m)
- Tailwind of no more than 5 kts
- Visibility of no less than 8 km
- Dry runway

During a community presentation in September 2023, Airservices Australia (**ASA**) proposed applying to CASA to lower the cloud ceiling requirement from 2500 ft to 2000 ft as a potential mitigation measure. At the time, indications from ASA suggested this change could enable approximately 1,200 additional flights to track over Moreton Bay rather than over land, providing some noise relief to affected communities.

However, an update published on ASA's Engage page in March 2026 states:

"In September 2025, having met with CASA and conducted safety and risk assessments, we determined that it is not feasible to safely change the cloud ceiling limit and maintain the required visibility needed to use this mode."

The outcome was known to ASA in September 2025 (and potentially Brisbane Airport Corporation (**BAC**) as it is not clear who was having the discussions with CASA). It was not communicated to the AAB at that time, nor discussed at subsequent meetings. The only disclosure has been the above brief note after the last AAB meeting.

This update has occurred after a period of approximately two years during which the measure was presented as a potential mitigation, raising reasonable expectations within the community. This reflects a broader community concern that mitigation options are being progressed and then marked as "complete" without meaningful transparency regarding the analysis undertaken, the options considered, the reasons for decision to abandon it as an option and the implications for overall mitigation outcomes.

Interaction with Tailwind Trial

A voluntary tailwind trial was announced by BAC on 1 December 2025 (reference: [Voluntary tailwind data trial begins at Brisbane Airport https://newsroom.bne.com.au/tailwind-data-trial-begins-at-brisbane-airport/](https://newsroom.bne.com.au/tailwind-data-trial-begins-at-brisbane-airport/)), with conditions which did not reference cloud ceiling requirements. Instead it listed only the following:

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| • Tailwind component is 10 kts or less (including gusts) | • No thunderstorms are present or forecast within 30nm of the aerodrome |
| • Crosswind component is 20 kts or less (including gusts) | • No reported or forecast windshear |
| • Runway is dry | • Adequate Air Traffic Control staffing |
| | • Acceptable levels of traffic complexity |

Given that the cloud ceiling reduction was ruled out in September 2025 and the tailwind trial was announced shortly after in December 2025, it is unclear from publicly available information:

- whether these two initiatives were developed as separate or coordinated workstreams; or
- whether the tailwind trial is, in effect, being pursued as an alternative mitigation in place of the abandoned cloud ceiling proposal.

For the tailwind trial BAC has not stated:

- if it is being conducted only within the existing 2500 ft cloud ceiling constraint; and
- whether any alternative ceiling settings (including 2000 ft or any intermediate level) are being considered.

The relationship between the cloud ceiling lowering application not being feasible and the tailwind trial commencing is not explained, and at face value the timing raises reasonable questions about whether one has effectively replaced the other as the focus of mitigation efforts. The broader concern is that a mitigation option (cloud ceiling height) appears to have been put forward, created a reasonable expectation in the community that some relief may be achievable, and then ultimately ruled out without any discussion at the AAB, despite ASA (and BAC, if involved) being aware of the outcome as early as September 2025.

Questions

- Why was the September 2025 outcome not communicated to the AAB earlier?
- Please confirm if the tailwind trial is being conducted only within the existing 2500 ft cloud ceiling constraint and no alternative cloud ceiling settings are being considered as part of the tailwind trial or related work?
- Whether these two initiatives (tailwind trial and cloud ceiling) were developed as separate or coordinated workstreams?
- Whether the tailwind trial is, in effect, being pursued as an alternative mitigation in place of the abandoned cloud ceiling proposal?
- What specific safety and operational constraints led CASA and ASA to conclude that lowering the cloud ceiling to 2000 ft is not feasible?
- What analysis underpinned that conclusion (e.g. scenarios tested, parameters assessed, risk thresholds applied)?
- Were any alternative approaches explored ? (such as different visibility thresholds, conditional or time-limited use or other operational limits that might allow its use)?
- Have international comparisons been done for example airports where the cloud ceiling is not a condition for SODPROPS?
- Given earlier indications of approximately 1,200 additional bay movements, how is the loss of this mitigation now being addressed? What alternative measures are being pursued to deliver equivalent noise relief?
- Was the anticipated benefit of this proposal incorporated into planning assumptions (including the BAC Master Plan)? If so, how has this now been adjusted?
- Has the Minister been advised of this outcome and its implications for the overall effectiveness and limitations of SODPROPS?