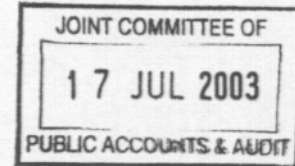




ACTING SECRETARY

Mr J Catchpole
A/g Committee Secretary
Joint Committee of Public
Accounts and Audit
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mr Catchpole

Thank you for your invitation to make a Submission to the Committee's Review of Aviation Security in Australia.

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) role at airports is to protect Australia's favourable pest and disease status while also ensuring that it does not unnecessarily impede the movement of aircraft, passengers and imported goods.

AQIS staff physically inspect and/or x-ray approximately 90% of passengers' baggage on arrival. In undertaking these duties AQIS regularly encounters items of interest to other border agencies. These items include drugs, weapons and an array of other prohibited material. When AQIS staff encounter these items they are quickly referred to the appropriate agency for follow up action. This important role highlights the necessity for careful co-ordination between all the border agencies.

AQIS has an excellent relationship with the airlines and airports and this is essential to ensure AQIS is able to facilitate both the movement of aircraft and passengers and also contributes to the overall protection of Australia's security. This relationship is enhanced with regular formal interaction through the AQIS/Airline Industry Consultative Committee. This Committee is chaired by Mr Warren Bennett, Executive Director of the Board of Airline Representatives of Australia.

An emerging issue is the prospect of Australia's international airports imposing charges on border agencies for the space and facilities occupied by the agencies to perform border control functions at those airports. Any additional costs that AQIS may incur without additional funding is likely to compromise AQIS's capacity to contribute to the protection of Australia's borders. AQIS is in direct discussions with a number of airports and other Government agencies to determine the way forward on this important issue.

AQIS would be pleased to provide further information to the Committee as required. The contact officer is Mr Robert Murphy, National Manager, Border, telephone (02) 6272 5445.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meryl Stanton', written in a cursive style.

MERYL STANTON
Acting Secretary

14 July 2003