

**ResDev**  
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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**EMBARGOED 4AM Thursday, 7 May 2015**

**ERIN BROCKOVICH-STYLE COMMUNITY INVESTIGATION UNEARTH AIRPORT MISINFORMATION**

**Thursday, 7 May 2015**

CONCERNED residents have called on Sunshine Coast Council (SCC) to explain why locals and the broader community appear to have been grievously misled during the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process for council's proposed \$347 million airport upgrade.

Residents who conducted an Erin Brockovich-style community investigation today revealed it appeared council had failed to inform ratepayers and possibly the state government's independent Coordinator-General (CG) that the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) no longer required a special dispensation to keep the existing airport open.

Council's argument for its preferred option on the proposed expansion, as outlined in their EIS currently before the Coordinator-General, is largely based on CASA's requirement the runway be upgraded or face potential closure. Alternative options have largely been discounted because of the CASA restrictions.

However CASA wrote to Sunshine Coast Airport (SCA) management to advise them the upgrades were no longer required on 12 August 2014 – 48 days before council's EIS materials were distributed for community consultation.

It appears council failed to disclose this information or amend their EIS which was distributed to the public on the Department of State Development's website more than one month later on 29 September 2014.

The apparent failure to amend critical EIS information was revealed to a concerned resident who wrote to the office of Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss seeking a date for when CASA informed council or the Sunshine Coast Airport the upgrades were no longer required.

The resident received a letter from Mr Truss' Chief of Staff David Whitrow (dated 7 April 2015) which read: *"...I am advised that the then CASA Director of Aviation Safety wrote to the General Manager of Sunshine Coast Airport on 12 August 2014, explaining that once the amended CAR 235A commenced, neither the aerodrome operator nor aircraft operators with the appropriate flight manual documentation would require an exemption..."*

SCA and council failed to make this information public.

In fact council's EIS, distributed as part of the Coordinator-General's independent EIS process, contained at least 26 references to the need for CASA upgrades. Council materials also stated CASA's requirement was a "key driver" for the project. Council and SCA also continued to distribute media releases on the need for CASA upgrades to keep the airport operational.

Residents for Responsible Development Sunshine Coast (ResDev) spokesman Charles Toms said the apparent misinformation required urgent explanation from council.

"It appears this vital information was withheld and the public clearly misled on the need for council's \$347 million airport expansion," Mr Toms said.

"ResDev believe this apparent misinformation renders the EIS process for council's project lacking in credibility, transparency and integrity.

"We feel that council has corrupted the independent Coordinator-General's assessment process."

ResDev today call on council to address the following questions:

- Was council aware of CASA's written notification on 12 August 2014?
- If so, why wasn't the Coordinator-General and the community notified?
- Why weren't the EIS and other materials released to the media amended to reflect this significant change prior to distribution?

Mr Toms said ResDev had written to the Coordinator-General to alert him to the new information and request he discontinue the EIS process for the project. ResDev have also written to Mr Truss, Federal Minister for the Environment Greg Hunt, Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk and Minister for State Development Dr. Anthony Lynham on the issue. In addition, ResDev has requested the Premier request an independent investigation on the apparent misinformation.

CASA publicly reported the airport no longer required an exemption on 12 November 2014, one day before public submissions on the EIS closed.

[http://www.casa.gov.au/wcmswr/\\_assets/main/newrules/airspace/download/nfrm-car-235a-annexa.pdf](http://www.casa.gov.au/wcmswr/_assets/main/newrules/airspace/download/nfrm-car-235a-annexa.pdf)

Council's EIS materials distributed for community consultation included more than 26 references to the need for a CASA exemption. Examples include:

- **Summary of Major Findings, page 2:** "Further, the continued airline operation on Runway 18/36 is dependent on an ongoing exemption from CASA to allow Boeing 737 and Airbus A320 aircraft as operated by Virgin, Jetstar, Air New Zealand and Tiger Air to operate on a 30 m wide rather than a 45 m wide runway"
- **Page 12:** "A key driver for the Project is that Regular Public Transport (RPT) jet services currently operate under an exemption on the existing main runway which is 30 m wide rather than the 45 m typically required by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA). The exemption runs until February 2015. If SCA can show it has made substantial progress towards upgrading its runway facilities the exemption may be renewed through to 2018"
- **Page 12:** "Option 2: Do minimum: Under this option, SCA would upgrade the 18/36 Runway to achieve CASA compliance for runway widths..."

The unamended EIS remains online with the State Department at

<http://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/assessments-and-approvals/sunshine-coast-airport-expansion.html>

ResDev is a sub group of Mudjimba Residents Association Inc. (MRA)

Web page: <http://www.residents-for-responsible-development.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sunresdev>

Mr Toms said ResDev was a community group formed to raise awareness of the serious financial, environmental and economically sustainable developments. He said the group had long been concerned council had failed to properly address the CG's strict EIS criteria for the airport extension. This latest evidence of apparently misleading information goes a long way to demonstrate the flaws within the council's handling of the EIS process.

"ResDev are a group of concerned residents who are not fear mongering but rather fearful of the dire impacts associated with council's project," Mr Toms said.

Mr Toms said council had failed to provide transparency or a business case for this project. He said the community was clearly interested in the site and could play an important role in helping develop a financially and environmentally acceptable plan for the future of the existing airport –but this would require a significant mind shift on the part of council.

#### **TIMELINE:**

- **12 August 2014:** CASA advise Sunshine Coast Airport *that once the amended CAR 235A commenced, neither the aerodrome operator nor aircraft operators with the appropriate flight manual documentation would require an exemption...*
- **25 August 2014:** Sunshine Coast Council hold a Special Meeting to discuss and approve EIS submission
- **29 September 2014:** 48 days later SCC EIS unamended materials are released for public consultation. Council distribute media release stating ongoing need for CASA exemption  
<http://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/sitePage.cfm?code=council-news&stid=0&id=14665>
- **29 September 2014:** Meeting of SCA Community and Aviation Forum held on the EIS and the minutes link CASA restriction and no mention of letter from office of the Deputy Prime Minister
- **10 October 2014:** Community briefing session held with unamended EIS
- **15 October 2014:** Community briefing session held with unamended EIS
- **22 October 2014:** Community briefing session held with unamended EIS
- **November 2014:** SCC releases 100,000 'Shaping our Future' booklets of which pages six and seven refer to a continued need for a CASA exemption
- **4 November 2014:** In a statement to the media and public, Sunshine Coast Airport Management states the need for a CASA requirement is the "main reason" behind council's project as without an upgrade, the airport "could lose their operational capacity on the spot" <https://news.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/content/submissions-sunshine-coast-airport-expansion-close-soon>
- **12 November 2014: CASA found:** "Airplanes that have current narrow runway supplements (i.e. the B737) have been operating safely for more than two decades on 30m wide runways. The cost of widening 30m runways to 45m in order to accommodate these aeroplanes cannot be justified on a safety case"  
[http://www.casa.gov.au/wcmswr/\\_assets/main/newrules/airspace/download/nfrm-car-235a-annexa.pdf](http://www.casa.gov.au/wcmswr/_assets/main/newrules/airspace/download/nfrm-car-235a-annexa.pdf)
- **23 January 2015:** Letter sent to Deputy Prime Minister requesting information on CASA regulations
- **7 April 2015:** Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss' Chief of Staff David Whitrow writes to Mudjimba resident to state Sunshine Coast Airport Management was informed on August 12
- **28 April:** ResDev write to CG, Mr Truss, Mr Hunt and Mr Lynham to raise issue of misleading EIS materials online.

To sign ResDev's petition against the financial and environmental impacts associated with the project visit <http://www.change.org/p/no-new-runway-for-the-sunshine-coast>

**Contact:** Mr Toms: 0418544667 or 0422550278

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