

Providing a clarifying response to a question asked by Senator Mackenzie at the Public Hearing of the Senate Inquiry into Aircraft Noise and Mitigation, held at the Q Theatre, Joan Sutherland Centre, Penrith on Friday 9th August 2024.

The question was about a statement made in the Blue Mountains Residents submission, asking for clarification as to the meaning of the statement which occurs in the second paragraph of the Introduction – “WSA is an airport in entirely the wrong place.”

I am concerned that my response to the question may have been misunderstood and I was aware that at the time it was incomplete. I would like to revisit my response in a more specific and complete way.

I responded by saying that the placement of the Airport at Badgerys Creek was predicated on a model designed in the 1980’s and in the 30 years since 1980 Western Sydney had seen a massive growth in residential development, such that by 2016 the areas that would have perhaps been rural with minimal residences such as St Clair (now proposed to be under a flight path) are now fully occupied.

Between 1980 and 2016 successive Governments made decisions to not pursue the building of a second airport in Western Sydney and the result has been that residential development in Western Sydney continued unabated. The 2016 decision to build the airport at Badgerys Creek did not take into consideration the residential development of Western Sydney.

Then in 2016 when the Federal Government decided they would build the second airport and they determined to build at Badgerys Creek they also decided to separate the Construction EIS from the Flight Path EIS – the result being runways were built with an orientation that has also predetermined departure and landing flight paths – had this not been done then the aircraft noise issue would have come to light much sooner and perhaps a different site for the airport would have eventuated.

There were other things that happened in those 30 intervening years that also were a background to the statement made in the submission and they are:

- 2001 UNESCO determined the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area – which now lies 10 kms from the airport. The original granting of the WHA was partially done on the guarantee from the Australian Federal Government that an airport would not be built at Badgerys Creek.
- There are already 5 airports that currently operate in the Sydney Basin – Kingsford Smith Airport; Camden Airport, Bankstown Airport and Richmond Airforce Base these airports have all seen growth and expansion, except perhaps Richmond Airforce Base, and they all lay claim to airspace in Sydney Basin which now has to be shared with Western Sydney Airport.
- Effect of the airport on tourism, especially in the Blue Mountains, will devastate the local small business economy. Western Sydney Airport will be a visual and noise nightmare for the tourist industry in the Blue Mountains that relies on nature-based activities.

This is why the WSA is an airport in entirely the wrong place.

Thankyou.