FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:
AIR TRAFFIC FLOW MANAGEMENT

Airservices uses an Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFM) system called Harmony to provide more fuel efficient operations for airlines and to reduce aviation’s impact on the environment.

WHAT IS HARMONY?

Harmony is the name of an ATFM tool that manages static and real-time data exchange to provide airlines, airports and Airservices with an enhanced situational awareness capability.

It supports pre-tactical operational demand-capacity planning, including through traffic management initiatives, e.g. a Ground Delay Program (GDP).

Harmony helps achieve a balance between capacity at an airport and air traffic demand throughout the different ATFM phases while also striving to reduce operational variability by enabling greater forward predictability and regularity of air traffic sequences.

In the pre-tactical ATFM phase (usually the day before operation) Harmony uses airline and airport schedule information to analyse demand against forecast capacity.

During tactical operations (usually the day of the operation) Harmony provides real-time updates to the ATFM situation.

Further information is available on the Airservices website: www.airservicesaustralia.com/services/air-traffic-flow-management

HOW ARE INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS HANDLED IN HARMONY?

Ground delays are not applied to international or long haul domestic flights (i.e. from Perth). When Harmony is ‘revised’, e.g. due to unforeseen circumstances such as a weather event, it will populate the arrival sequence based on Estimated Times of Arrival of airborne aircraft.

Therefore, international or long haul domestic flights effectively get priority in the Harmony sequence over aircraft that have not yet departed.
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN DEMAND EXCEEDS CAPACITY?

Where forecast demand exceeds an airport’s capacity, Airservices uses GDPs as a demand-capacity management plan.

GDPs establish greater tactical predictability and provide a more cost-effective means of tackling this imbalance, given a delay taken at a departure gate is less of a cost imposition on an airline or aircraft operator than conducting airborne holding.

A GDP allocates departure gate delays to the pool of flights bound for a congested airport in order to resolve projected airborne delays resulting from a demand-capacity imbalance.

ARE INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS EXEMPT FROM GDPS?

While international flights en-route to Australia and long haul domestic flights are part of the demand at GDP airports, are included in the slot allocation, and are provided with ATFM Calculated Off Blocks Times (COBTs), they are exempt from delays (referred to by the NOC as ‘Delay Exempt’).

International flights coming to Australia are also delay exempt and are not required to depart in accordance with their ATFM COBT.

HOW DO SLOT MANAGEMENT AND SCHEDULE COORDINATION WORK AT SYDNEY'S KINGFORD SMITH INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (KSA)?

Slot management at KSA is governed by the Commonwealth Sydney Airport Demand Management Act 1997 (the Act). The Act establishes a regime intended to control the scheduled movement times of airlines so that no more than 80 runway movements occur in any hour (the Sydney Airport Slot Management Scheme 2013).

Special provisions in the legislative regime include the 80 per hour movement cap; guaranteed slots for New South Wales (NSW) regional services; access for new entrants; the ‘Size of Aircraft’ test and the compliance regime to encourage timely performance.

Airservices is not responsible for schedule coordination at Sydney Airport. Refer to AIP ENR 1.9 for applicable contact details.