

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc



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Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

Date: 7 July 2024

Dr Emma Banyer

Acting Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

RRAT.Sen@aph.gov.au

Request to appear as a witness at the Senate Hearing into the impact and mitigation of aircraft noise.

My name is Mrs Annette Cam and I am the President of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society (the Society). I am requesting the opportunity to represent the Society as a witness at the upcoming Senate hearing into the impact and mitigation of aircraft noise scheduled to be held in Western Sydney/Blue Mountains in August 2024. This is crucial as aircraft noise affects animals as well as people and it is important to have impacts considered.

The Society is a community-based conservation organisation in the Blue Mountains, having currently over 850 members drawing from all walks of life. Our mission is to help protect, conserve and advocate for the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains. In fulfilling its mission, the Society advocates for the protection of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWhA).

The Society was formed over 60 years ago when a group of concerned residents met to determine the action they could take to help protect the Blue Mountains environment. You can read our deep involvement of the successful nomination of the GBMWhA in the Society's newsletter issue celebrating the 20th anniversary of the World Heritage Nomination [Hut News Issue no. 387](#).

Representing the broader community of the Blue Mountains, our members largely draw from the many villages within the Blue Mountains City Local Government Area (LGA) from Lapstone to Mt Victoria. In advocating for the ongoing health and protection of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area the Society works closely with many other conservation organisations¹, the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, and all three levels of government, including Blue Mountains City Council, State and Federal Government.

¹ Examples include: Lithgow Environment Group, Wilderness Australia, NSW Nature Conservation Council, Total Environment Centre, Science for Wildlife, Planet Ark.

In relation to Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport (WSI), we are part of a coalition of concerned residents from Western Sydney, working closely with Residents Against Western Sydney Airport (RAWSA).

In relation to WSI, the Society made submissions to:

- The Draft Environmental Impact Statement Proposed Western Sydney Airport (2015)²,
- The draft Environmental Impact Statement for Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport Airspace and Flight Design (2024)³,
- The Senate inquiry regarding the impact and mitigation of aircraft noise (2024)⁴

The Society's view is that the detrimental impact of aircraft noise on the GBMWhA and nearby natural areas is worthy of close scrutiny by this Senate hearing because:

- Australia has an international obligation to protect the world heritage area and effectively eliminate adverse impacts of development upon it;
- Declared wilderness areas in NSW have protection under the Wilderness Act 1987;
- The GBMWhA with its protected wilderness and world heritage areas with little to no human interference, close to the city of Sydney, is a major tourist drawcard and provides an important economic benefit to Western Sydney, NSW and Australia. The value of wilderness and quiet in maintaining people's mental health is well-documented and an important reason to maintain this area's integrity.

In our Submission to this inquiry, the Society commented on the Terms of Reference in line with our mission, as follows:

- a) The Society acknowledges that the proposed flight paths will result in stress and amenity and way of life for the residents of the Blue Mountains, and we recognize their concerns.
- b) The likely impact on small businesses that rely on the intact Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the GBMWhA and the associated wilderness, and the natural quiet of the bushland and the villages.
- c) Proposals for mitigation and limitation of aircraft noise affecting the GBMWhA.
- d) Barriers to limitation of aircraft noise from the proposed flight paths as they relate to the geological characteristics of the mountains and the failure of WSI to collect any baseline data (noise or biodiversity data) from GBMWhA, wilderness or associated natural bushland areas. This has resulted in a failure on their part to propose any plans for eliminating or mitigating this threat.

² https://bluemountains.org.au/documents/submissions/2015/BMCS_WSA_Draft_EIS_Submission.pdf

³ <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/submissions/2024/bs240131-wsi-draft-eis.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/submissions/2024/bs240430-impact-and-mitigation-of-aircraft-noise.pdf>

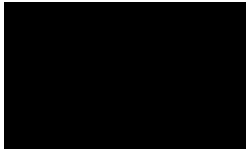
- e) Discussion of OUV of the GBMWhA, our international obligations to mitigate detrimental impacts of development and to avoid any action that cannot be effectively reduced as per UNESCO requirements. We also briefly detailed the failures of the Draft EIS on proposed flight paths in relation to the GBMWhA.

Also, in our submission, the Society requested for a Senate hearing to be held in Sydney to give community groups an opportunity to speak, and we are very pleased that this will occur.

You can read more about the Society, its history and actions on the website <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/index.shtml>.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Yours sincerely,



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