

## Update – 7th January 2018

Dear Members and Volunteers,

With the Christmas Festive Season now at an end, it is hoped that all members and volunteers had an enjoyable break with family, friends or on holidays. It seems an appropriate time to issue another Newsletter to update you on past RAWSA activities and those planned for 2018.

### Summary of RAWSA Activities in 2017

- In conjunction with the Blacktown based “No Badgerys Creek Airport” (NoBCA) group we have set up and staffed information stalls at:
  - Blacktown Community Fair, *(Received a positive public response)*
  - Blacktown Medieval Festival weekend, *(Received a very good positive public response)*
  - Katoomba’s Winter Magic Festival and parade, *(Received an excellent public response)*
  - Glenbrook and Penrith Markets. *(Received a very good positive public response)*
  - St. Clair Community Fair *(Received a positive public response)*
- In conjunction with NoBCA and Blue Mountains Conservation Society distributed updated leaflets to letterboxes in Western Sydney.
- Attended 3 of the 4 SACF (Sydney Airport Community Forum) meetings and asked questions about KSA current flight paths, increased flyover numbers and aircraft flying over the area at lower altitudes. *(Only received the usual Airservices explanations, but at least it keeps them aware of the growing opposition).*
- Attended meetings with (mainly local) politicians including, Susan Templeman, Emma Husar, Trish Doyle *(all of whom support the fight against the airport)* and Stuart Ayers *(who wants WSA)*. There have been meetings with non local MPs.e.g. Luke Foley, Anthony Albanese, others in Canberra.
- Attended book launch with Mark Butler and Anthony Albanese where they were challenged on the ALP policy of supporting the airport.
- Enlisted the help of EDO (Environmental Defenders Office - a community legal centre specialising in public interest environmental law) to write to Minister Frydenberg, requestion his justification for approving the WSA plan. *(No answer yet, but it is supposedly coming).*
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- Written to cross-bench Senators to gain support for a Senate Enquiry into the Airport and the flawed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). *(Answers only from Bernardi, Greens and Xenophon parties).* This initiative was interrupted by the citizenship fiasco and that it will be revisited in 2018?
- Attended a Parramatta forum run by the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, where the South- West Sydney Area Health Unit, released their disparaging report on the WSA, EIS consultation process.
- Carried out roadside protests (wobbles) throughout the Mountains and (mainly) Western Sydney areas.
- Created an “aircraft noise machine” that replicates the sounds of overhead aircraft at different decibels. This has been used very effectively in Glenmore Park, Leura, Penrith and Katoomba.
- Continued with various petitions and group letters. *(Sent off to Canberra without much/any? feedback)*
- Attended and supported various rallies and protest meetings, including at:
  - Blue Mountains Council,

- Penrith Council,
  - Blacktown Council,
  - Blue Mountains National Park – Glenbrook rally
  - Greater Sydney Commission, Penrith Forum,
  - Community Forums at St. Marys, Penrith and Emu Plains, and
  - Don't Mess with the West Rallies, where combined protest groups come together.
- RAWSA and No Badgerys Creek Airport group held combined strategy meetings to co-ordinate activities.
  - In order to stay abreast of developing situation, attended Aerotropolis Forum designed for business groups to 'take a slice of the action'. (*More biased 'yay airport hype' from politicians and aspirational hopes by business people – most stressed need for rail before opening, for airport to succeed*).
  - Released our Research Team paper on the threats to bio-diversity posed by an airport so close the UNESCO World Heritage listed Blue Mountains National Park. (*Huge effort by Tony Green and the Research Team*).
  - Continue to co-ordinate the submission of aircraft noise complaints to Airservices Australia, with more than 30 volunteers participating each month.
  - Established a RAWSA presence on Twitter and Instagram.
  - Despite little support from much of the mainstream media, RAWSA will continue to be proactive and where necessary, reactive, with media releases and letters to the editor. We have been successful with getting coverage by Channel 7 on a number of occasions and continue to receive good coverage in some local papers.

### What's going for us

At the same time as our Government and airport proponents are pushing ahead with their plans for a 24 hour Western Sydney Airport (WSA), there is a noted change in community opinion. While Blue Mountains residents have always been opposed en-mass to the airport, there is evidence that Western Sydney communities are also becoming aware of the impacts and are increasingly voicing their opposition to WSA.

This is evidenced in two ways. Firstly the growing number of people expressing their views in local newspapers or on social media sites and secondly, we have noticed a significant change in support for our cause, when we carry out our roadside protests. Of course at these events most people do not respond either way, however when we started this campaign nearly two years ago there was a fairly even number of motorists who responded negatively to our protests compared to those who responded positively in support of us. We keep count of the negative and positive responses (mainly in Western Sydney areas) and can tell you that consistently throughout 2017, the ratio of those opposing the airport is now 11 to 1 (in support of WSA).

The deception by Government and airport proponents that a WSA will solve all the employment deficiencies in Western parts of the metropolitan area, is not and cannot be backed up with credible analysis as to the number and type of jobs to be created.

More and more people are challenging the:

- wisdom of building another airport instead of High Speed Rail networks,
- inequity of treating residents affected by WSA flight paths, differently to those affected by Sydney Airport flight paths, and the
- prudence of building a second airport in the Sydney basin that will adversely impact Western Sydney voters.

The political uncertainty of outcomes in both the State Govt. election (will be in March 2019) and the Federal election (due July 2019 - but could happen at any time and the word is could well be the end of 2018), will force politicians to listen more to their constituents rather than those who usually hold power and influence over them.

While some work is proceeding at the Badgerys Creek site, such as fencing, relocation of graves from 3 cemeteries and re-routing of the high voltage lines that transverse the site, any major earth works for levelling the site and for the actual construction phase of the airport will have to go through a lengthy tendering process. The

WSA Company (established to manage construction) have indicated that tenders (for major construction) probably won't be let until February 2019.

The Govt. catch-cry that the airport is a "Done Deal" is just a slogan, like all political slogans e.g. "Jobs and Growth" or "We'll put people first" and it means exactly the same thing – it is meaningless! If the airport was a 'done deal', why would proponents even bother to remove many of the "No Airport" signs that community members have erected in Western Sydney?

Remember how the Greyhound Racing Ban was a 'done deal', the Budget Deficit Reduction measures were a 'done deal' and the policy to cut legal aid funding was a 'done deal'! All were reversed due to political pressure/expediency or because Govts got it so wrong in the first place. **The airport issue is no different!**

### Where the Local Councils Stand

Our fight against WSA continues to be supported by **Blacktown Council** and one of our staunchest allies, Mayor Stephen Bali was elected to State Parliament in a recent by-election.

**Blue Mountains Council** has always been a strong opponent of the airport and continues to be a thorn in the side of those who want WSA built. This was shown to be the case when recently the State Government (an avid WSA supporter) threatened to suspend Council and appoint an administrator. While the catalyst for this threatened action had nothing to do with the airport issue, it is clear that the 'sacking' of Blue Mountains Council would have resulted in the reversal of Council's strong stand against the airport and other adverse developments that the local community has long opposed, such as the over development of the Mountains.

**Penrith Council** continues to ignore the impacts of an airport and has repeatedly refused to inform residents of the 'down-side' of the project. Only 4 of Penrith Councillors oppose the airport, with the Labor and Liberal block combining in continued support for WSA.

These same Councillors oppose the development of a major cemetery complex on the basis that it will adversely impact the area and ruin the ambience of the Mulgoa Valley. How they can reconcile their support for WSA and oppose the cemetery development on environmental and social grounds, is totally inconsistent and simply beggar's belief.

Penrith Council support for WSA has always been 'conditional' upon certain conditions being met. These include the attainment of 28 actions including:

- "A passenger rail line from the Western Sydney Airport to the Main Western line be in place before the opening of the airport",
- "Amendment to the Sydney Airport Curfew Act 1995 to become the Sydney Airports Curfew Act and apply to both KSA and the future WSA".

While somewhat subjective, a review of these Penrith Council conditions has been carried out to see how many of them have or would likely to be met before the planned construction begins. Five of Council's conditions appear to be in progress, but none of the social or environmental conditions set by Council seem ever likely to be met. (For further info see *attachment*), and the Govt. has made it quite clear that WSA will not have a curfew.

What this essentially comes down to is that Penrith Council continues to give its support to the building of WSA, without any realistic chance that the conditions (upon which it gave its support), will be implemented.

### During the next few months

The de-bunking of the jobs myth at a WSA and the provision of an alternative employment plan for Western Sydney is seen as a major strategy to be implemented. To this end, a "Jobs for Western Sydney Working Party" has been established and is expected to compile a report in May/June 2018.

While this Working Party (WP) is a community group independent of RAWSA, we feel that the output of the WP will be very important in providing an alternative employment strategy for Western Sydney and showing that employment at the proposed airport will be minimal consisting mainly of low paid casual work. To this end the RAWSA Committee will contribute input to the WP and have representation on it.

Following is more information issued by the Working Party:

- *Working Party (WP) is a community based group developing a jobs strategy to overcome the deficit of future employment opportunities for Western Sydney, Southwest Sydney and Blue Mountains areas.*
- *WP is not aligned to any political or commercial interests.*
- *Priority is to develop sound job creation strategies without a Western Sydney Airport.*
- *Final Report, presentations and strategies will be grounded in research data and not in speculative modelling.*
- *WP will use input from people living in the local areas to plan the future of their local areas.*

Other strategies that RAWSA will pursue include:

- Continued pressure on politicians to justify their support for a WSA,
- Promote alternative uses for the Badgerys Creek site that will enhance the opportunity for quality employment, without the adverse noise, health, lifestyle and environmental impacts that an airport will thrust upon local communities, Have we been doing this?
- Continue to highlight the social inequity of a 24 hour WSA while those around Sydney Airport are favoured with an 11 pm to 6 am curfew.
- Encourage more people to participate in the submission of aircraft noise complaints, to ensure that Airservices and politicians are kept regularly informed of the opposition to WSA plans,
- In 2018, continue to participate on the WSA Blue Mountains Mayoral Reference Group.
- Develop relationships with other anti-airport groups such as those emerging in Blackheath & Lithgow,
- When the Canberra debacle over 'citizenship' settles down, evaluate the need to write to new Senators and MPs.
- FOWSA (Forum On Western Sydney Airport) currently operates in secret, away from public scrutiny because it does not allow members of the public to attend its meetings as observers. Apart from being mistrusted by our community because it has been stacked by Govt. with the 'Yay Airport' crowd, it is suffering a further credibility crisis, due to its lack of process transparency. RAWSA representations to one of the FOWSA Community Reps focused on the need for FOWSA to be more transparent, give people direct access to FOWSA Community Reps and allow the public to attend FOWSA meetings. Minister Fletcher's reply to letter sent about the same issues, does not address the matters raised and simply highlights that actions do not meet the Government rhetoric.

## Coming Up Soon

Over coming weeks RAWSA will be asking members to renew their annual membership (fee \$10) and seeking to get volunteers to join up as well. Although we live in a time-poor world, it is important that we get as many people as possible actively involved in the fight against a WSA.

RAWSA will be holding its Annual General Meeting in March (details to follow later) and everyone interested in the WSA issue is encouraged to attend.

## Communications

Your RAWSA Committee has met on 10 occasions throughout 2017 to discuss emerging issues and to decide upon appropriate actions. Time does not allow all these matters to be passed on to members and volunteers.

- The RAWSA website contains information and research papers: - <http://www.birdsnotboeings.com/>
- Current issues can be found on the RAWSA Facebook site: - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/rawsa/>
- In recent weeks a Twitter site has also been established at: - <https://twitter.com/search?q=%23rawsa>

We have taken a deliberate approach of issuing quarterly Newsletters and only emailing people when urgent assistance at various events was necessary. In this way, we feel people will not be overwhelmed by email traffic and hopefully realise the importance of emails when they do come along.

This communication strategy may need some revision as there has been some recent commentary about the need to improve communications from RAWSA. While this is probably justified, please remember that your Committee members suffer the same time-poor restrictions as everyone else and are contributing to the fight in the best way they can.

We will endeavour to get information distributed more often. To do this however, we need the active assistance of more people to share the workload, so if you are in a position to help formulate and distribute Newsletters please let us know through an email to [info@rawsa.info](mailto:info@rawsa.info) with subject titled "Help with Information".

Thank you and regards,

RAWSA Management Committee