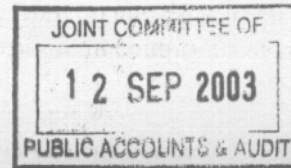


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8th SEPTEMBER 2003

The Chairman
Federal Parliament Public Accounts and Audit Committee
Inquiry into Aviation Security
Parliament House
Canberra 2600



Dear Chairman

I am uncertain as to the protocol involved but I hope you will be able to take my submission into account in your inquiry.

I have been writing to the Department of Transport and Regional Services since the 27th September 2002 to try and improve regional airport security. The risks from regional airports, where there is virtually no security, is so obvious that it was extremely puzzling to try and understand why the Department of Transport was so reluctant to address these obvious risks. The comments attributed in "The Australian" dated 05/09/03 to the Head of Transport Security make it plain that the reason is simply that he feels that regional airports could not afford the increased costs.

Let me rebut that comment from that official. I know that in the case of Mildura, the owner, the Mildura Rural City Council, has estimated that it would cost \$800,000 per year to run a security system and that the number of passenger movements is estimated for this year to be 120,000. That means that the cost of putting in security systems at Mildura airport would be less than \$8.00 per ticket. This could appropriately be divided into \$4.00 per passenger and \$4.00 per airline because the latter would certainly benefit because more people would travel by air, from regional airports, if they were more secure.

The security official for the Department of Transport does not mention the costs of not increasing security. Imagine the cost to the ratepayers whose councils own regional airports if security systems are not put in place in today's climate and a disaster happens and the victims relatives sue because the security was not in place. The costs involved would bankrupt local councils.

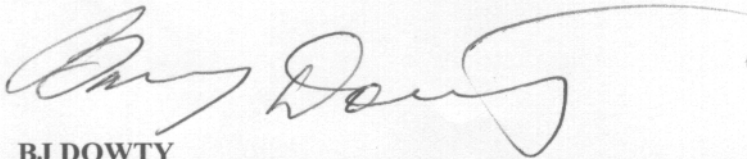
Screening of passengers and their carry-on baggage is absolutely essential for any modern passenger airline service whether it is from a regional airport or from a capital city airport. It must not be optional. It would be as senseless to allow this to continue as to allow a hospital to operate without resuscitation equipment. This measure alone would stop passenger aeroplanes being used as guided missiles flown into capital cities where people are congregated e.g. a function such as the M.C.G on AFL Grand Final day. The Act of Federal Parliament requiring no or all security measures to be put in place needs to be amended. High fences never would stop heavy 4WD vehicles, so freely available, being driven into an airport. Continuous surveillance by cameras must have a place and must be cheaper than the outdated requirements in the Act.

Country people and regional aircrews have the same rights to safe flying conditions as their capital city counterparts and capital city people deserve to be protected from 36 and 50 seat turboprop. Aircraft being used as guided missiles against buildings and other venues such as the M.C.G as mentioned or even the coming Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.

At the moment, a few officials' ideas of what is appropriate are blocking moves, which urgently need to be put in place to prevent disasters happening; because of their notions of what security will cost. There is no doubt at all that security in regional airports will be increased dramatically should a disaster occur and we have had too many near misses to suggest that these events will not happen from regional airports, whether perpetrated by terrorists, or mentally unwell citizens. The event on the aircraft flying from Tullamarine to Launceston would have become a true disaster if the person had got onto the aircraft in one of our regional centres where he could have taken on a firearm and the flight attendants and the other passengers would then have had no hope of stopping him gaining entrance to the flight deck of the aircraft. These sorts of events were once very remote possibilities. They are now in the realm of probability and it is vital that we prevent them from happening.

It is my impression that the desire for greater regional airport security is widespread, as is the puzzlement that it has not already been put in place. It is difficult to marshal and thus demonstrate these widespread feelings without alerting terrorist organizations to our vulnerability. I ask that your committee please help bring about real change in security at regional airports because it is difficult to see any other safe way this will come about.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BJ Dowty', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

BJ DOWTY