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## WESTERN SYDNEY AIRPORT – Final Environmental Impact Statement offers no protection for Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

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In September the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure finished the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Western Sydney Airport. In response to this 5,531 page set of documents, we could have mobilised a team, taken the documents apart, written a comprehensive submission, just like we did for the Draft EIS last year. We didn't do this, because the document is Final and not for public comment!

The Final EIS was presented to the Department of Environment, they studied it, and they approved it with, to quote Minister Josh Frydenberg, a "comprehensive set of more than 40 conditions" that will "protect the environment".

I have read the conditions document, there are 41 conditions, and most of them are complete fluff.

QUOTE:

'The Site Occupier will prepare a Construction/Operational Environment Management Plan (CEMP or OEMP) for item XXX in accordance with Table 28-YY of the EIS and submit it for approval'.

TRANSLATION:

The Site Operator will develop plans for construction, human remains removal, electricity grid relocation, Aboriginal artefact salvage, noise and vibration, biodiversity management, soil and water, traffic and access, air quality, European heritage, waste and resource, visual and landscape, community and stakeholder engagement, airspace design, aviation fuel supply, sustainability, supply of native seed, threatened flora propagation, reporting and auditing, all complying with chapter 28 of the EIS.

So after reading 5,500+ pages, the DoE just agreed with the EIS, told the 'Site Occupier' to develop a batch of plans, and off we go building an airport.

There is no mention of World Heritage other than "airspace and flight path design must minimise to the extent practicable the impact of Aircraft Overflight Noise on ... the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, particularly areas of scenic or tourism value, and Wilderness Areas".

Critical matters like where will the planes fly, how will fuel be supplied, what will ground transport look like, what homes will be acquired, what noise treatments will be applied to which buildings, what flight altitude is acceptable over Wilderness, none of these have been addressed, just pushed off into a future set of plans. No night-time curfew was imposed by the Minister, despite nearly everybody calling for one.

The only "comprehensive" area of the Conditions document is around Biodiversity Offsets. The principle here is that, since threatened species (*Marsdenia viridiflora* and *Pultenaea parviflora*), and threatened ecological communities (*Cumberland Plain Shale Woodlands* and *Shale-Gravel Transition Forest*) will be destroyed by this development, Greening Australia and Mount Annan Botanic Garden will be given millions of dollars to go onto the site, gather seeds, propagate plants if possible, and plant them somewhere else (again, if possible) for a net gain.

There is a statement in the associated media release that galls me somewhat:

"The conditions have been informed by meetings with key local leaders to hear first hand the issues important to the community."

I was at this meeting, it lasted one hour, it was in Canberra (not in a quiet Blue Mountains back yard), I got to speak for three minutes, and everything I raised was ignored. This is the state of "Extensive Consultation" in modern Australia.

So now we have to wait for each of the CEMPs and OEMPs to be written and released, study them all, write submissions, be ignored again, all in the hope of reducing the impact of this project.

A 1,000 page contract, which we don't get to see as it is "commercial in confidence", now goes to Sydney Airport Corporation to see if they are interested in building WSA, a project that their former Chairman describes as a "waste of money".

The campaign goes on. **No Airport!**

