



SUBMISSION 4

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The Secretary
Public Works Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Sirs

Submission re Proposal for Williamtown Air Force Base Redevelopment

It has been stated in the Draft EIS by the company, URS on the introduction of the Hawk fighter/trainer, that Williamtown Base was chosen for the training program "..... as it is strategically located in accordance with defence policy." As a member of the Committee formed to discuss Council policies in relation to Williamtown and the Salt Ash Weapons Range, I have repeatedly tried to ascertain what these policies are and how exactly they are determined, with little success. It appears that few people seem to know and those who do know are certainly not going to disseminate this knowledge." Damn the public!" appears to be the attitude. We are left wondering what it is that the Government wants to spend \$149,000,000 on whilst the rest of the population have to put up with a desperate shortage of necessary public support in the way of Police, Healthcare, Education, etc.etc. Only last week the local school was vandalised and torched, with one of my granddaughters having her personal possessions destroyed because the governments cannot afford the police we are so desperately short of.

Perhaps we should examine the exact nature of the necessity of the expenditure. From my enquiries I managed to elicit ONE answer that addressed the issue. That the location of the training base is an enticement to all candidates applying for the role of pilots in the defence scheme. In other words THE GOVERNMENT IS SPENDING 149 MILLION DOLLARS TO RECRUIT MORE TRAINEE PILOTS INTO A SCHEME THAT HAS NEVER BEEN SERIOUSLY USED EVER SINCE ITS INCEPTION MORE THAN 20 YEARS AGO. Not only are the manoeuvres grossly out-dated (in fact suicidal in the Gulf War) but bombing is an attack weapon NOT defence so why does it come under the heading of Defence Department at all? Over the years the expenditure on this useless training has been absolutely colossal and the side-effects have been horrendous putting everybody's health at risk all around the shire of Port Stephens from poisonous fallout, chemical pollution from the planes themselves and ear-shattering noise from the manoeuvres to add to the annoyance of the inhabitants in this area.

As there is absolutely no connection between the RAAF Hornet strike aircraft and the intended coastal early warning radar patrol command why are they even considering stationing both commands on the same base, being situated as it is 3,000kms from the most likely entry for terrorist invasion into our country and a prime target for any kind of terrorist organisation such as Al Quaida, Iraq or otherwise.

This whole redevelopment application must only be seen by any clear-minded thinker to be an attempt by the RAAF to seize a stranglehold on as much of the base as possible so as to eliminate any possible encroachment of the much more sensible use of the base for commercial aviation. onto its own land in the fear of being diverted to a more sane area closer to where the possibility of terrorism attack might erupt, nearly 3,000 kilometres away to the North and West. (This would be the most likely area of entry from any kind of potential terrorist attack dismissing any possibilities of New Zealand and Antarctica becoming belligerent.)

Why therefore are we stationing an early radar warning system almost half a world away from the most vulnerable coast of our country. It has been suggested that should we be invaded from that area the Hornets stationed at Williamtown would have to refuel at least SEVEN times to get there and they would be refuelled in the air by huge, slow flying tankers. It doesn't take much imagination to visualise the horrific situation that should one of these combinations of 'child suckling' pairs be struck by an incendiary cannon shell or a ballistic missile it would create a holocaust several miles wide of flaming white hot chunks of metal raining down on the unfortunate victims below, and thus the defence force would be reduced by two very expensive aircraft not to mention innocent casualties and fatalities.

It may be reasonably assumed that the early warning radar planes would have to fly that extra 3,000 kilometres every time it takes up station on its surveillance course. These are very large planes and most assuredly would be very expensive to fuel. Is this then not another reason for stationing them much closer to the obvious area of potential invasion.

On a more positive note, the government has two warring factions against it in relation to aircraft noise. On the one hand the residents of the Sydney suburbs in close relation to Sydney Airport and on the other the residents of Port Stephens in relation to military aircraft practice noise. Why not solve the two problems in one fell swoop and use the money to develop Williamtown into Sydney's second airport in much the same way that Gatwick was developed from a little flying field just after the war into London's second airport which now has a enormous infrastructure of surrounding buildings containing thousands of staff supporting the passenger and freight services applicable to a very active transport centre. Instead of an air base dedicated to nothing but death and destruction the airport could be vital to reducing the load on Sydney Airport and supplying lifelines to the not inconsiderable tourist Mecca of the North Coast and increasing the export potential of the hospitality industry! In that way two long-standing problems could be eliminated.

Consider this! What is wrong with building the infrastructure for the early warning system where it's most needed, and not nearly so expensive - for example Amberley or Tindal, and use the surplus of the 149 million dollars to upgrade Williamtown to international airport standards, and at the same time improving the quality of life for local residents, vastly increasing employment around the area, strengthening the defence of our country by relocating the defence armoury to an area close to our most vulnerable coastline and not where the defence force wants it to be and boosting the support of one of our most valuable exports - our tourist industry.

Apart from our most non-productive public service component how can anyone possibly disagree with that?

Yours faithfully
E. Timothy R. Polhill