

**Submission
No 16**

INQUIRY INTO HEALTH IMPACTS OF AIR POLLUTION IN THE SYDNEY BASIN

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Subject:

Summary



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NSW Legislative Council
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2
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To the Committee:

GPSC's

Inquiry into Health Impacts of Air Pollution in the Sydney Basin

This is a **submission** prepared on behalf of the Macarthur-Onslow family to the LC Inquiry into the health impacts of air pollution in the Sydney Basin.

Preamble

The family has owned and been resident on the Mount Gilead property for the last 65 years, having purchased the property in 1941. It is one of the larger rural properties within the Sydney Basin and is a major landmark within the south Campbelltown/Camden district, with direct links to John Macarthur and the evolution of the wool industry in Australia.

The Mount Gilead property comprises a total of approximately 800 hectares (2000 acres). It extends from the Appin Road in the east to the Nepean River in the west, a distance of approximately 3 kilometres. In the north, it is bounded by Menangle Creek and the Noorumba Reserve. In the south, the boundary is adjacent properties. The north south extent varies between 2 and 2.7 kilometres.

The Mount Gilead property was originally established through a land grant in 1812. The origin of the name is unclear but the name of the property became the name of the local area.

Air Quality in the Western Sydney Basin

Air quality in the Sydney Basin (and the potential health effects) has been an environmental constraint on most development for the last 20 years. It was a contributing factor in:

- **urban development of the South Creek valley** being considered unsuitable on environmental grounds (along with water quality in the Hawkesbury-Nepean River) by the Carr Labor Government;
- concerns that led to the indefinite scrapping of the **Second Sydney Airport** proposal at Badgery's Creek;

- recent community concerns re the reduction of the final size of the Rouse Hill Regional Park (*SMH Wednesday 2 August 2006*):
 - *Last year the State Government ditched plans for green space within the two major development zones in the north-west and south-west after landowners threatened a revolt. Instead, the Government agreed to preserve zones around waterways and flood-prone land only.*
 - *John Mant, a planning expert who serves on the Government's metropolitan strategy reference panel – "When the panel went along with the rezoning of the south and north-west sectors, **our misgivings about air pollution air pollution** and the health of the Hawkesbury were tempered to an extent by such open space promises as the regional parks and the proposed green wedges."*

The climatic and meteorological models and resulting conditions are well understood. Air emissions from industry and increasing urban population being located in the area are accumulating in the 'basin' in summer (particularly) and are being held in the western part of the basin by the prevailing north easterly winds (that unfortunately do not penetrate much distance inland). At night under quiescent conditions air contaminants can partly drain from the basin. However if this is not fully possible then further emissions the next day add to the mix and are trapped by the prevailing winds. Increasing concentrations of particulates, NOx, SOx, etc are being measured and constitute a 'limit to growth' for the area.

Continuing Development in the western part of the Sydney Basin?

Unfortunately the **urban growth of Sydney** is concentrated in the western Sydney Basin - see *Managing Sydney's Urban Growth, April 2003 Update*
www.planning.nsw.gov.au

The North West and the South West are where the available land is! However the Government has shown its concern for this 'limit to growth' by focussing over recent years on urban consolidation and increasing the density of eastern Sydney. However the vast majority of the future land bank is located well west of Parramatta!

However one thing that will potentially add to this mix of future development is current and future **resource and infrastructure development**. 'Resource' because there are considerable natural petroleum type resources in western Sydney, and infrastructure, because where there are resources you need associated infrastructure to develop those resources. Unfortunately most Governments will not want to stop development of natural resources on environmental grounds and forgo the economic benefits. Also resource development is potentially limiting to urban development because of environmental effects and the need for appropriate buffer zones.

But in the South West Sydney Growth sector we have:

1. **Large coking coal reserves** – as an extension of the Illawarra Coal Measures. There are economic recoverable coking coal reserves under the upper Nepean and Camden areas. In a recent article in the local Campbelltown paper of late 2004 under a caption of "*Coal seam shakes up Menangle planning*" it was stated that:

Plans to build 4200 new homes in Menangle park are on shaky ground following the discovery of a nationally significant supply of coking coal beneath the development site.” It is not a discovery that the industry is unaware of! BHP-Billiton has held authorisations to prospect and develop coal in the area for over 10 years. It is only now that plans are being bought forward to develop this area to replace those leases that are nearing exhaustion around Appin.

2. Associated with the coal reserves are large and recoverable reserves of **coal seam methane**. Development by Sydney Gas has resulted in the development of two gas treatment plants and the drilling of over gas wells in the Camden/South Campbelltown area.
3. Finally, because of the associated infrastructure in the area includes the ethane pipeline from Moomba, the eastern Gas Pipeline from Bass Strait and high voltage transmission lines through the area. This has attracted AGL who in early 2006 announced plans to build a **600MW gas turbine peaking power plant** some 1km south of the Mount Gilead property. The EIS for this proposal will be released next month – September 2006.

So in summary, the region is being targeted for resource and infrastructure development at a time when the Government has major plans for future urban growth. **THERE IS A LIMIT TO GROWTH.** The region can not sustain this totality of development. It is on the main southern freeway with direct access to Sydney suburbs. There is a need for some sense to be introduced to the planning of the area. The real limit is the already problematic air quality!

Thank you for this opportunity to place this submission before the Legislative Council and we wish you well in your endeavours.

With regards
MACOUN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING
On behalf of
Mount Gilead Pty Ltd and the Macarthur-Onslow family

TIM MACOUN
Principal