



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

ADJOURNMENT

**Sydney (Kingsford Smith)
Airport: Air Traffic Control**

SPEECH

Thursday, 2 November 2000

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Albanese, Anthony, MP

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Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (11.35 am)—I rise in the Main Committee to put on record my concern—indeed, very real fear—both for people who are travelling on planes into and out of Sydney airport and for the people in electorates such as mine around the airport. In spite of the government's rhetoric on 1 April 1998 in what can only be seen as an April Fool's joke, when the then Minister for Transport and Regional Development put out a press release headed 'Resolution of Badgerys Creek issue within site'—what a farce—some 2½ years later we still have no decision. We have prevarication from this government, and we have the document which I released here on 11 February, the briefing that was given to country mayors, state members and federal members, which suggested that the transforming of Bankstown to the airport of choice for regional New South Wales is the reality in terms of the plan that this government has for Sydney airport.

Also, we have seen six breaches of the movements cap at Sydney airport, a legislated cap that means nothing: on 22 June, 81 movements; 23 June, 87 movements; 26 July, 83 movements; 22 August, 81 movements; 1 September, 82 movements; and 19 September, 81 movements. What response do we get from the department about the breaches of this cap of 80 movements? We have a letter which says:

When this occurs there will be an offsetting reduction in actual runway movements for other periods of the day.

What a joke! But it is more serious than that. Yesterday we saw an accident at Sydney airport to China Eastern Airlines flight MU-561. There are more and more near misses at Sydney airport as the airport runs above safe capacity.

Now we have an extraordinary plan by Airservices Australia, which is undertaking a project to investigate the feasibility of closing the remote terminal control unit at Sydney airport so that the airspace around Sydney—and Perth, Adelaide and Cairns, which are also part of this plan—would be controlled from either Melbourne or Brisbane. This would leave the control of this airspace over the Sydney basin in the hands of controllers located at an interstate centre. If this were to occur, there would be no local management structure left in place to deal with the many issues that affect Sydney airport—safety, the implementation of the long-term operating plan, the cap of 80 movements an hour at the airport, the curfew. This is a disaster.

Residents around Sydney airport will simply not cop the shutting down, effectively, of air traffic control facilities around that airport and its being controlled from Melbourne or Brisbane, which would have no concern for the residents around the airport. I have been written to and contacted by air traffic controllers at the airport who are scared about this proposal, not just for themselves and their jobs, but because of the implications for safety around Sydney airport. We saw yesterday the reality of the danger.

If the airspace over Sydney and affecting Sydney airport were controlled from Melbourne, no-one in Melbourne would have the slightest interest in the noise issues affecting Sydney. The minister must intervene. He must stop this feasibility study and he must say that this plan is simply not on. Once again there has been no consultation with the Sydney Airport Community Forum, chaired by Dr Brendan Nelson and appointed by this government. It is ignored on all the big picture issues related to Sydney airport. We, the residents in the community around Sydney airport, have given notice that the time for dialogue is pretty close to being up. We have been responsible and there has been cooperation over the management of the airport—for example, during the Olympics—but this proposal is dangerous. It is unsafe. It is secret—none of the public or the community know about it. After this speech they will know and they will rise up against this plan. I call upon the Minister for Transport and Regional Services to actually make a decision on something: to make a decision about Sydney's second airport but also to make decisions relating to how that airport operates, in the interests of not just those who fly into and out of Sydney but those residents who live around the airport. (*Time expired*).