



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Infrastructure and Transport**

**Deputy Secretary**

*File Reference: 11/470*

Ms Julia Morris  
Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications  
PO Box 6021  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Morris


**INQUIRY INTO CABIN CREW RATIOS**

Further to your letter dated 7 March 2011 please find attached, my Department's submission to the Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications' inquiry into the ratios of cabin crew on aircraft.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Wilson

 March 2011

**DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT**

**SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS INQUIRY INTO CABIN CREW RATIOS ON AIRCRAFT**

Australia's aviation security environment

Australia's aviation security regime combines multiple layers of preventive security that have proven to be effective in protecting travellers, aviation infrastructure and assets, and the general public.

Aviation security is regulated under the *Aviation Transport Security Act 2004* which establishes a regulatory framework to safeguard against unlawful interference with aviation. To achieve this purpose, the Act establishes minimum security requirements for civil aviation in Australia by imposing obligations on persons engaged in civil aviation related activities.

The Act provides the legislative framework for Australia to meet its obligations under the Chicago Convention. One of the Chicago Convention's primary functions, administered by the International Civil Aviation Organization, is international standardisation through the establishment of standards and recommended practices. Aviation security requirements are outlined in Annex 17 to the Convention and cover general aviation security principles, organisation and delegation, preventative security measures and the management of each Contracting State's response to acts of unlawful interference.

The Act and its regulations, the Aviation Transport Security Regulation 2005, do not prescribe the number of cabin crew required to manage security on board a passenger aircraft. However, the regulations mandate security measures onboard an aircraft including:

- the requirement for aircraft with over 30 seats that are operating a RPT or open charter service to have a hardened cockpit door that is locked during flight;
- the requirement for an operator of a prescribed air service to establish and maintain a security training program for crew covering topics such as: deciding the seriousness of an occurrence; crew communication and coordination; and appropriate self-defence. This satisfies Australia's obligation under Annex 6 to the Chicago Convention in respect of minimum security training topics that an aircraft operator must include in their crew training program; and
- the requirement for an aircraft operator's transport security program to address matters including: measures and procedures for handling suspect behaviour by a passenger; procedures for raising the awareness and alertness of staff to security threats and their responsibility to report aviation security incidents and breaches; how security awareness training will be given to operational staff; and duties and responsibilities of personnel with security roles.

In addition to these requirements, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) deliver an Air Security Officer Program which involves the deployment of armed AFP officers on selected Australian domestic and international flights who are responsible for the containment or resolution of high-risk security incidents.

A key layer of preventive security is passenger and baggage screening. Passengers are screened for a range of items that are prohibited in sterile areas of security controlled airports or in the cabins of prescribed aircraft. Security screening measures include the use of X-ray for baggage and checked baggage, walk-through metal detection equipment, random and continuous explosive trace detection and physical searches as required for all RPT and open charter services on aircraft with a maximum takeoff weight greater than 30,000 kg.

The *National Aviation Policy White Paper – Flight Path to the Future* (The White Paper) outlined a number of initiatives to enhance aviation security measures, including measures to further ensure the integrity of aircraft. The White Paper announced the extension of security screening services to all RPT and open charter aircraft over 20,000 kg maximum takeoff weight (these regulations come into effect on 1 July 2012). Furthermore, the White Paper announced the extension of requirements for hardened cockpit doors to all aircraft over 10,750 kg maximum takeoff weight (i.e. capacity of greater than 30 passengers).

Together, these measures help to minimise the likelihood of weapons or prohibited items being brought onboard an aircraft and the likelihood of unlawful access to the flight deck. The changes to hardened cockpit door requirements are supported by funds allocated under the strengthening aviation security initiative announced in February 2010.

#### Onboard security incidents involving cabin crew and/or passengers

Statistically, the number of disruptive passenger events onboard an aircraft is very low. Between 2008 to 2010, preliminary analysis indicates that disruptive passenger events as a proportion of total passenger movements on Australian domestic and international flights was about 0.001 % per year. The majority of disruptive passenger events do not involve passengers either attempting or engaging in the unlawful interference with aviation. For example, events may involve passengers who are intoxicated, not following crew instructions, smoking, arguing or exhibiting signs of mental illness. In some of these cases the disruptive passenger has been restrained either by the crew or with the assistance of other passengers.

Internationally there have also been occurrences in which the crew, with or without the assistance of other passengers, have restrained disruptive passengers. Some notable occurrences include the Northwest 253 flight on Christmas Day 2009 in which passengers restrained a man who attempted to ignite an explosive device concealed on his person (more commonly referred to as the ‘underpants bomber’).