

> Historical Context



Bankstown Airport

Master Plan
2004/05



> Historical Context

Bankstown Airport has a long and proud history, dating back to 1929 when the site was first identified as an airport site by the (then) Department of Civil Aviation (DCA). The intention of the DCA was to develop the site as a second or training airport for Sydney.

Since 1929, Bankstown Airport has developed into one of the busiest general aviation airports in Australia and from a business/corporate perspective, has evolved from a government/military airport to a thriving composite business comprising both aviation and property aspects.

7.1 The War Years

No activity occurred at the site until 1940 when an area of 255 hectares was acquired to establish a RAAF airport. An important reason for locating the RAAF airport on the Bankstown site was its close proximity to the Clyde Engineering Works at Granville where aircraft manufacturing was being conducted. In 1942 a de Havilland (now Boeing) facility was established to produce Mosquito aircraft. During the war years the airport was first a RAAF station, then a US Army Air Corps base and then a Royal Naval Fleet Air Arm Station (HMS Nabberly).

7.2 World War II to Federal Airports Corporation

In 1945, Bankstown Airport as well as other sites were investigated as the possible location for Sydney's International Airport. The Bankstown site was considered unsuitable because of runway approach limitations but the airport was considered suitable to act as a reliever airport. As a result of the Commonwealth Government's Cabinet approval to develop the Mascot site as the main international airport, control of the airport passed to the DCA in November 1948.

The following aviation infrastructure development occurred during the subsequent years:

- **1952** – a gravel runway was constructed in the 11/29 direction (914m);

- **1962** – new operational procedures were introduced in 1962 using three runway directions (11/29, 18/36 and 05/23). In addition, a second 1190 metre runway was constructed also in the 11/29 direction. The centre runway (11C/29C) was strengthened to F27 standard for operations from Sea Venom jets;
- **1965** – installation of runway lighting;
- **1970** – commissioning of the current control tower;
- **1974** – closure of the 05/23 runway;
- **1980** – relinquishment of the last of the RAAF land to Bankstown Airport and introduction of General Aviation Airport Procedures (GAAP); and
- **1988** – transfer of airport ownership to the Federal Airports Corporation (FAC) on 1 January, 1988.

By the time that Bankstown Airport transferred to the FAC in 1988, it had grown into Australia's premier GA airport, accommodating more than 400,000 aircraft movements per annum. As the airport was still in government ownership however, it was still relatively immature from a stand-alone business/commercial perspective.

7.3 FAC to Bankstown Airport Limited

Under the FAC regime, Bankstown, Camden and Hoxton Park Airports were managed as a single business unit to achieve economies of scale in management. The FAC era represented the first real attempt to run Bankstown Airport (together with Camden and Hoxton Park) as a stand-alone business. During the FAC period, major activities and developments included:

- **1988 to 1998** – leasing of various land areas and some buildings for commercial activities
- **1991** – development of first commercial office/warehouse complex known as Nabberly House on Marion Street;
- **1993** – conversion of pilot's briefing office to a passenger terminal for use by regional airlines and charter operators;
- **1993** – installation of a Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI) system on runway 11C/29C

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- **1994** – closure of a grass runway parallel to the existing Runway 18/36;
- **1997** – expansion of aircraft parking aprons on the northern side of the airport;
- **1997** – development of the loop taxiway connecting Runway 11R/29L to Runway 11L/29R at the eastern end;
- **1998** – further property development (eg Hawker Pacific development on Airport Avenue); and
- **1998** – ownership transferred to Sydney Airports Corporation Limited (SACL).

From a commercial perspective, by the end of the FAC period, Bankstown Airport had been transformed from an airport losing more than \$1.5m per annum (in 1989 dollars) into a profitable aviation and property management and development business, able to invest in both aviation infrastructure and the growth of its business.

7.4 BAL to Today

In 1998, ownership of Bankstown Airport was transferred from the FAC to SACL, as part of the winding-up of the FAC following the privatisation of its non-Sydney Basin airports. The move resulted in an even greater focus on the development of Bankstown Airport as a business. The following is the chronology of control, management and activity on the Airport from 1998:

- **1998** – transfer, on 1 July, of the ownership of the airport to Bankstown Airport Limited a wholly owned subsidiary of Sydney Airports Corporation Limited (SACL);
- **2000** – widening on the northern taxiway;
- **2000** – Bankstown Airport fulfilled its role as the main general aviation airport during the Sydney Olympic Games;
- **2001** – separation of BAL from SACL. BAL becomes a “stand alone” entity wholly owned by the Commonwealth; and
- **2003** – sale of BAL to the BaCH Consortium on 15 December.

In the lead-up to its privatisation in 2003, Bankstown Airport had further evolved as a commercial enterprise able to invest in infrastructure and the growth of the business.