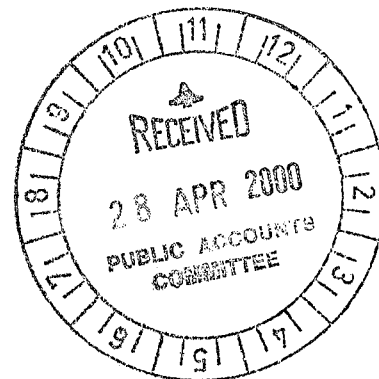




The Hon John Anderson MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Transport and Regional Services
Leader National Party of Australia



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

Beb
Dear Mr Charles

With reference to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit's Report No. 371 – Review of Auditor-General reports 1998-99 – *Aviation Security in Australia*, I attach the Department's Executive Minute response to the Committee's recommendations. The response has been cleared with the Attorney-General's Department.

Yours sincerely

John Anderson
JOHN ANDERSON
13 APR 2000



EXECUTIVE MINUTE

on

**JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT
REPORT No. 371 – REVIEW OF AUDITOR GENERAL REPORTS - 1998/99**

AVIATION SECURITY IN AUSTRALIA

General comments

The Department of Transport and Regional Services oversees aviation security regulation in Australia. The focus of aviation security is on protecting regular public transport passengers and aircraft at major airports against acts of unlawful interference. Matters relating to criminal activity at airports are essentially dealt with by State or Territory police, with the involvement of the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Protective Services and the Australian Customs Service as appropriate.

The Department is updating Australia's aviation security regulations to establish clear, enforceable standards, including those covering passenger and baggage screening.

Response to the recommendation(s)

Recommendation No.1 (a) paragraph 2.27

The Committee recommends that the Department of Transport and Regional Services and the Attorney-General's Department review arrangements for cooperation between airport authorities and police forces in dealing with criminal activity at airports.

The recommendation is supported with a qualification. The qualification notes that dealing with the majority of criminal activity at airports comes largely under the responsibility of relevant State and Territory police authorities.

In accordance with the Committee's recommendation, the Department of Transport and Regional Services has reviewed its arrangements. Subsequently, the Department will use the network of existing airport security committees at major airports in Australia to promote closer cooperation between airport authorities and police forces. Representatives from the Department of Transport and Regional Services, the airport operator, airline operators, Customs and Police agencies, including those in the Attorney-General's portfolio, are represented on these committees and the Department will encourage other agencies to use these committees to enhance cooperation in dealing with criminal activity on airports. Attorney-General's supports this approach.



The Department of Transport and Regional Services is also increasing its intelligence network with police forces around Australia, to enhance a two way flow of information which will assist both the Department perform its regulatory functions and airport operators and the police with their work in handling airport criminal activity.

By 30 June 2000, the Department will have had formal intelligence exchanges with all State and Territory police jurisdictions, as well as agencies under the Attorney-General's Department and the information obtained will be updated as appropriate.

The Attorney- General's Department also notes that Federal and State police cooperation, as well as inter-Commonwealth agency cooperation between the Australian Federal Police and Customs, will continue to be a feature at airports in handling a range of criminal investigations including drug seizures.

Recommendation No.1 (b) paragraph 2.27

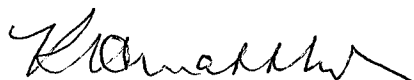
The Committee recommends that the Department of Transport and Regional Services review passenger and hand luggage screening, including: the training, capability and responsibilities of operators; and the effectiveness of response by relevant authorities (Federal Police and Protective services officers) in the event of contraband being detected, or other critical events occurring during screening procedures.

The Department of Transport and Regional Services supports the recommendation and is already well advanced in completing important changes on passenger and hand luggage screening. These changes including major airport operators assuming responsibility at many major airports for screening, coinciding with the development of better designed screening checkpoints and upgraded screening equipment. As well drafting instructions for the establishment of regulatory standards for passenger and checked bag screening have been issued for industry comment.

The Department, in conjunction with the aviation industry, is also developing a national screening training course to provide benchmark competencies for screeners. Revised arrangements for screening are scheduled for completion by 31 May 2000.

In terms of response arrangements, aviation security screening arrangements are focussed on the detection of weapons or other objects that could be considered dangerous. Should a critical event occur during screening procedures, agreed response arrangements with relevant police and screening authorities are already in place.

As part of its examination of the appropriate aviation security measures which should be used at major airports, the Department will continue to examine the effectiveness of response arrangements, particularly in terms of the risk management approach recommended by the Audit Office. The Department notes however that contraband and drug detection is a matter for Customs and the police, not aviation security screening.



K H Matthews
Secretary