



Submission No. 27

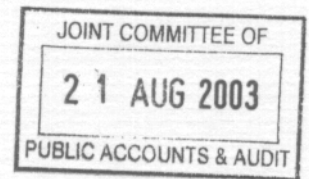
MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN
BA LLB BJuris JP MLA

18 AUG 2003

My ref: 032348

Mr Bob Charles MP
Chairman
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



20 AUG 2003

Dear Mr Charles

Review of Aviation Security in Australia

Thank you for writing to the Premier of Western Australia inviting the State Government to comment on your committee's "Review of Aviation Security in Australia".

As the Minister responsible for aviation matters within the State Government, the Premier has referred this item to me for a response. As such, please find enclosed a submission on behalf of the State Government.

I understand there is the possibility for the State Government to speak to the submission in October. The State Government is considering this position and will inform your secretary in the near future of our decision.

Yours sincerely

ALANNAH MacTIERNAN MLA
MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SUBMISSION

to the

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

REVIEW OF AVIATION SECURITY IN AUSTRALIA

**Submitted by the
Minister for Planning and Infrastructure
on behalf of the
Western Australian Government**

Prepared by the Department for Planning and Infrastructure

Introduction

The Western Australian (WA) Government has been interested in the developments in aviation security since the events of September 11 2001. It has generally supported the upgrading of aviation security for air travellers as a necessary measure.

Whilst aviation security is important for international, interstate and intrastate passengers, this submission will focus on the impact of security on regional aviation and the importance of striking a balance between security and affordability.

In this respect, the submission will focus on two criteria from the Terms of Reference:

- a) *Regulation of Aviation Security by the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services; and*
- e) *Cost imposts of security upgrades, particularly for regional airports.*

Furthermore, the following comments have been raised by the State Government in forums such as the Standing Committee on Transport – Aviation Working Group (AWG). As such, the State Government is pursuing these matters through forums such as the AWG.

Terms of Reference A

Regulation of Aviation Security by the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services

Originally, there were five airports in regional WA that had been identified as security categorised. These were Broome, Karratha, Port Hedland, Kalgoorlie and Kununurra.

With respect to the first four airports, these already have screening in place as they are deemed "Domestic" airports as they receive aircraft with over 100 seats in capacity. Based on their category designation, it has been determined that these airports have to screen all passengers 90 minutes prior and 30 minutes after the arrival or departure of any aircraft over 40 seats capacity.

The exception is Kununurra, which although a security categorised airport, does not have screening as the largest aircraft servicing the airport is a 36 seat Brasilia. However, if larger aircraft in excess of 40 seats commence operating, the airport will have to instigate screening procedures.

Kununurra was originally included in the security category as it was a jet port however, it now receives only turbo prop aircraft. The Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) believes that it should no longer be a security categorised airport. DOTARS intended to remove Kununurra from the category but the events of September 11 2001 overtook this process. It is our understanding that DOTARS intends to remove Kununurra at some future time.

Latest measures announced and impacts on WA

The Commonwealth Government initiated a further review in early 2002 following the additional measures announced after September 11 2001. A range of options were investigated culminating in the revised criteria outlined by the Deputy Prime Minister in late 2002. The new regulations will be called the Aviation Security Regulations.

The review has identified that all ports operating scheduled jet operations will require passenger screening. In WA, this measure has captured the additional airports of Newman and Paraburdoo. This highlights inconsistencies with aircraft based categories as other regional centres such as Albany and Geraldton, which have similar passenger numbers will not require screening as they operate turbo prop aircraft.

With respect to baggage screening, Newman and Paraburdoo will also need to ensure that contingency plans are put in place for special flights. The criteria for identifying these flights has yet to be determined and will be part of the consultation process with airport owners, the industry and the State Government. The State Government is unsure as to what will constitute a "special flight" and is seeking clarification from DOTARS. However, to date the State Government has not been consulted.

Although turbo prop routes are not automatically included to undertake passenger screening, the Commonwealth Government has indicated that any airport not receiving jet traffic is entitled to apply for inclusion in the security categorisation and thus require passenger screening. DOTARS will assess each airport application on a needs basis. DOTARS explains this optional position on the basis that it is difficult to determine the appropriate level of the industry airport security and therefore it has limited compulsory screening to jet operations. The State Government believes that a categorisation based on aircraft type is problematic and should be based on more comprehensive benchmarks such as passenger numbers.

Who pays for the security

Notwithstanding the assessment as to which airports require passenger screening, the cost of security is factored into the cost of the airline ticket. The State Government is concerned that the already struggling regional airline industry in regional Australia is further burdened by the additional cost of security. Added costs on a ticket for a regional service can be more onerous than a domestic or international flight given the economies of scale.

Recommendation

The Commonwealth Government:

- Consider more appropriate benchmarking other than aircraft type when considering which regional airports require passenger screening; and

- acknowledge the disproportionate cost of passenger screening on regional aviation and consequently contribute to the ongoing costs of passenger screening.

Terms of Reference E

Cost imposts of security upgrades, particularly for regional airports

Further to the costs of providing security, the State Government through the Department for Planning and Infrastructure (DPI) has raised with the DOTARS the additional unforeseen infrastructure costs for regional airports in order to meet passenger screening requirements.

For example, under the new Commonwealth airport security arrangements, the present Newman Airport terminal is not suitable to house the proposed passenger screening facilities. Consequently, in order to comply, the Shire of East Pilbara has had to put in place temporary measures at its existing terminal to comply with passenger screening requirements and will need to construct a new terminal at an estimated cost of \$3.5 million to permanently house passenger screening facilities.

The cost of building the new terminal is well beyond the financial capacity of the Shire. DPI has raised this matter with DOTARS suggesting that the Commonwealth Government should take responsibility for costs of this nature if it wishes to implement unilateral policy.

In this respect, the State Government is willing to play its part and proposes the Commonwealth Government enter into negotiations to determine a funding arrangement for this extraordinary item in order for the Shire to comply with Commonwealth policy. This position has been raised with DOTARS with little result.

Recommendation

The Commonwealth acknowledge the cost implications of additional airport infrastructure required beyond normal passenger screening costs and contribute towards the cost of extraordinary items.