



Reference: 50/10/0001
Contact: Mr Dale Blampied

22 July 2005

The Secretary
Joint Committee of Public Accounts & Audits
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir

**Subject: Joint Committee of Public Accounts & Audit
Review of Aviation Security in Australia**

Attached is a submission from AlburyCity that addresses the Terms of Reference of the above enquiry.

AlburyCity, as the owner and operator of Albury Airport, one of the busiest regional destinations in terms of passenger throughput, is a significant stakeholder in the provision of commercial regional aviation services.

The availability of convenient, economic and reliable air access from regional centres to capital cities and beyond is crucial to the economic development of regional cities.

Convenient air services also add significantly to the quality of life available to the regional population.

For these reasons AlburyCity is resolved to support and encourage the growth of regional services throughout the region.

With respect to Aviation Security AlburyCity generally accepts the security measures required to be implemented in accordance with the DoTARS approved Albury Airport Security Management Plan and supports the funding initiatives of the Federal Government.

Issues of concern to AlburyCity relate to the need to ensure that the measures introduced are workable in practice, that ongoing operational costs of these security requirements are minimised and the need to ensure that any potential future security upgrades are commensurate with the identified level of risk.

It is important that any measures introduced do not place an unnecessary burden on regional centres and negatively impact on the viability of regional aviation and economic development.

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Joint Committee of Public Accounts & Audits
Review of Aviation Security in Australia



Issues such as continuing convenient and affordable access to and from regional centres to capital cities are considered imperative to the long term growth and development of regional centres.

Our submission identifies a number of issues relating to regional commercial aviation security and wherever possible suggests courses of action for Government consideration.

Our contact in relation to this submission is Mr Dale Blampied, Manager Albury Services, who may be contacted directly on (02) 6023 8747 or via e-mail on dblampied@alburycity.nsw.gov.au.

Yours faithfully

Robert Brown
Acting General Manager

Introduction

This submission is made by AlburyCity in response to a call for submissions by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, Review of Aviation Security in Australia.

Scope of Submission

The submission focuses on the importance of regional aviation to the social and economic development of centres such as Albury and issues raised in the terms of reference of the inquiry.

The submission is divided into two (2) sections.

The first places Albury into perspective as a significant Australian regional centre with considerable potential for further economic and social development. This section also profiles the Council owned airport which serves the extended community.

The second deals with issues directly related to the terms of reference.

Section 1 – Overview

Albury is the major urban centre of the Albury Wodonga region servicing a population in excess of 100,000 people and is one of Australia's fastest growing business, cultural and residential centres.

Albury, located adjacent to the Murray River between Sydney and Melbourne on Australia's busiest inland transport corridor, is a strategic hub for commerce, transport, industry, health and education and has a strong tradition of regional leadership.

It supports a regional airport and national rail service and is the confluence of several other important highways giving access to regions to the east and west.

Additionally, the Albury Wodonga region is one (1) of Australia's premier tourism destinations and is regarded as a mecca for sporting enthusiasts with world class facilities. Further, it is the gateway to both the high country and alpine regions, and the famous gourmet and wine regions of South-East NSW and North-East Victoria.

AlburyCity owns and operates Albury Airport.

Albury is a significant element in the Australian regional aviation network. It is among the top three (3) New South Wales regional airports with approximately 187,000 passenger movements to the year ending 30 June 2005, an increase of around 29,000 or 17% over the previous year.

AlburyCity regards Albury Airport as a valuable component in our regional infrastructure and is resolved to develop the facility to meet the ongoing needs of the airlines and the travelling public.

Section 2 – Responses to Terms of Reference

Reference a) – regulation of aviation security by the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services, and the Department's response to aviation security incidents since June 2004.

In general, AlburyCity is supportive of the centralised process undertaken by DoTARS with respect to the regulation of aviation security.

In particular this relates to the provision of assistance with respect to:

- the development of understanding of the level of risk as related to regional airports;
- assistance provided with respect to the development of Airport Security Management Plans; and
- guidance provided with respect to the implementation of the provisions of the Airport Security Management Plan.

Additionally, DoTARS, in conjunction with the relevant police authorities have provided valuable training and information seminars regarding security issues as they apply to regional aviation. DoTARS have also provided personnel to visit regional airports to discuss security issues directly with local general aviation businesses.

All of the above serve to provide a greater awareness and hence significantly improve security for regional travelers.

AlburyCity is not in a position to comment on the Department's response to aviation security incidents since June 2004.

Reference b) – compliance with commonwealth security requirements by airport operators at major and regional airports;

From a regional airport perspective, Albury Airport is complying with the security requirements in accordance with the timeframes set forward by DoTARS.

Major issues of concern can be summarised as follows:

Introduction of ASIC Cards:

The introduction of ASIC cards has been mandated for all regional airports that have RPT traffic. This appears to be unnecessarily onerous on regional operators considering that it is not deemed necessary to implement the same requirement on other regional facilities such as Bankstown which is in much closer proximity to a major capital city (Sydney).

Regional airports such as Albury, whilst having RPT traffic, have significantly less overall traffic and personnel working within the airport precinct.

The issuing of ASIC cards for the RPT apron area only and for ground handling staff rather than all persons in the GA areas is more manageable and appropriate for regional operations.

It is believed that simply insisting that each business provide each employee with a business photo card and providing a list of all employees to the airport operator can effectively monitor personnel working within the precinct. This would simplify the process and minimise the cost burden whilst at the same time provide an effective monitoring process.

Hand Wand Metal Detection:

Whilst not having to implement this process to this point in time it is considered that significant problems may arise when required to do so.

Regional airports such as Albury, or regional airline operators, have limited access to resources necessary to effectively implement this process.

Of particular concern is the ability to appropriately address/overcome social, ethnic, religious and language issues that may arise during the implementation of these procedures. Unlike major capital city airports, regional operators do not have access to the range of personnel necessary to deal with these types of difficulties should they arise. Nor, in Albury Airport's case is the terminal building infrastructure adequate to provide secure and private rooms where discussions or more detailed investigations can be undertaken.

Additionally, it is unclear to what extent airport or airline personnel have the authority to undertake these processes. It is envisaged that it will be difficult to implement these procedures effectively and that to do so could be cost prohibitive.

It is considered that pre-planned deployments of the Regional Rapid Deployment Teams on a regular basis would be an adequate level of deterrent at regional airports.

Reference c) – compliance with Commonwealth security requirements by airlines:

No submission.

Reference d) – the impact of overseas requirements on Australian aviation security:

No submission.

Reference e) – cost imposts of security upgrades, particularly for regional airports:

As previously indicated, Albury is a significant element in the Australian regional aviation network. It is among the top three (3) New South Wales regional airports with approximately 187,000 passenger movements to the year ending 30 June 2005 an increase of around 29,000 or 17% over the previous year.

AlburyCity regards Albury Airport as a valuable component in our regional infrastructure and is resolved to develop the facility to meet the ongoing needs of the airlines and the travelling public.

Issues such as continuing convenient and affordable access to and from regional centres to capital cities are considered imperative to the long term growth and development of regional centres.

AlburyCity considers that the implementation of some security measures will significantly impact on operational costs that will subsequently need to be passed on to the travelling public and adversely impact on regional growth and economic development.

AlburyCity has already, in response to security issues, increased it's airport staff levels considerably to provide on site coverage from approximately 0530hrs to 2230hrs daily.

The implementation of ASIC cards, considered as unnecessary particularly given the inconsistency in application, is likely to require a further increase in staffing levels to firstly administer the process and secondly to ensure staff are available on site 24 hours per day to deal with visitors. It is considered that this would result in an increase in airfares of between \$1 and \$2 per ticket.

The use of hand wands on an intermittent basis creates a number of operational difficulties, as indicated above, the cost of which to overcome, whilst not on a continuous basis, is considered to be significant. It is not unlikely that this would result in a further \$1 or \$2 per ticket increase particularly when one considers the training requirements associated with this function.

Whilst it is understood that any further requirements, such as check bag screening for all luggage, is not currently envisaged at regional airports, the capital and operational costs of providing such a facility, whether by airports or airlines, would have a serious implication on the cost of regional air travel and potentially the growth and economic development of regional centres such as Albury.

Reference f) – privacy implications of increased security measures:

The implementation of ASIC cards, in the event that this requirement is implemented, is not considered to result in adverse privacy implications on the basis that the undertaking of police checks:

- is a requirement of a large number of positions within the community; and
- will automatically be introduced by AlburyCity as a prerequisite of working at the airport.

Of concern, however, are the privacy implications resulting from the introduction of hand held wand metal detection as a result of social, ethnic, religious and language issues that may arise during the implementation of these procedures.

Reference g) – opportunities to enhance security measures presented by current and emerging technologies, including measures to combat identity fraud:

AlburyCity is not in a position to comment on this term of reference.