

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 46
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Environment Standards Division (ESD)
Topic: Western Sydney Airport - Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Areas - Ambient Noise Measures
Hansard Page: 131
Question Date: 08 February 2016
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Cameron asked:

Senator CAMERON: Do you know if there were any ambient noise measures from a representative sample of locations?

Mr Roberts: I will have to take that on notice.

Mr Tregurtha: It is standard practice, when we have airport referrals or referrals in relation to aircraft movements, for us to get noise contours and standard noise sampling. So that would be standard practice. But in this instance, as Mr Roberts has said, we will have to take that specific one on notice so we can answer the question accurately.

Answer:

The draft Western Sydney Airport Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) includes dedicated chapters on aircraft noise (Chapter 10) and ground based noise (Chapter 11). Noise impacts are also discussed in relation to human health (Chapter 13), wildlife (Chapter 16), social values (Chapter 23) and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (Chapter 26).

Ambient noise measurements are less relevant to the assessment of intermittent noise (such as from aircraft overflight) than noise of relatively constant intensity (such as from ground based noise associated with the continuous operation of an airport). For that reason, the assessment of aircraft overflight noise impacts presented in Appendix E1 to the draft EIS is based on maximum noise levels without reference to ambient noise measurements. The draft EIS acknowledges that aircraft overflights will have an 'annoyance' effect in some locations.

Appendix E2 to the draft Environmental Impact Statement explains how ambient noise measurements, taken from ten locations in accordance with the relevant Australian standard, are used to inform the assessment of ground based noise.

The assessment of the Western Sydney Airport is ongoing. Until the Environmental Impact Statement is finalised, the Department cannot reach any conclusions on the impacts of the Airport or make any recommendations to the Minister as to whether and under what conditions it should proceed.

The Department anticipates that the finalised EIS will expand on its discussion of noise impacts in response to comments on that issue.