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New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly

Badgerys Creek Airport

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I make a contribution to the ongoing debate in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains about the poorly planned and poorly executed proposal by the Federal Government to build a new airport at Badgerys Creek. I note that in the past week the Federal environment Minister, Josh Frydenberg, has given the project the green light.

I also note that the supposedly "final" environmental impact statement [EIS] still fails to tell residents where flight paths and merge points will be located and which residential areas will be blighted with 24 hours a day, seven days a week aircraft noise.

The final environmental impact statement makes no effort to address the grave concerns of environmentalists, conservationists or local residents about the impact of the airport on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Of the 5,000 submissions received during the public consultation process, the overwhelming majority came from residents of the Blue Mountains. Of those, 2,000 were lodged by my office in December last year on behalf of the community.

People in the Blue Mountains are worried about the future of the World Heritage listed national park and the risk to the drinking water catchment and Warragamba Dam, and angry that the airport is to be operated without a curfew or flight path sharing. They are angry that the final revised environmental impact statement does not address their concerns.

The tangible, real-world impacts of this airport have been dismissed into the never-never by the airport evangelists who produced the environmental impact statement. There is nothing in the final environmental impact statement about the real-world flight paths that residents will be forced to live with.

While the environmental impact statement is light on detail, it is heavy on pro-Government spin. The community has been told repeatedly that the airport will bring jobs; this is a con. Residents have been told repeatedly that the airport is necessary because of capacity limits at Mascot; this is a con. They are told repeatedly that the project is visionary; this is a con.

The hardworking Blue Mountains mayor, Mark Greenhill, has been leading the charge of discontent and reason against this airport. He said, "This is a con job. Full stop. It is a sham".

Speaking of con jobs, during the Federal election the Minister for Urban Infrastructure, Paul Fletcher, made a series of promises to Western Sydney and Blue Mountains residents; he stated:

Allocating the flight paths to minimise the individual impact on any one point will form part of a comprehensive noise mitigation plan to be contained in the final EIS...with a clear direction given that the flight paths will not merge to a single point over Blaxland.

It was not just a con; it was a lie.

According to analysis by the Residents Against Western Sydney Airport Group, the final EIS contains no such plan. Blue Mountains residents cannot trust the Turnbull Federal Government, nor should they trust the Baird Government.

Ministers in the State Government present the airport as an opportunity for infrastructure investment in Western Sydney, but this is a con.

It is the State Government's responsibility to build road, rail, health and education infrastructure. It should not wait for the Federal Government and the Sydney Airport Corporation to provide a business case for new transport and schools.

There are new housing developments at Luddenham, Oran Park and Leppington. The new owners and renters of those homes will need to travel to work each day, send their children to school and when they are unwell they will need a staffed, well-resourced hospital. All of those essential services are necessary now, even if the airport is not built.

It is absurd for the failed Baird-Grant Government to sit on its hands and refuse to commit to infrastructure investment outside the context of an airport business case.

Rather than wasting the astonishing sums of money involved in this project, the Federal Government could engage in nation building of the sort invested in by the Gillard Labor Government.

It could build new rail links to the south-west Sydney region to take cars off the road or a new hospital for the growing Western Sydney and Blue Mountains populations that are presently pushing the Nepean Hospital past its breaking point.

These are the core government services that politicians should concern themselves with, not unnecessary new airports.