

Objection to Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley Resort – Modification 4 of MP06_0310 – helicopter movements

I totally object to Modification 4 of MP06_0310.

I am a keen bushwalker, and a resident of the Lower Blue Mountains. The proposal will affect me personally on both those aspects.

As a bushwalker I have visited the Gardens of Stone region numerous times during the last 30 years, and have enjoyed exploring this part of the World Heritage Area and State Conservation Area. The natural beauty (including pagodas, streams, waterfalls and swamps) and wilderness, (uninterrupted by the excessive number of helicopter movements now being proposed by Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort), need to be protected for current and future generations. You would know that community health is enhanced by quiet recreation in nature and the benefits for our mental health. It is extremely short sighted to introduce helicopter noise which will drive other visitors away from enjoying this natural wonder. There is no valid reason to change the Wolgan Valley's character in this way.

As a lower Blue Mountains resident I am dismayed by the imposition of these excessive numbers of helicopter flights which from June 2026 due to Western Sydney Airport airspace restrictions, will force helicopters to fly near minimum altitudes to avoid the commercial airspace ceiling. This will concentrate the noise from 30 daily helicopter movements to and from the Emirates Resort when flying over lower Blue Mountains townships and the World Heritage Area, degrading acoustic amenity, and affecting our lives in other detrimental ways. It adds insult to injury!

I request that the Department refuses the modification because the Wolgan Road is re-opening in August 2026 and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has not been conducted for high numbers of helicopter flights impacting on sensitive park areas.

Specific reasons for my request to refuse this proposal and my objections:

1. The Proposal is Unnecessary (The Wolgan Gap Road is re-opening)

There is no justification for 210 helicopter flights per week. The Wolgan Gap Road is only temporarily closed, and is scheduled to reopen to 2WD traffic by August 2026 (Lithgow Mercury, 7 May 2026). The road is safe enough for heavy truck logistics (linen, food, renovation materials), and safe enough for guests in 2WD vehicles. This 'modification' is an attempt to make a permanent 'fix' for a very temporary problem. I cannot see Emirates reducing flight frequencies once the road is opened in August 2026.

2. Excessive Flight Volume

The original approval allowed only 4 flights per week, there is no valid reason to increase this exponentially to 210 flights per week (30 per day) which effectively transforms a private resort helipad into a busy commercial heliport, which was never the intent of the original development, and was not approved.

The proposal is really for a private heliport, and therefore requires rigorous Environmental Impact Statement processes for the frequent flights which will impact sensitive park areas, visitors and the lower Blue Mountains.

3. Flawed Noise Assessments

It is totally unacceptable for the noise reports provided by the resort to be using obsolete data that predates the creation of the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area (SCA) and for the assessment to ignore "sensitive receivers" like hikers and campers. Unlike residents, visitors to the Gardens of Stone don't have walls and can't install double-glazing to block out helicopter rotor noise.

Studies (like those from the US Forest Service) show that park users are 10dB(A) less tolerant of aircraft noise than people in residential areas. Due to a quiet ambience, parks are visited for peace and quiet, not the extreme noise caused by helicopters.

4. Impact on Public Investment and Tourism

You would be aware that the NSW Government is investing \$50 million into the Gardens of Stone SCA for walking tracks, lookouts and campgrounds, as well as the other inappropriate 'glamping' resorts recently proposed in pagoda landscapes. You would also know that constant helicopter noise from the excessive flight movements proposed will degrade these public assets, ruin the "peace and quiet" visitors expect, and is likely to lead to a net economic loss for the region's tourism industry. The majority of park visitors won't come to the Gardens of Stone once it has a reputation for constant helicopter noise.

5. Environmental impacts disregarded

Why has there been no consideration in the modification of the adverse impacts of the proposed helicopter overflights above Newnes Plateau passing directly over the Pagoda Walk, a public camping ground on the walk, Birds Rock Lookout and Forest Camp which will ruin the acoustic amenity of these high use visitor areas?

The proponent's report is totally flawed as it understates the impacted World Heritage Area by nearly half (by omitting the Gardens of Stone National Park from the property).

6. Lack of Trust and Accountability

Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort has a history of unfulfilled obligations, specifically regarding land exchanges with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) that have been outstanding since 2007.

As mentioned before, there is no guarantee that this "temporary" increase in flights won't become a permanent fixture once established. In fact, it's likely that the transport to the resort by helicopter will be permanent, once established.

What has changed? - the resort has operated successfully without this proposal for a heliport by stealth!

7. Safety Concerns

This flawed proposal lacks a rigorous risk assessment regarding potential mid-air collisions, particularly given the high elevation of the Newnes Plateau, the frequency

of the proposed flights and use of one flight approach path in and out of the resort.

8. Helicopter noise concentration in the lower Blue Mountains

This is rubbing salt into the wound – I totally object to the intensified noise footprint caused by the ‘vertical sandwich’ of the June 2026 WSI airspace design. The rising terrain between Glenbrook and Springwood will force helicopters to fly at or near legal minimum altitudes to avoid commercial flight paths. This will concentrate the noise of 30 daily Emirates helicopter movements directly over lower Blue Mountains townships (including mine) and the World Heritage National Park, significantly degrading the acoustic amenity of the region.