

LTOP & VARIABLE CAP

The variable cap is a subset of a more broader concept of enshrining LTOP with legislation so that its noise sharing objectives can be met and the balance between the demands of the aviation industry and the noise impacted community is restored at Sydney Airport as intended.

The LTOP Terms of Reference state: *The capacity of the airport is to be maintained to the maximum practicable extent consistent with noise-sharing objectives, but the programmed movement rate is not to exceed 80 movements per hour.* (LTOP p15)

The problem is that the non-parallel runway combinations, known as the noise sharing modes, have a lower capacity than the parallel runways and less than the 80 cap. Rather than maintain a capacity consistent with noise sharing objectives, capacity has been given priority over noise sharing objectives in the day to day operations of the airport.

At the moment a blanket 80 movements per hour cap means that there is no attempt to smooth demand so that the non-parallel runway noise sharing modes can be used or to seek to use those runway modes to their maximum capacity.

At the core of enshrining LTOP is that the main factor that should influence runways selection is noise sharing within the constraints of the prevailing weather conditions rather than traffic levels. With some exceptions, parallel runway operations at Sydney Airport are only permitted during the times that LTOP recognises as the peak and therefore designates them as preferred. These are*:

- (a) 0730 to 1030 and 1500 to 2000 on weekdays;
- (b) 0730 to 1030 on Saturdays; and
- (c) 1600 to 2000 on Sundays and public holidays.

Exceptions are for a short time at the end of the period to allow for an orderly change to noise sharing modes, weather, an adhoc safety need, or occasional maintenance on the East West Runway.

To enable this to occur the Sydney Demand Management Act would also be amended to specifically require the Minister to nominate lower caps outside of the peak periods to enable the LTOP preferred noise sharing (non-parallel) modes to be used and the LTOP objectives to be met. The Minister can adjust the number over time as more experienced is gained in the use of the noise sharing modes at higher movement rates. (At the moment they just revert to parallels because it is easy.) This is the variable cap concept. The cap that applies during peak periods remains at 80.

* These are the times prescribed by the LTOP itself for when parallel operations are the preferred mode. However, as it is currently implemented a half hour has been added to the beginning and end of the periods put forward in LTOP. Airservices Australia in its description of its preferred runway selection at Sydney Airport states: "Parallel Runway operations should only be considered for use if required for traffic management purposes during the following hours: 0700 to 1100 Monday to Saturday, 0800 to 1100 Sunday and 1500 to 2000 Sunday to Friday."(Airservices Australia, Sydney Airport Operating Statistics, February 2019 p5) In practice parallels are used for much of the time outside these periods as well.

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