

**Submission
No 17**

INQUIRY INTO HEALTH IMPACTS OF AIR POLLUTION IN THE SYDNEY BASIN

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Summary

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Badgerys Creek Airport: Air Quality & Health Implications

**SUBMISSION TO THE NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
INQUIRY INTO THE HEALTH IMPACTS OF AIR
POLLUTION IN THE SYDNEY BASIN**



Submission By:

The Western Sydney Alliance

4 August 2006

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FOREWORD ...

The Western Sydney Alliance comprises the Mayors, Councils and communities of eight Western and Southwestern Sydney Councils. Members of the Alliance include Blacktown City Council, Camden Council, Campbelltown City Council, Fairfield City Council, Holroyd City Council, Parramatta City Council, Penrith City Council, and Wollondilly Shire Council.

The Alliance was formed some nine years ago to deal with a number of serious concerns regarding the proposed development of a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek, or elsewhere within the Sydney basin.

Among other serious concerns, the Alliance believes that such a development would represent a very major threat to air quality, and therefore to the health and well being of communities in Sydney's West and Southwest.

This submission to the New South Wales Legislative Council Inquiry into the Health Impacts of Air Pollution in the Sydney Basin has been prepared by the Western Sydney Alliance, taking into account expert input in the areas of transport, health and the environment commissioned by the Alliance, and provided by the following organisations:



World Health Organisation
Collaborating Centre
University of Western Sydney

Child & Associates



Consultants in Transport, Energy & Environment

The Alliance would be pleased to provide to the Inquiry and its Committee Members any further information or details in support of this submission that may be of interest or value.

SUMMARY OF THIS SUBMISSION

This document presents a submission from the Western Sydney Alliance to the NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into the Health Impacts of Air Pollution in the Sydney Basin. The key aspects of this submission are:

1. Sydney is located in a geographic basin with the very clearly demonstrated characteristic of retaining air pollutants generated within that basin. Exhaust emissions from motor vehicles have been shown to be the primary contributor to air pollution within the Sydney basin.
2. The contamination of urban air by pollutants, in particular those generated by motor vehicles, has been demonstrated beyond any doubt to increase the incidence, and the very significant cost to the community, of a number of harmful medical conditions, including respiratory illnesses such as asthma, coronary illness, cancers including childhood leukemia's, and others.
3. Ambient air in Western and Southwestern Sydney has been shown to be more heavily contaminated than air in other parts of the Sydney basin, as a consequence of the physical characteristics of that basin.
4. Air quality, and therefore health, in Western and Southwestern Sydney is further threatened by the reliance of current and projected residential and other populations on unsustainable transport systems, involving an over-dependence on private motor vehicle use – an over-dependence exacerbated by a chronic political disinterest, at all levels, in the provision of more sustainable public transport systems, and the infrastructure upon which such systems can be based.
5. The development of a second major airport at Badgerys Creek, or elsewhere within the Sydney basin, has been demonstrated to be unsustainable – particularly in respect of the very significant increases in private motor vehicle use and associated air pollution that such an airport would generate, given current and projected ground transport practices.
6. Despite the demonstrated unsustainability of the Badgerys Creek Airport proposal, the Commonwealth – regardless of repeated public statements to the contrary – continues to hold the Badgerys Creek formally reserved for future airport use.

7. The Badgerys Creek site is the Federal Government's only developed option to provide for future airport capacity in the Sydney region, if and more realistically when such capacity is required.
8. To this time, no meaningful effort has been made to examine or identify more sustainable alternative future airport sites outside the Sydney basin, or to investigate and plan for the provision of alternative transport infrastructure, including substantially upgraded intra-city public transport systems, and innovative and high speed, non-road based, inter-regional and interstate ground transport systems.
9. The uncertainty caused by the continued retention of the Badgerys Creek site for future airport use, particularly given the Federal Government's public statements that such an outcome will not eventuate, is a major and increasingly serious impediment to the planning and delivery of a sustainable future for the people of Western and South Western Sydney.
10. In the view of the Alliance, the ongoing retention of the Badgerys Creek by the Commonwealth means one of two inevitable, and equally unacceptable outcomes:
 - The ultimate development, by default, of a demand driven "overflow" airport, built "on the cheap" and in the absence of a sustainable ground transport matrix, or
 - The ultimate realisation of the asset by the Commonwealth through effective sale at its maximum potential value for residential housing development, once again in the absence of a sustainable, ground transport matrix.
11. In terms of air quality and health impacts, and other responsible social and environmental impacts, neither outcome is acceptable. For acceptable air quality and health conditions to be delivered, certainty regarding the future of the Badgerys Creek site must be provided.
12. Accordingly, the central conclusions of this submission are that:
 - the current political disingenuity and uncertainty surrounding the continued retention by the Commonwealth of the Badgerys Creek site for future airport use must be resolved as a matter of urgency, and
 - that a sustainable future use for the site must be determined as a matter of priority, and that this process must involve Federal, State and Local Governments, and the communities at immediate interest.

1 INTRODUCTION

The proposal to build a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek in Western Sydney had its general origins in a number of preliminary studies in the 1970's, and its more specific grounding in the site selection EIS process competed in 1985.

The question of Sydney's long term airport capacity was then impacted by the decision of the Hawke Federal Government to construct a third runway at Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport – a project that was competed in 1994.

The Badgerys Creek Airport proposal then re-emerged in the years leading up to the Sydney 2000 Olympics, on the premise that without a second major airport, Sydney would not be able to cope with the aircraft and passenger movements that the Games would generate.

During the subsequent assessment process, an extensive catalogue of negative and very serious environmental and social impacts were identified in full in submissions made by the Western Sydney Alliance, the NSW Government, and many others to the formal EIS process.

The overwhelming majority of the more than 20,000 submissions made to the Badgerys Creek EIS process expressed very strong opposition to the airport proposal.

It was, and remains, the view of the Alliance that a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek would not solve any of the core social and environmental problems associated with Sydney's existing airport, but would in fact simply duplicate the negative impacts of that airport on young and vulnerable communities in Western and Southwestern Sydney, in an at least equally sensitive environment.

In December 2000, following a lengthy and controversial EIS process, the Commonwealth Government announced that no immediate action would be taken regarding the development of a second Sydney airport, and that the matter would be deferred for further consideration in 2005.

Since that time, Kingsford Smith Airport (KSA) has been privatised. The terms of the privatisation arrangement give the new private operator, Macquarie Airports, first right of refusal on the operation of any second airport to be constructed within 100 kilometres of Sydney.

The issue of Sydney's future airport capacity, and that of the 1800 hectare Badgerys Creek site reserved by the Federal Government to provide future airport capacity, remains unresolved.

This submission deals with the very serious potential implications of this hiatus for air quality in the Sydney basin, in particular for the western and southwestern parts of that basin, and therefore for the health of people living in Sydney's west and southwest now – and in the future.

2 THE SYDNEY BASIN

In 2003/04, during the preparation of the Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney, the then NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR) prepared and released the discussion paper "Regional Air Quality and Greenhouse Issues Affecting Development of North West and South West Sectors". The paper is currently accessible through the NSW Department of Planning web-site.

The paper provides an effective description of the particular climatic and geographic factors that affect the movement of air, and air pollution, in Western and Southwestern Sydney.

That description is as follows:

The Sydney region is a basin-like structure bounded by elevated terrain to the north, west and south;

- The spatial pattern of air quality is determined by the action of wind regimes and how they interact with the topography. Air movements are affected by gradient winds (movements caused by high and low pressure systems), the sea breeze, and drainage flows (movements of cool air down slopes);
- The characteristics of sea breeze are of particular importance for transporting elevated concentrations of ozone. Air quality data shows that the highest levels of ozone often occur in the Hawkesbury basin, and often under the influence of the sea breeze. In the Sydney basin the sea breeze is generally northeasterly to easterly, and elevated concentrations of ozone within the sea breeze are observed in the northwest, west and southwest of that basin.
- For air quality purposes, it is useful to consider the Sydney region as having three sub-regions – east, northwest and southwest. These areas all interact and polluted air moves between them during the course of the day. There is also the potential for inter-regional air movements that could impact on air quality between Sydney and the Illawarra, and Sydney and the Lower Hunter.

This summary repeated the more detailed analysis that was contained in the "Metropolitan Air Quality Study" (MAQS) completed by the NSW Environment Protection Authority in 1995.

The Metropolitan Air Quality Study also confirmed that Western and Southwestern Sydney were particularly susceptible to episodes of poor air quality, mainly due to photochemical air pollution.

Oxides of nitrogen ("NOX") are one of the key contributors to photochemical air pollution – or "smog". The 2003/03 DIPNR paper "Regional Air Quality and Greenhouse Issues Affecting Development of

North West and South West Sectors" provided the following breakdown of the sources of NOX in Sydney, and in Western Sydney:

Table 1: Sources of NOX Pollution in Sydney & Western Sydney

Source	Sydney Region	Western Sydney Region
Domestic/Commercial	6%	8%
Industry	18%	7%
Motor Vehicle	73%	85%
Other Mobile	3%	-

The same paper confirmed that motor vehicles were the major source of hydrocarbon pollution in Sydney's air, and that the effect was greater in Western Sydney than in other areas.

Sydney is located in a geographic basin with the very clearly demonstrated characteristic of retaining air pollutants generated within that basin. Exhaust emissions from motor vehicles have been shown to be the primary contributor to air pollution within the Sydney basin.

3 AIR POLLUTION & HEALTH

3.1 THE LINK BETWEEN AIR POLLUTION & HEALTH

The impacts of poor air quality on community health have been extensively studied throughout the world. It is now generally accepted that elevated levels of air pollution contribute to increases in the incidence and severity of respiratory and heart illness, and have been identified as a cause of some cancers, including a number of childhood leukemia's.

In 2005, the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) published the report "Air Pollution Economics: Health Costs of Air Pollution in the Greater Sydney Metropolitan Region". The report provides a very detailed analysis of air pollution, and its impacts on public health.

The DEC report identified a number of individual air pollutants that are present in the air in Western and Southwestern Sydney, and summarised the health effects of these pollutants.

Airborne Particulates: increases in cardiac and respiratory mortality; increased admission to casualty rooms and hospitals for the treatment of respiratory and cardiovascular conditions; increased incidence of acute bronchitis in adults and children; increased prevalence and exacerbations of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) in adults and children; asthma attacks in adults and children; reduced lung function.

Nitrogen Dioxide: increased mortality; impaired lung function; impaired respiratory defence mechanisms, leading to increased susceptibility to infections; increased respiratory disease in children.

Carbon Monoxide: increased rates of mortality, especially among those with cardiovascular disease; aggravation of cardiovascular disease and chest pain; nausea; headache; fatigue.

Ozone: increased mortality; acute respiratory problems; chest constrictions and pain; increases in the incidence and severity of asthma attacks; increases in asthma and respiratory related casualty room visits and hospitalisations; coughing and wheezing; eye irritation; headache.

Air Toxics:

Benzene: leukemia, long term harm to the immune system; skin and eye irritations; drowsiness; dizziness; headaches.

Toluene: Central nervous system (CNS) dysfunction; narcosis; light headedness.

Xylene: inflammation of the respiratory tract; eye irritation; headaches, dizziness, fatigue, tremors, and coordination difficulties; impaired pulmonary function.

1,3 –butadiene: cancer; eye, nose and throat irritations.

PAH's: cancer; kidney and liver damage; respiratory irritation; exacerbation of asthma; chronic bronchitis; coughing and throat irritations.

3.2 THE HEALTH RELATED COSTS OF AIR POLLUTION

The 2005 DEC report referred to above provided a contemporary update of the very extensive body of research, built up over many decades, identifying the unquestionable link between the degradation of urban air quality by pollutant chemicals, and a very wide range of negative health impacts.

The restatement of that very salutary fact, while not presenting any really new knowledge, was very timely in terms of the situation in Western and Southwestern Sydney generally, and the concerns expressed in this submission regarding the unresolved Badgerys Creek Airport matter in particular.

The report also included a quantification of the cost to the health system of declining health directly linked to urban air pollution.

The cost impact of air pollution in Sydney is effectively summarised by the following direct quotation from the report:

"at the average levels of ambient particulate pollution that occurred across the Greater Sydney Metropolitan Region (GMR) from 2000 to 2002, the total health cost of annual emissions of common ambient air pollutants from all sources in the GMR were conservatively estimated to be between \$1 billion and \$8.4 billion per annum. This is equivalent to between 0.4% and 3.4% of the gross state product".

The contamination of urban air by pollutants, in particular those generated by motor vehicles, has been demonstrated beyond any doubt to increase the incidence, and the very significant cost to the community, of a number of harmful medical conditions, including respiratory illnesses such as asthma, coronary illness, cancers including childhood leukemia's, and others.

4 AIR QUALITY IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Sydney is a large, sprawling city, with a very heavy dependence on private motor vehicle use. Sydney, as pointed out above, is also a city located within a classical "pollution basin", where air pollutants from transport and other sources tend to be trapped by prevailing geographic and meteorological conditions.

Elevated levels of air pollution are known to cause unacceptable increases in the incidence of many illnesses, including respiratory, coronary, cancer and other very serious conditions.

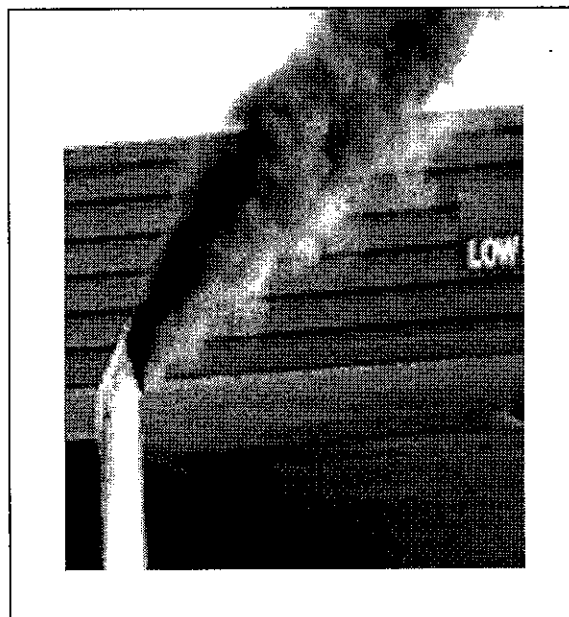


Figure 1 – Motor Vehicle Sourced Pollution

Of great concern, and of particular relevance to this submission, is the fact that levels of air pollution are greater in Western and Southwestern Sydney than in other parts of the basin.

Sydney already experiences regular exceedances of established air quality goals, largely as a consequence of the city's high and increasing dependence on private road transport, coupled with the natural tendency of the Sydney basin to "trap" and retain air pollution.

Ozone is a harmful urban air pollutant, generated by the collective impact of other air pollutants, including oxides of nitrogen (NOX) in what is known as photochemical smog. Ozone causes increases in respiratory and other illnesses. Ozone is also an effective “marker” for urban air pollution and smog levels. Fine particle pollution, generated to a large extent by road transport sources, is of increasing concern internationally. It has been linked to respiratory and coronary conditions, and to cancer. The New South Wales State of the Environment Report 2003 shows that Sydney experiences regular exceedances of established air quality goals and regulations for both ozone and fine particle pollution. These exceedances are illustrated in Figures 2 and 3 below, both sourced from the 2003 Report.

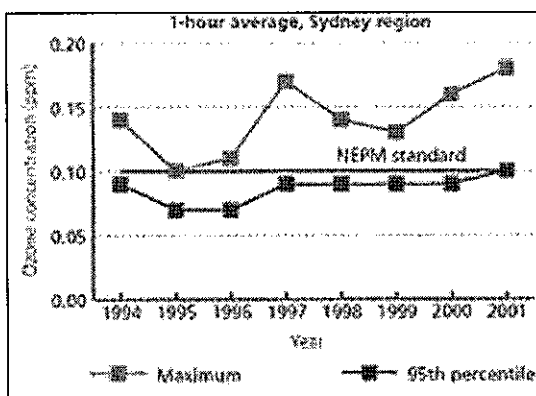


Figure 2 – Ozone Pollution Levels

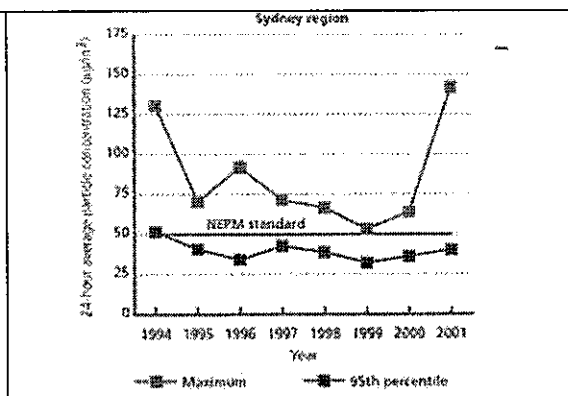


Figure 3 – Fine Particle Pollution Levels

The worst impact of air pollution in Sydney is felt in the western and southwestern suburbs. Figure 4 below, based on information presented in the 2003 NSW State of the Environment Report, shows typical concentrations of ozone within the Sydney basin.

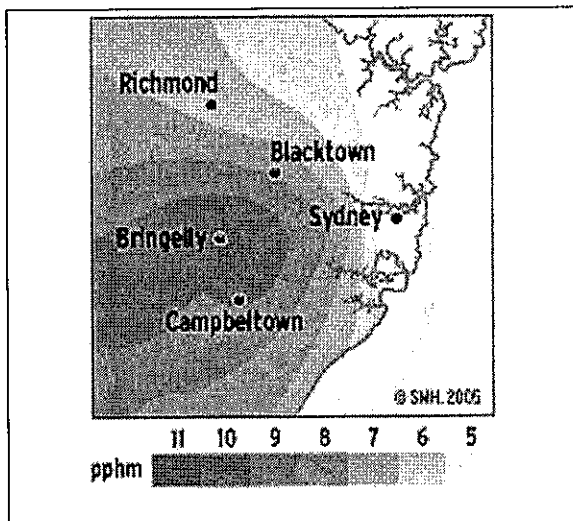


Figure 4 – Ozone Distribution in Sydney

The graphic used is reproduced with the generous permission of the Sydney Morning Herald, and Fairfax Newspapers.

In a City where air pollution is already an acknowledged problem generally, this diagram shows that pollution levels are worst in Sydney’s western and southwestern suburbs.

The worst impacts occur over the Bringelly, and Badgerys Creek areas - in exactly the area currently reserved for Sydney’s second airport.

Air and road transport activity associated with a major airport would result in a further unacceptable and unsustainable deterioration in air quality in Western and Southwestern Sydney, in areas where significant air quality problems already exist.

From an air quality perspective, Badgerys Creek is a completely inappropriate site for a second Sydney airport, and for the significant increases in road transport generated exhaust emissions that would result from such a development.

The reality is that great care will need to be taken during any future development in or impacting upon Western and Southwestern Sydney, including residential and commercial development with an undue reliance on private motor vehicle use, to ensure that air pollution levels are held within safe and acceptable limits, and that air pollution does not in fact become a limiting factor on future growth and development in the region.

Ambient air in Western and Southwestern Sydney has been shown to be more heavily contaminated than air in other parts of the Sydney basin, as a consequence of the physical characteristics of that basin.

5 THE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGE

5.1 PRIVATE MOTOR VEHICLE USE

Sydney confronts a major transport and transport infrastructure challenge - challenge that is considered in some quarters to be approaching crisis proportions.

The key element of this challenge is to reverse the high and increasing level of dependence and reliance throughout Sydney on private motor vehicle use.

The latest available data indicates that the average private motor vehicle trip in Sydney involves just 1.3 passengers, down from a figure of 1.7 passengers per trip less than ten years ago.

These statistics reflect the reduced effectiveness and utilisation of existing non private vehicle transport modes and options in Sydney, and the remorseless impact of the failure of successive governments to invest, or facilitate investment, in other than road based transport systems.

At the 2004 Sydney Futures Forum, hosted by the NSW Government, the then NSW Sustainability Commissioner, Professor Peter Newman, made the following observations:

"The global oil depletion curves that are now being seen and appearing in newspapers have been around in journals for 20 years, but the same story is coming out time and again: We are facing a crisis. We cannot continue to assume oil into the long-term future, not in the same way Our cities in Australia are up there amongst the world's worst in terms of per capita

transport energy use and oil use. The European cities, the wealthy Asian cities, are half to a quarter of what we use "

"We really need to overcome automobile dependence as a key part of any transport planning future You cannot have great cities without great transport access "

"Any city that is predominantly car dependent will be at a major disadvantage in the 21st century"

"If you have a city that is based around automobiles and all of your movement time is spent in a car, you will develop problems of obesity and lack of identity"

An second Sydney airport, or any other development that would rely almost entirely on private motor vehicle transport - as would be the case at Badgerys Creek - would cause significant increases in air pollution, and would trigger the associated health impacts described in this submission.

5.2 AIRPORTS & AVIATION

There is every indication that Sydney's existing airports will in future become capacity constrained, which suggests that a sustainable provision for future additional airport capacity should be made.

From an air quality and health perspective, and for many other reasons, the contingency provision for that additional capacity should be made outside the Sydney basin.

Kingsford Smith Airport

The Sydney Airport Master Plan was based on typical demand growth of between 3 and 4 percent over the twenty-year period of the plan. Even these relatively modest growth factors equated to a trebling of passenger traffic through the airport over the twenty-year period of the Plan. Actual 2004 aviation activity at KSA, as reported in the Sydney Airport's 2004 Annual Report, was approximately 10 percent higher than 2003.

A continuation of growth at rates considerably higher than those in the Master Plan would place very significant doubt on the Plan's underlying assumption that KSA alone can handle Sydney's future airport needs.

In any case, it appears almost inevitable that growth and expansion at KSA will be limited by very real social and environmental considerations, including regional congestion issues, even before the airport becomes limited by physical aviation capacity constraints.

This limitation is likely to occur in the medium term, and well before the expiration of the twenty-year timeframe of the current Master Plan. These considerations are considered likely to once again bring the second Sydney airport question into prominent public focus.

Bankstown Airport

The Bankstown Airport Master Plan approved in March 2005 included the introduction of regular passenger services (of passenger capacity up to 120 per aircraft), up to an initial maximum of twelve aircraft movements, or six services, per day.

The introduction of such services, which will commence in 2007, is considered likely to have several consequences:

- Inevitable pressure to increase the number of such services, both for economic reasons related to the new, privatised operation of Bankstown Airport, and for demand and capacity reasons based on capacity, congestion and environmental constraints at Kingsford Smith Airport;
- Resistance from surrounding residents, on the reasonable grounds of social and environmental impact; and
- Pressure on the capacity of Bankstown to handle its core population of general aviation aircraft (exacerbated by the closure of Hoxton Park Airport for housing development in 200708). Each regular passenger service (RPT) introduced at Bankstown will have the effect of "backing out" capacity for many smaller, general aviation aircraft.

The end result of this, over time, will be a remorseless increase in the demand pressure for additional airport capacity to meet Sydney's future needs.

This pressure will also have the effect of exacerbating the air pollution and health issues described elsewhere in this submission, and will add to the urgent need, also expressed elsewhere in this submission, to move now to identify a series of sustainable strategies for the provision of future airport capacity.

5.3 RAIL & HIGH SPEED TRAIN STRATEGIES

Consideration of high-speed rail, both in the Sydney region and beyond, is currently "off" both State and Federal political agendas.

Lack of focus on the need for a range of ground transport infrastructure projects, including high speed rail, increases the prospect of a "worst case" second airport outcome.

The Alliance believes that such a “worst case” scenario would involve the development, by default, of a low cost overflow airport at Badgerys Creek, inadequately serviced by sustainable ground transport, and therefore maximising the generation of air pollution and associated community health impacts discussed elsewhere in this submission.

Air quality, and therefore health, in Western and Southwestern Sydney is further threatened by the reliance of current and projected residential and other populations on unsustainable transport systems, involving an over-dependence on private motor vehicle use – an over-dependence exacerbated by a chronic political disinterest, at all levels, in the provision of more sustainable public transport systems, and the infrastructure upon which such systems can be based.

6 BADGERYS CREEK AIRPORT UNSUSTAINABLE

The focus of this submission has been on the very serious impacts that a prospective airport at Badgerys Creek, or elsewhere within the Sydney basin, would have on air quality – particularly on air quality in Western and Southwestern Sydney – and negative impacts on community health caused by air pollution.

It is relevant to note some of the other negative impacts that such an airport would have on the environment and health of the people of Sydney.

Noise

The impact of aircraft noise on surrounding communities represents a major constraint on airport operations internationally.

New airports developed throughout the world in recent years have been deliberately sited at arm’s length from the communities they serve to avoid such noise impacts.

The operation and expansion of existing airports is very significantly constrained by noise factors. The noise problems associated with a new airport at Badgerys Creek, or elsewhere within the Sydney basin, were extensively documented during the original environmental assessment process. The noise limits and constraints that would be associated with such an airport were generally acknowledged, and confirmed by the Commonwealth’s appointed EIS auditor – the Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation.

The proposed Badgerys Creek airport site is surrounded by new and emerging suburbs, and is located in a young and developing area of Sydney: an area demographically most vulnerable to the negative impacts of airport and aircraft noise.

The urban and residential development of Sydney has made, and will continue to make, the Badgerys Creek site unsuitable for airport development.

Water Quality

The vulnerability of Sydney's water catchment, storage and distribution systems has been starkly emphasised in recent times.

This issue, important at the time of the original environmental assessment of the Badgerys Creek Airport proposal, has now become a matter of even greater urgency and community priority.

Any airport site that presents a major and significant additional risk to Sydney's water storage and catchment systems is inappropriate. An airport at Badgerys Creek would represent just such an unacceptable and unsustainable risk of harm to Sydney's major water catchments and storages.

Summary

An extensive catalogue of these and other negative environmental and social impacts were detailed in full in submissions made by the Western Sydney Alliance, the NSW Government, and others to the Badgerys Creek Airport EIS process in the late 1990's.

The Alliance believes that the solution to Sydney's future airport capacity needs is a fully and properly planned second airport, situated outside the Sydney basin, and connected to Sydney by a new and effective high speed ground transport system.

Such an approach would avoid the very real risk of the further deterioration in Sydney's urban air quality, and the associated public health impacts, described in this submission.

The development of a second major airport at Badgerys Creek, or elsewhere within the Sydney basin, has been demonstrated to be unsustainable – particularly in respect of the very significant increases in private motor vehicle use and associated air pollution that such an airport would generate, given current and projected ground transport practices.

7 THE COMMONWEALTH'S POSITION

7.1 BADGERYS CREEK RESERVED FOR AIRPORT USE

The Commonwealth continues to hold the Badgerys Creek site reserved for future airport use, through the Airports Act 1996.

The land owned by the Commonwealth at Badgerys Creek remains formally reserved for airport use by the provisions of the Airports Act, 1996. Section 6 of the Act defines "Sydney West Airport", which is in effect the land owned by the Commonwealth at Badgerys Creek, as an "airport site" under the Act. Section 6 (a) of the Act says:

"Sydney West Airport is taken to be an airport at a particular time even if, at that time, it is merely intended to be developed for use as an airport"

The Badgerys Creek site is not at present specifically defined as an airport site in the Regulations associated with the Act, but amendment of the Regulations would be a routine matter if and when a decision to proceed with an airport were to be taken.

7.2 INCONSISTENT AND MISLEADING MESSAGES

Despite this ongoing site reservation, between 2000 and the present time, the Federal Government has maintained what appears to be a deliberate political policy of "talking down" the need for, and likelihood of, a second Sydney airport.

In December 2003, then Federal Transport Minister John Anderson issued a press release indicating that the Federal Government:

"has no plans to build a second Sydney airport, and that this decision provides security for residents of Western Sydney who have long been concerned about the possibility of a future new airport in their area"

During the 2004 federal election campaign, the subsequently re-elected Federal Coalition issued the transport policy document "Building Our National Transport Future", which included the statement that:

"a re-elected Coalition Government will not build a second Sydney airport"

Of course this undertaking was carefully worded, and on careful examination the commitment offered was very limited indeed. It was an undertaking that could well be taken to apply only to the term of a re-elected Coalition Government (that is until 2007), and not subsequent governments.

Despite repeated requests from the Alliance, the longevity of this undertaking has not subsequently been confirmed or clarified. This once again leaves the Badgerys Creek site reserved for future airport use, and leaves the position beyond 2007 open.

Despite the various comments and undertakings set out above, the Commonwealth continues to hold the Badgerys Creek site reserved for future airport use. The Federal Government had promised to undertake a further review of Sydney's future airport needs during 2005. Correspondence from the Office of Federal Transport Minister John Anderson to the Alliance in December 2004 indicated that:

"it would be reasonable to expect that the future of the Badgerys Creek site would be a key consideration" of the 2005 review of Sydney's future airport needs"

There has been no public indication that the promised 2005 review was in fact undertaken, and the Federal Government has not indicated publicly, to this time, when or indeed if that review will in fact take place.

The current Minister for Transport and Regional Services, Mr Truss, confirmed the reality of the ongoing airport reservation, when in a recent answer to a question on the matter in the House of Representatives he said:

"... it (the Government) would retain the land at Badgerys Creek in Commonwealth ownership and protect the site from incompatible (with an airport) development in surrounding areas"
(House Hansard; 29 May 2006; Page 104).

Little more needs to be said to confirm the very serious concerns held by the Alliance regarding the prospect that an airport, and the air pollution and public health impacts identified in this submission, is still very much on the Federal Government's agenda for Western Sydney.

7.3 PUBLIC PERCEPTION & PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

General public perception is that the Badgerys Creek Airport issue has been resolved, and that the risk of an airport and its associated air quality impacts on Western Sydney has been removed.

This perception has been based on the deferral of plans for such an airport in the short term, and the associated statements by the Federal Government indicating that an airport in Western Sydney is off the political agenda.

The reality is that the Badgerys Creek site remains formally reserved for future airport use; that no alternative site has been sought; and that the Federal Government and the Federal Department of transport have both indicated that no other second airport site will be sought.

The cruel reality of this position is the prospect that existing communities will continue to grow, and new communities will become established in Western and southwestern Sydney on the basis of the politically encouraged perception that an airport will not be developed at Badgerys Creek, and not the administrative and legal reality that such an airport remains the Federal Governments only fall back position..

Despite the demonstrated unsustainability of the Badgerys Creek Airport proposal, the Commonwealth – regardless of repeated public statements to the contrary – continues to hold the Badgerys Creek formally reserved for future airport use.

The Badgerys Creek site is the Federal Government's only developed option to provide for future airport capacity in the Sydney region, if and more realistically when such capacity is required.

8 OTHER VIEWS ON THE BADGERYS CREEK ISSUE

The Federal Government appears to be almost alone in clinging to the clearly unsustainable Badgerys Creek site as its preferred, and indeed only, option for the provision of additional airport capacity for Sydney.

It is relevant to this submission to record the contrary positions now adopted by virtually all other political organisations and parties at the federal, state and local level.

8.1 FEDERAL

Labor: Prior to mid 2003, Federal Labor had been a long-standing proponent and supporter of a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek. In July 2003, then Federal Opposition Leader Simon Crean and then Shadow Transport Minister Martin Ferguson foreshadowed a policy change, rejecting the Badgerys Creek option. That policy change was subsequently confirmed at the January 2004 Federal Labor Conference. Federal Labor's revised policy position calls for a second Sydney airport, but one situated outside the Sydney basin - and therefore an airport that avoids the air quality and health impacts described in this submission. Federal Labor has identified a preferred area to the south of Sydney, including prospective sites such as Wilton and Sutton Forest. The Alliance met with current Federal Labor Leader Kim Beazley in June 2005, and obtained his confirmation that the revised policy, formulated under the former leadership of Mark Latham, continues to apply.

Greens: The Australian Greens have always opposed a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek, or elsewhere within the Sydney basin.

Democrats: The Australian Democrats have always opposed a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek, or elsewhere within the Sydney basin.

8.2 STATE

Labor: The NSW Government has indicated in correspondence to the Alliance, and in associated public statements, that it is opposed to the construction of a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek, or elsewhere within the Sydney basin. The State Government, however, is ultimately bound to a large extent by what is a Commonwealth decision, in a Commonwealth area of responsibility. The Alliance has written to the current NSW Premier Morris Iemma, and other key NSW Government Ministers, seeking a confirmation of the State Government's position on the Badgerys Creek matter.

Coalition: The NSW Opposition parties have supported the Alliance position, and opposed the development of an airport at Badgerys Creek or elsewhere within the Sydney basin, since the late 1990's. That position has not been formally reaffirmed since the election of Peter Debnam as NSW Opposition Leader. The Alliance Executive met with Opposition Leader Peter Debnam, and State Shadow Ministers Peta Seaton MP and the John Ryan MLC, in September 2005. The NSW Opposition indicated that there had been no change in policy on the second airport issue, and Mr Debnam undertook to represent the concerns of the Alliance to Federal Transport Minister Warren Truss.

Greens: The Australian Greens have always opposed a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek, or elsewhere within the Sydney basin.

Democrats: The Australian Democrats have always opposed a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek, or elsewhere within the Sydney basin.

8.3 LOCAL

NSW LGA: In 1998, Local Government in New South Wales adopted the following airport policy:

- State and Commonwealth Governments should provide policies and regulations that allow for provision of air services to country NSW that are safe and accessible;

- Local Government supports the continuing access for regional airlines to Kingsford Smith Airport (KSA) at an equitable landing charge;
- The Federal Government should subsidise airports to remote areas as a community service obligation;
- Local Government opposes the further development of, or at, Sydney KSA which would serve to increase the capacity of KSA as measured by flight numbers in view of the adverse impacts any increase would have on the residents and environment of Sydney;
- Local Government opposes the development of a second airport at Badgerys Creek or elsewhere in the Sydney basin in view of the adverse impacts any increase would have on the residents and environment of Sydney; and
- Local Government would support any initiative of the Federal Government to re-examine potential locations outside the Sydney basin, given the likely adverse impacts of developing a second airport in the basin and the expressed desire of a number of regional councils to locate the facility within their local areas.

This policy has been maintained, without amendment, to the present time.

8.4 OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The Alliance has also gained and maintained the support of a number of other key stakeholders in opposing a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek, or elsewhere within the Sydney basin.

This support for the Alliance, and opposition to the development of a second Sydney airport within the Sydney basin, has been based very largely on concerns regarding the negative social and environmental impacts of such a proposal, including in particular the air quality and health concerns that are the subject of this submission.

Other supporters of the Alliance position include church and community interest groups, major hospitals including Westmead Hospital, and a number of transport policy and research centres, including the Warren Centre at Sydney University.

9 ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT & SITE OPTIONS

While opposing the development of what it believes to be an unsustainable and inappropriate "second Sydney airport" in Western Sydney, the Alliance has consistently acknowledged and supported the urgent need for major initiatives and innovations in other infrastructure, including in particular ground transport infrastructure.

The Alliance believes that such infrastructure, planned and delivered in a prioritised and integrated manner, and effectively linked to existing transport systems, is a fundamental requirement for sustainability, amenity and social equity throughout Sydney, and New South Wales generally.

The planning and provision of new and effective ground transport systems in Sydney, and in the Newcastle/Sydney/ Wollongong/Canberra corridor, is in our view fundamental to any consideration of a second major airport outside the Sydney basin. Such systems would also open up the potential for the more effective use of existing airport infrastructure in Newcastle, Canberra and elsewhere within the Greater Sydney conurbation.

The Alliance believes that the introduction of innovative, prioritised and well-integrated ground transport systems are also essential to the medium and long term future of Greater Sydney, and New South Wales, in an overall sense. In our view, the Commonwealth must play a fundamental role in the funding of such infrastructure, and that a cooperative dialogue between Commonwealth, State and Local Government will be essential if effective outcomes are to be achieved.

In our view, the planning and introduction of such systems will also be essential if the population growth currently planned for the outer regions of Sydney will be able to proceed without the unacceptable air pollution and health impact outcomes identified in this submission.

To this time, no meaningful effort has been made to examine or identify more sustainable alternative future airport sites outside the Sydney basin, or to investigate and plan for the provision of alternative transport infrastructure, including substantially upgraded intra-city public transport systems, and innovative and high speed, non-road based, inter-regional and interstate ground transport systems.

10 THE UNCERTAINTY ISSUE

10.1 THE REALITY

The ongoing reservation of the Badgerys Creek site for airport use, although downplayed in various public and policy statements, means that prospect of a major airport development at the site remains very real. This reality means that the risk of unacceptable elevations in the already high pollution levels in the air to be breathed by current and future residents of Western and Southwestern Sydney will be substantially increased – as will the risk of attendant and negative health impacts

Under current circumstances, any identified need for additional airport capacity in Sydney would trigger the development of a second airport at Badgerys Creek, which remains the default second

airport site - despite the overwhelming catalogue of evidence that shows the Badgerys Creek site to be inappropriate, unsuitable and unsustainable for such a purpose.

For many years, the Alliance has argued that a full and thorough examination of integrated ground transport issues is a critically important element in the resolution of not only the second airport question, but of the provision of workable and sustainable transport systems for Sydney generally. The Alliance has long believed, and argued, that improved and integrated ground transport infrastructure is the real priority for Western Sydney, and not an unsustainable airport.

10.2 THE UNCERTAINTY

The ongoing uncertainty regarding the future of the Badgerys Creek site represents a serious and growing problem for both Local Government and residents in Western and Southwestern Sydney.

The various public announcements made by the current Federal Government, and detailed in this submission, have had the effect of convincing the vast majority of the general public that a decision has been taken not to build a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek. Those living in areas subject to the impacts of any prospective airport at Badgerys Creek, and in particular those who now or in the future decide to become part of the many new residential developments subject to such impacts, have taken the Federal Government at its word. They have assumed that there will be no airport at Badgerys Creek, and no attendant environmental impacts – including air pollution and health impacts.

Yet despite this public perception, the reality is that the Badgerys Creek site remains reserved for future airport use, and that under current circumstances no other option or process is under consideration for the provision of additional airport capacity for Sydney – should such be required.

This uncertainty needs to be resolved one way or the other. The development and implementation of a viable planning and strategic framework for Western and Southwestern Sydney, and indeed for all of Sydney, demands the urgent resolution of this uncertainty. The resolution of this uncertainty is also vital if a range of completely unacceptable air pollution and public health impacts are to be avoided for the current and future residents of Sydney, and in particular those of its western and southwestern regions currently earmarked for very significant population growth over coming decades.

The uncertainty caused by the continued retention of the Badgerys Creek site for future airport use, particularly given the Federal Government's public statements that such an outcome will not eventuate, is a major and increasingly serious impediment to the planning and delivery of a sustainable future for the people of Western and South Western Sydney.

11 THE DEFAULT PATH IS A DANGEROUS PATH

This submission has described, and supported with facts, references and relevant quotations, the very cynical and misleading approach that has been adopted by the Federal Government in relation to the provision of future airport capacity for Sydney, and to its intentions regarding the future use of the 1800 hectare site owned by the Commonwealth at Badgerys Creek.

The use of that site for a second Sydney airport has been demonstrated, to the satisfaction of virtually all stakeholders except the Commonwealth, to be entirely inappropriate and unsustainable.

Some of the key arguments in this regard have been repeated for convenience in this submission.

The position adopted by the Federal Government now means that the people of Sydney are being asked to tread a dangerous default path regarding future airport capacity, future transport infrastructure capacity generally, and very significant air quality and health issues.

While the Commonwealth continues to hold the Badgerys Creek reserved, albeit somewhat surreptitiously, for future airport use, there is no chance that the work that should now be proceeding to identify more sustainable site and transport infrastructure alternatives will be commenced.

This in turn means that any change of circumstances that might bring forward the urgency and priority of the need for additional airport capacity for Sydney would result in the use of the inappropriate Badgerys Creek site by default – because the time consuming process of identifying a better and more sustainable alternative would not have been initiated.

This default path also means that in the long term, if the Commonwealth continues to hold the Badgerys Creek site in its ownership, the value of the site for residential development will continue to increase at a far greater rate than its value for other, more sustainable and responsible, purposes.

The resulting risk is that, even in the absence of a default airport development, a future federal government of either persuasion might seek to recover the maximum realisation from the asset, in circumstances where an end outcome of excessive residential development could well impose similar environmental and health risks to those that would result from an airport.

For these default risks to be avoided, the Alliance believes that is essential for the Federal Government to rule out the possibility of a second airport at Badgerys Creek now; to start the difficult but important process of developing alternative airport and ground transport strategies; and to commence a process involving State Government, Local Government, and the communities at interest to identify a sustainable future use for the Badgerys Creek site.

The Alliance believes that, as a broad community, Sydney is having imposed upon it a serious and potentially dangerous set of default scenarios – essentially because the Federal Government will not address the second Sydney airport issue, and the associated Badgerys Creek site issue, in a candid, open and honest manner.

These default scenarios have ominous implications for Sydney's air quality and health.

It is the view of the Alliance that the ongoing retention of the Badgerys Creek by the Commonwealth means one of two inevitable, and equally unacceptable outcomes:

- **The ultimate development, by default, of a demand driven “overflow” airport, built “on the cheap” and in the absence of a sustainable ground transport matrix, or**
- **The ultimate realisation of the asset by the Commonwealth through effective sale at its maximum potential value for residential housing development, once again in the absence of a sustainable, ground transport matrix.**

In terms of air quality and health impacts, and other responsible social and environmental impacts, neither outcome is acceptable. For acceptable air quality and health conditions to be delivered, certainty regarding the future of the Badgerys Creek site must be provided.

12 THE WAY FORWARD

While ever the Badgerys Creek site remains formally reserved for future airport use, and while ever the Federal Government has no plan or program to identify a possible alternative site, the risk of an unsustainable airport at Badgerys Creek remains very real.

Under these circumstances, if at any time in the future the pressures of increasing passenger and aircraft growth are seen to limit the capacity and performance of Kingsford Smith Airport, then Badgerys Creek will emerge as the only default site for a second Sydney airport. There is a very real risk that this will happen sooner rather than later. Many industry experts regard the need for additional airport capacity as inevitable.

The Alliance is continuing to use its best endeavours to press the Federal Government to honour its past undertakings, to eliminate Badgerys Creek as a future airport site, and to start the process of identifying and implementing a better, smarter and more sustainable set of alternatives.

The Alliance believes very strongly that the important question of Sydney's future airport capacity must be resolved in a way that provides a workable, equitable and sustainable outcome for all of Sydney, and all of New South Wales. The Alliance also believes that the resolution of the airport question must not proceed in isolation, and must take into account all associated infrastructure and planning issues, including most importantly the vital role of ground transport infrastructure.

In our view, the key issues that will need to be addressed in the delivery of these outcomes are:

- the formal and unequivocal rejection of the fundamentally flawed Badgerys Creek site for future airport use;
- the identification and reservation by the Commonwealth of a viable site for a second Sydney airport outside the Sydney basin, as a contingency against future requirements; and
- commitment by the Commonwealth, in effective partnership with State and Local Government, to the planning, development and implementation of a suitable high-speed ground transport system to effectively link such an airport to all of Sydney, by effective integration with existing transport systems and modes.

In the absence of such an approach, the very serious air quality and health issues discussed in this paper will not be resolved.

The Western Sydney Alliance wishes to express its appreciation for the opportunity to present this submission to the NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into the Health Impacts of Air Pollution in the Sydney Basin.

We seek the support of the Inquiry in our efforts to formally and finally resolve the second Sydney airport and Badgerys Creek site issues, and through the successful resolution of these matters to deliver a positive air quality and health outcome for all of those living within the Sydney basin.

Accordingly, the central conclusions of this submission are that:

- **the current political disingenuity and uncertainty surrounding the continued retention by the Commonwealth of the Badgerys Creek site for future airport use must be resolved as a matter of urgency,**
- and**
- **that a sustainable future use for the site must be determined as a matter of priority, and that this process must involve Federal, State and Local Governments, and the communities at immediate interest.**

13 REFERENCES

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14 AUTHORISATION & LIMITATIONS

The Western Sydney Alliance has based this submission on the best information available to it at the date of preparation, and to the very best of our knowledge and understanding this submission presents the important circumstances described in this document in a candid, objective and factual manner.

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Holroyd City Council
Chairman, Western Sydney Alliance

Councillor John Thain
Mayor, Penrith City Council
Deputy Chairman, Western Sydney Alliance

4 August 2006

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