

8 June 2005

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit  
ATTN: Chairman Mr Bob Baldwin MP  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Submission No: 14

Re: Review of Aviation Security in Australia

Thank you for inviting public submissions to your inquiry and report as above.

My own areas of interest in aviation are as a private pilot, freelance aviation journalist and paying commercial passenger. Accordingly, I will restrict my comments to these areas.

## ASIC

The idea of security cards is to ensure that only those who are entitled to access to areas for legitimate means have access to those areas. They work on the basis that they are only issued to a select group and the vetting process needs to be quite strict. The secret of successfully implementing security is to identify the target areas of the threat and use the issuing process to limit access. Therefore, the fewer cards issued the better the security works.

Report 400 noted that 15% of expired ASICs issued in Melbourne cannot be accounted for and between one and two percent of active ASICs cannot be accounted for. In situations such as this the ASIC has ceased to be an effective security tool and could even work against airport security by providing easy access to people who are not approved to hold the card.

Under the new regulations, private pilot licence holders (PPLs) are required to undergo background security checks in order to gain a photo licence. This process is conducted by CASA. These checks are nearly identical to those required by DOTARS for the issue of an ASIC. However, DOTARS have elected to compel pilots to get ASICs so they can move around airport tarmacs.

In short, pilots will need one security check to fly the aeroplane and another one to get out and walk across the tarmac. On nobody's planet does this make sense. The solution is that photo-id flight crew licences should carry the same weight and access as an ASIC. This will limit the number of ASICs issued and therefore increase their effectiveness. The ASIC was not designed as a security measure to control airside access to pilots and should not be used as such. As a compromise, I would suggest that flight crew licence holders could be issued an ASIC on the basis of the CASA check.

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## AIRPORT SECURITY

There is no doubt that stricter security measures are required at major international airports and larger regional airports, so I do not include them in my comments below.

The need for strict security at some of the smaller regional has to be reviewed. Since the directions were handed down from CASA, the understanding of the requirements has been misunderstood and misused by all parties involved. I say with some confidence that this issued has decayed into chaos. The main cause for this is the simple lack of application of commonsense.

For example, Bankstown in Sydney has been declared a security-controlled airport, yet Moorabbin in Melbourne has not. Why the difference? Both are GAAP airports catering for general aviation and do not have any heavy movements. Both have RPT movements below 5700 kg maximum take-off weight. The requirements appear unclear and inconsistent. Airport operators are responsible for implementing the DOTARS regulations, but many of them are unsure or are going 'overboard' because they fear the consequences of falling short.

For example, the operators of the airport at Griffith NSW were told - I believe - by DOTARS that it is mandatory for the entire airport to be security controlled. Of course this is not the case, only certain areas have to be secure. This illustrates that even DOTARS aren't really sure. What are pilots to think? If the regulator is not sure of the methods, then they can't be sure of the aims either.

## AIRCRAFT SECURITY

A bit of sanity prevailed with the implementation of the aircraft security measures when DOTARS allowed the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association to have a hand in writing the regulation. This was smart because no-one knows how to disable an aircraft better than a pilot. Plaudits to DOTARS for this. However, they then implemented a program of inspections by people who did not have aviation backgrounds. A DOTARS officer admitted at Avalon that they had to take the inspectors around the tarmac at Bankstown and show them the basics of light aircraft. The result has been the unhappy situation where the actions of an inspector damaged a privately-owned aircraft at Mt Hotham in Victoria. Clearly, a greater level of training and understanding is required before these inspectors are given a mandate to interfere with aircraft.

General aviation in particular is looking to your committee and its report to restore some commonsense to the issue of airport security.



Steve Hitchen