

Submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Standing Committee 2006 Inquiry into the 1996 Airports Act

With the adverse impacts of human activity regularly exceeding the natural capital of planet Earth to repair, it is perhaps time that we re-evaluated each piece of legislation on sustainability principles if the majority of humanity presently alive are to survive.

Whether we agree or disagree with Lovelock's prediction of a correction in human population this century from near 7,000 million, to 500 million, it would seem unlikely that the world's foremost experts would be 'out' in their calculations by a factor of 14?

To continue with policies that embrace unsustainable annual 'growth targets' set under Australia's OECD membership would seem illogical in a situation where reducing rather than growing each human's planetary impacts would seem to make more sense.

Extremes of temperature, drought, salinity, acidity, topsoil loss, global heating, global dimming, peak oil, fossil fuel depletion, greenhouse effects of human generated carbon emissions, all driven by human activity and the resulting destructive impacts of extreme weather events and species extinction, are all indicators of the effects of past policies

1. The 1996 Airports Act has failed in that it has not put into legislation the land use planning and compatibility with adjoining communities and the rights and protections promised to the community in the Perth Airport Master Plan
2. High conservation lands surplus to airfield requirements and containing regionally significant rare floral and faunal suites of plants and animals with way below sustainable percentages of original extent presently in reserve, have and will be lost, and, experts agree, should not have formed part of a commercial Perth airport lease.
3. Non Aviation related development that is incompatible with the needs, land uses and amenity of surrounding communities and of Local and State (WA) Government are not acceptable, should not have been and must not be approved in the future.
4. Industries that produce toxic/noxious emissions and that otherwise degrade the local amenity must not be permitted on airport land – surrounding communities already suffer from the toxic emissions from aircraft, and, do not deserve the double whammy of toxic synergies of aircraft/industrial emissions; a future James Hardie?
5. An independently administered Airport Environmental Consultation Group meeting monthly with full minutes and powers to approve, disapprove or veto plans for airport development, must be fully funded and properly constituted.
6. An Airports Act is required that has fully enforceable penalty provisions against the airport lessee with third party stakeholders empowered to take action under the Administrative Appeals Tribunal system rather than to be denied standing.

Without these significant changes to the Airports Act 1996 the inevitable outcome will be more of the same since the privatization of Perth airport; further loss of the 'green ocean', of floral and faunal corridors, loss of biodiversity and further species extinction.

As members of this nation and of the world community we have to assess whether we can 'afford' for this to continue, in the name of unsustainable 'progress' and 'development' or, make the changes in our legislation to afford protection.

Australians, as members of one of the world's more affluent yet ecologically fragile countries we have the power (in our incremental decisions) to begin the changes needed to avert Lovelock's dire prediction for the bulk of humanity.

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*James Lovelock's; 'The Revenge of Gaia'