



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Committee Hansard

JOINT COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION

**Reference: Immigration entry arrangements for the Olympic Games**

TUESDAY, 2 MARCH 1999

SYDNEY

BY AUTHORITY OF THE PARLIAMENT

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## JOINT COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION

Tuesday, 2 March 1999

**Members:** Mrs Gallus (*Chair*), Senators Bartlett, Eggleston, McKiernan and Tierney and Mr Baird, Mrs Irwin, Mrs May, Mr Ripoll and Dr Theophanous

**Senators and members in attendance:** Senator McKiernan, Mr Baird, Mrs Gallus, Mrs Irwin, Mr Ripoll and Dr Theophanous

### Terms of reference for the inquiry:

The efficient planning and co-ordination of immigration arrangements for the Olympic and Paralympic Games will be a key contributor to the success of the Games. Positive experiences in obtaining visas, entering, staying in and leaving Australia, will assist Australia in gaining opportunities for the development of business, tourism and its place in the world as a multicultural nation. The Committee will inquire into and report on:

- (1) Australia's immigration temporary entry provisions and their capacity to meet the special needs arising from the Games;
- (2) The planned immigration arrangements for the entry and departure of Olympic and Paralympic Family Members at the time of the Games; and
- (3) The planning and co-ordination arrangements for informing visitors of the entry requirements at the time of the Games.

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**Committee met at 9.05 a.m.**

**CHAIR**—I open this public hearing of the committee's inquiry into immigration entry arrangements for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The matter was referred to the committee in June 1998. The inquiry lapsed when the election was called last year. However, the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs re-referred the matter to the new committee on 16 December 1998. The terms of reference are as follows:

The committee will inquire into and report on:

- (1) Australia's immigration temporary entry provisions and their capacity to meet the special needs arising from the Games;
- (2) The planned immigration arrangements for the entry and departure of Olympic and Paralympic Family Members at the time of the Games; and,
- (3) The planning and coordination arrangements for informing visitors of the entry requirements at the time of the Games.

The purpose of the inquiry is to review issues related to the planning and coordination of immigration entry arrangements for the Olympic and Paralympic Games and also the exit of visitors and athletes. The terms of reference note that positive experience in obtaining a visa, entering, staying and leaving Australia will assist Australia in gaining opportunities for the development of business, tourism and its place in the world as a multicultural nation.

At this hearing, members will hear evidence from a number of organisations which play a key role in organising the entry of thousands of athletes, coaches, media and advisers to the Olympic Games. Further details about the inquiry can be obtained from the committee staff.

[9.07 a.m.]

**PARMENTER, Mr Geoff, Program Manager, Accreditation, Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, Sydney Paralympic Organising Committee**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. I inform you that, although you do not have to take an oath, these are proceedings of the parliament and any misleading information is regarded as a contempt of the parliament. Do you wish to amend your submission in any way?

**Mr Parmenter**—No.

**CHAIR**—Would you like to speak to it briefly or make any other statement before the committee asks questions?

**Mr Parmenter**—Yes, please.

**CHAIR**—Please go ahead.

**Mr Parmenter**—Good morning. I manage the accreditation program for the Olympic and Paralympic organising committees. The accreditation program will identify and register all games participants, establish their eligibility to perform the role for which they have applied, and issue to each an accreditation pass permitting them the access necessary to do their job.

Accreditation is also the program which, through the department of immigration, coordinates the arrangements to allow for entry into Australia by accredited members of the Olympic family in accordance with rule 65 of the *Olympic Charter*, which we have pledged to honour in our bid commitments and in the host city contract.

The Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games and the Sydney Paralympic Organising Committee welcome the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry of the parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Migration. As you are aware we have made a written submission detailing our approach, obligations, the status of the project, our role in advising visitors of requirements, and airport facilitation. Today I wish to highlight only two issues and to correct an inaccuracy which has arisen recently through more detailed planning.

Firstly, I would like to highlight the strong working relationship which has been developed between our organisations and the department of immigration. We are grateful for their approach, commitment and assistance to date. Secondly, it would be appropriate to point out that the work conducted to date, largely within DIMA's existing progressive operating environment, has allowed the creation of several groundbreaking initiatives. These offer the opportunity to provide a more efficient level of service to accredited international visitors to the games than has ever been provided previously.

Finally, I should correct a small inaccuracy in the written submission: as planning has progressed, it has been decided not to provide uniforming at the airport; only accreditation validation will be provided at the international and domestic terminals. I thank you once again on behalf of SOCOG and SPOC, and I will be happy to take any questions.

**CHAIR**—Could you go over what you just said: what will you not be providing at the airport?

**Mr Parmenter**—An inaccuracy has arisen because planning has developed just that little bit further. Originally, there was the plan to uniform some arriving international visitors, such as technical officials and competition officials, at the airport, but the latest progress in planning has suggested that is not the best way to uniform them, and they are going to be uniformed elsewhere.

**CHAIR**—What percentage of the Olympic family do you think will already have their accreditation by the time they arrive at the airport?

**Mr Parmenter**—We are working on 65 per cent as a target figure. When you say ‘already have their accreditation’, that is a non-valid accreditation which we are planning to validate upon arrival.

**CHAIR**—Can you briefly go through that process on the arrival of that accreditation?

**Mr Parmenter**—Certainly. This is a new process. It is not the same process as was provided in Atlanta, but it was trialled successfully in Nagano, and we are hoping to implement the same process. For those participants who meet the deadline for applications and provide us with an acceptable photograph, we will dispatch to them a combined Olympic identity and accreditation card.

**CHAIR**—And they will have that when they arrive?

**Mr Parmenter**—They will bring that with them when they arrive, and we will perform a process to it. It is both a technical process, in changing the status of that record in the computer system to live, and a physical process in changing its appearance so that you can easily distinguish a validated pass from the document that was sent out in advance. In order to prepare an accreditation from scratch—like they did in Atlanta—to take the photo and print the pass, it took between six and seven minutes. The benefit of this validation process is that it takes between 60 and 90 seconds, so we are able to dramatically increase the throughput.

**CHAIR**—So those people who have their accreditation will move to the special lines. What happens to the other 35 per cent who do not have the accreditation?

**Mr Parmenter**—There are two distinct processes for Olympic family arrivals and Paralympic family arrivals that we are talking about. One is the validation process and the other is the immigration-customs primary line process. We are trying to sift out those who are not carrying—

**CHAIR**—That is what I want to know: how do you sift them out?

**Mr Parmenter**—We will be purely saying, ‘If you are carrying one of these, please queue here. If you are not—

**CHAIR**—So you will actually be there, physically holding these up?

**Mr Parmenter**—Correct.

**CHAIR**—You will say, ‘Guys, if you have this, go that way. If you haven’t, go that way.’ It is physically telling them, so they can see exactly what you are talking about.

**Mr Parmenter**—We are expecting a proportion of people who are not holding them to go through the validation process. When they get to the top of the queue, they will be asked whether they have this, and they will say no. They will then be asked to proceed. That is separate to the—

**CHAIR**—What do you mean ‘asked to proceed’?

**Mr Parmenter**—Proceed to immigration.

**CHAIR**—I see. Do they go back to the queue or will there be a special queue for the ones who miss?

**Mr Parmenter**—Yes, they go onwards to special Olympic family queues through the primary line, which are not dependent on your holding one of these. It is a little bit like asking people whether they have an Australian passport or not and streaming people accordingly.

**CHAIR**—So there are two Olympic lines: one for those who are accredited and one for those who are not?

**Mr Parmenter**—Not at the primary line: there is just a dedicated number of queues for the arriving Olympic and Paralympic families, whether they have been accredited or not.

**CHAIR**—Do you want to take up on that line at all, Senator McKiernan?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—How will the photograph be transferred from the organisation overseas to SOCOG? Will Immigration get to look at it?

**Mr Parmenter**—At the moment it is not planned that Immigration would have a role in securing that photograph. We are just asking for a photograph to be provided at the time of application for accreditation. When an organisation submits their applications for accreditation, we will ask it to include a photograph with each application and we will scan those photographs when they arrive with us, and when we print this combined Olympic identity and accreditation card, it will include the photograph.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Does DIMA never see a photograph at all of an athlete coming in?

**Mr Parmenter**—Not as it stands at the moment—until arrival, at which point there is a face passport, Olympic identity and accreditation card three-way check.



**Senator McKIERNAN**—How does SOCOG receive the photograph? Is it a physical or electronic transfer?

**Mr Parmenter**—It is a physical transfer.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Then you scan it and reproduce it electronically, and that is what goes on the identity card?

**Mr Parmenter**—Correct.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Are the cards issued to the individual when they arrive at the airport or at their departure point?

**Mr Parmenter**—They are actually despatched en masse to what we call their responsible organisation. A national Olympic committee, for example, makes applications for accreditation on behalf of all their participants, and we provide back to them all the Olympic identity and accreditation cards. They then despatch those in turn to their participants.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What security is built into the identity card—what is the proper name for it?

**Mr Parmenter**—The Olympic Identity and Accreditation Card.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What security provisions are built into that to stop copying and counterfeiting?

**Mr Parmenter**—We are just starting that design process, and DIMA will be involved in it. There is at the moment the provision to print it onto Kodak photographic paper, which will be watermarked, but the additional security devices built into it are yet to be determined. It is intended, obviously, to make it very difficult to reproduce.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What are the plans to construct and make those cards for the 35 per cent who will not be carrying them when they arrive in Australia?

**Mr Parmenter**—As for previous games, accreditation centres will be created around the host city, around Sydney, at which cards for those other participants will be processed from scratch. It may be that we have already received a photograph from them, but it was after the deadline, so we do not have to take their photograph again. But, at the moment, we have identified one site close to Sydney Olympic Park, another site at the Olympic family hotel, which is the Regent, and we are looking for a third site. It is at those sites that those other 35 per cent will be processed.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—To whom will the identity card be issued? What is the membership of the Olympic family? Roughly, obviously.

**Mr Parmenter**—It comprises approximately 10,200 athletes; approximately 5,100 village accommodated officials; potentially, a further 2,500 team officials who will not be accommodated in the village; then approximately 20,000 members of the media—broadcast

and press media; around 2,500 competition officials—technical officials; and approximately 3,000 IOC, international federation and NOC officials, dignitaries and guests. For the Paralympics it is a very similar type of population, but the number is closer to 10,000.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Just a couple more from me and I will finish for now.

**CHAIR**—Are you staying on the same subject of entry?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—No.

**CHAIR**—Can we go back?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Well, it is actually.

**CHAIR**—Just so that I can understand the entry: I am here in an immigration box and you are an Olympic family member. You come up to me with your accreditation and so it is all whipped through. All your other Olympic members are behind you. Then the chap in the blue shirt comes up after you and he looks at me—he hasn't got anything—and hands over a passport. What happens then?

**Mr Parmenter**—One of the significant advantages that we have over previous games is the capability to take advantage of existing systems and technology that the department of immigration are using related to the electronic travel authority—

**CHAIR**—This guy has not got anything: he is an Olympic member and he has got his passport. He thinks that is all he needs and he hands you the passport, so there is no ETA.

**Mr Parmenter**—Provided he has made an application for accreditation. We are in the process of creating an electronic interface between our database and the systems at the department of immigration. When we receive that application for accreditation, even if it is after the deadline, we will—

**CHAIR**—It will be in the computer. What happens if he or she has not applied for accreditation?

**Mr Parmenter**—He won't have a visa.

**CHAIR**—How do you deal with him at the box?

**Mr Parmenter**—Firstly, they have got a problem. We are putting in place with DIMA what we are calling an entry response team—an emergency response team—to deal with those sorts of situations.

**CHAIR**—In fact, it would be as it is at the airport at the moment. If you have a problem, they press a bell, somebody comes and takes the chap out, so you are not holding up your line?

**Mr Parmenter**—Correct.

**CHAIR**—That is all I wanted to clarify.

**Mr Parmenter**—But there is a special team being put together to make sure that the right people are in a position to talk to each other to establish whether that person should be facilitated or not.

**CHAIR**—And I presume that you will have people there who have expertise in different languages.

**Mr Parmenter**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—You are confident of that?

**Mr Parmenter**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—There being a whole range of languages in the world.

**Mr Parmenter**—Yes. The plan at the moment is to provide for Spanish and French permanently, but to then deploy specialist linguists as we need them or as we envisage particular national groups arriving, because we hope to benefit from some advanced passenger information, both through a standard arrivals and departures process that has been in place for previous games and with the assistance of the department of immigration.

**CHAIR**—But you could get a situation—and I am not trying to be difficult but there could be just an odd one—when somebody arrives who does not have accreditation and has not applied and their language is not accessible at that moment to you.

**Mr Parmenter**—There is another thing that has been put in place by the language services division in SOCOG that allows for a multilingual switchboard. I have not got the exact number of languages at my disposal, but it is a large number of languages. It allows for a particular extension number to be called and you would be able to speak to somebody in each of those many languages. The idea is to have a hands free telephone and to be able to facilitate a conversation with a third party.

**CHAIR**—Right there and then.

**Mrs IRWIN**—Your submission notes:

It is anticipated that all Olympic and Paralympic Family Members would be accorded access to Australia . . . precedent is understood to exist for the rejection of Olympic Family Members who are considered totally unacceptable by the Host Country, by mutual agreement with the IOC.

Can you outline the details of any such incidents occurring in past Olympics and what would SOCOG's reaction be if DIMA recommended that an OPFM who had applied for accreditation not be allowed to enter Australia?

**Mr Parmenter**—The submission says 'a precedent is understood to exist' and, unfortunately, that is the level of our information. We do not have details about exactly what the

circumstances were but it is believed that, in both Barcelona and Atlanta, there was an instance or two where an individual who was, in fact, eligible to be a member of the Olympic family was considered too great a risk or an unacceptable person to the host country.

Our planning, in terms of dealing with such a situation, is related to the creation of what we are calling a chain of escalation. It is quite possible that a number of applicant Olympic family and Paralympic family members may be matched against a list of problem people being held by DIMA. Depending on what the nature of the problem is, that problem needs to be resolved at an appropriate level.

What we are intending to do, as part of our operational planning with DIMA, is to establish each type of possible problem and at what level it is appropriate for that problem to be resolved, and to do that in advance. Even if the situation arises, as you suggest, where the person has not even applied for accreditation and they turn up at the last minute and constitute some sort of problem, we know very quickly at what level that problem has to be resolved and who are the people that need to talk to each other to resolve it. That is the plan at the moment.

**Mrs IRWIN**—We were talking also a minute ago about the number of paralympians that are coming in. What arrangements have been made for their entry to Australia?

**Mr Parmenter**—For immigration, exactly the same arrangements as for the Olympic family. For airport facilitation, obviously slightly different arrangements in order to allow for their disabilities.

**CHAIR**—Just taking up Mrs Irwin's point with the paralympians, obviously some of them will be in wheelchairs and have other physical impediments. I know that you obviously would have looked at exiting them off the plane, where you could get into physical difficulties. Would that slow down the process?

**Mr Parmenter**—Certainly. One of the issues that arose in Atlanta which we are trying to learn from is the discussion as to how best to disembark wheelchair passengers in large numbers from aircraft because effectively their legs are stowed somewhere in the hold. It is a matter of matching those day wheelchairs to the right person as soon as possible upon their disembarkation.

Whether you take somebody to the door of the plane in an aisle chair and match them with their chair immediately or whether you take them to some sort of holding position and then match them all together with their chairs is what is under discussion at the moment. But certainly issues related to wheelchair passengers, blind or visually impaired passengers and the whole raft of disabled people that will be attending the Paralympic Games as participants, officials and guests are being considered.

**CHAIR**—And do they tend to arrive on a normal commercial flight?

**Mr Parmenter**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—And so you have got a mixture of passengers?

**Mr Parmenter**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Is there any problem that you see of that slowing down the exit of the other passengers at all?

**Mr Parmenter**—Quite possibly. When I say we expect them to arrive on normal flights, yes, we do. We also expect some of them to arrive on charters, and yes, in all this planning the Olympic and Paralympic family are only a small proportion of the arriving passengers. That is why we are trying to integrate our planning very carefully with the overall planning of the airport as it has to continue its normal business.

**CHAIR**—I understand you are working on facilitating that there is not going to be a problem?

**Mr Parmenter**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—And so those paralympians can exit quickly and also everybody else, with respect to Immigration?

**Mr Parmenter**—What is being planned today is what we call an affinity diagram which basically takes each client group through the arrivals process. The next stage of planning is to take that to a level of detail where exactly these interfaces are examined.

**CHAIR**—Mr Baird, I am sure you have lots of questions.

**Mr BAIRD**—Yes. I just want to understand how it is going to differ from the previous Olympics. What you are saying basically is that you are going to speed up the process by sending off the application for registration and get the photos, so that when they arrive, instead of having to go through the whole shebang, it will be there with your plastic cover and the photo inside, all ready to go and you hand it to them as soon as they arrive. Is that what you mean?

**Mr Parmenter**—No. There are a couple of ways in which we hope to be able to improve on what was done in Atlanta. The first is to do with the Olympic identity card. In Atlanta they effectively sent a batch of blank visas to each responsible organisation—to each national Olympic committee. So the Australian Olympic Committee would have been sent perhaps 1,000 or 1,200 of these blank visas with a set of instructions on how to fill them out. They needed to be typewritten, one by one, and have a photo applied to them using a seal. Then they all needed to be sent to the US Embassy for standard visa approval, after which they had a hologram applied to them and were sent back to the Australian Olympic Committee which could then dispatch them to all their people around the world.

As far as our planning for that particular requirement is concerned, we have centralised the approval process so that having applied for accreditation to us there is no requirement for the national Olympic committee to make contact with the Australian mission in the territory;

there is no requirement for them to handtype any of these documents. All that administration has been eliminated.

Also, because we are working with what we are calling Olympic and Paralympic travel authority, which is this electronic special purpose visa, the reality is that, even if the person does not receive their combined Olympic identity and accreditation card, they still have a special purpose visa and are still going to be able to board their flight and enter the country. There were plenty of instances in Atlanta where this document obviously did not catch up with the participant that it was meant for. I know that certainly a batch of Australian rowers tried to depart the UK for the States and had a lot of difficulties because their team manager had all their Olympic identity cards and was already in the States.

We hope that we have also eliminated that problem. In Atlanta, there was something like a 25 per cent failure rate of the Olympic identity card because it was either completed not in accordance with the instructions that had been sent, or it did not catch up with the person it was meant for. We hope that 25 per cent has been eliminated by the existence of this electronic special purpose visa.

**Mr BAIRD**—Will you still not get the normal accreditation until after you have gone through?

**Mr Parmenter**—That is the last thing. The document that is sent to these people which was previously just a travel document will become the accreditation. There is not a matter of producing another document; there is another matter of validating the document that you have sent. That validation is, as I say, both the electronic change of status in the computer system and also the physical change of appearance of that document through a lamination process. It is actually a special—

**Mr BAIRD**—When does that actually happen? When do they get that?

**Mr Parmenter**—For the 65 per cent who we are planning to have received that document in advance, we are planning to provide a validation service air side of the primary line in both piers of the international terminal and in both domestic terminals.

**Mr BAIRD**—What happens then? Is it then laminated again and hung around their neck?

**Mr Parmenter**—It has not been laminated. All they have in advance is a piece of card.

**Mr BAIRD**—A piece of card.

**Mr Parmenter**—It is a piece of photographic paper.

**Mr BAIRD**—But you do not have to fill out the forms as you did previously when you arrived and all of that. You just go straight through with this card?

**Mr Parmenter**—That is right.

**Mr BAIRD**—That then goes in. How long does that process take?

**Mr Parmenter**—The validation process is between 60 and 90 seconds.

**Mr BAIRD**—It should be fairly rapid because it was lengthy—

**Mr Parmenter**—Throughput is the key and it offers us a couple of opportunities: one is a significant increase in throughput; the other is the opportunity to provide this service air side of the primary line before you collect your bags because it requires dramatically less infrastructure than the full accreditation process. You do not need any infrastructure to take photographs, to solve problems or to print passes. Basically you just need a laptop PC to change the status and a laminating machine to laminate the pass.

**Mr BAIRD**—Geoff, what is the problem? Why do we have this inquiry? It sounds like you have it by the neck and are solving the problem. It seems to me as though this is going to be faster than it was in other cities. You have already had discussions with the department of immigration on what is needed, highlighting where there may be some queries and pre-solving them. What would you like to see happening that is not happening? For example, this is a little unusual in that everyone will require a visa. Are you making any statements in relation to that? Are you putting in a request that during the period of the Olympics it should be visa free, for example? Does this cover all your needs?

**Mr Parmenter**—I believe our needs are covered as it stands at the moment. I believe we have a genuine opportunity to provide something that is better than has been provided in the past. As far as not having visas, we have tried to operate in the whole arrivals process—airport operations, immigration, customs, everything—within the existing framework of what happens every day.

**Mr BAIRD**—You seem to me to have a better system going than I have seen in the other four Olympics that I have been involved in. I am not sure what our problem is but I am sure we will hear that over succeeding days.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Is that because we have a universal visa system?

**Mr Parmenter**—It is assisted by the technology that exists now within our immigration arrangements—very much so. In fact, we have had contact from future games organising committees asking us about this technology and how they might be able to use it.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Most of that technology was available for Atlanta and they had a 25 per cent failure rate in Atlanta on the system they were using there. They were not using a universal visa system in Atlanta and that is one of the advantages that we have and, indeed, SOCOG have.

**Mr Parmenter**—The centralised approval of visa applications was not available in Atlanta and nor was the electronic interface between the Atlanta databases and the US state department systems.

**CHAIR**—Will the Olympic family be required to fill out the customs declarations? Will there be a form for customs declaration and statistics?

**Mr Parmenter**—I believe as it stands at the moment, yes they will.

**CHAIR**—So what happens if on the customs declaration they have declared they are bringing in something that needs to be examined?

**Mr Parmenter**—With the exception of some rules that have been waived with regard to bringing in particular pins, gifts and things like that, the standard customs arrangements exist. All I can say is that there is some initiative at the moment to provide Customs and the customs computer systems with some data relating to the details of the Olympic family, so that at least Customs can be aware of the people they are dealing with.

**CHAIR**—Was there any problem with that in Atlanta? Was there any clogging up of lines in Atlanta?

**Mr Parmenter**—I do not know. I have not heard that, but I do not know.

**Mrs IRWIN**—You are saying that SOCOG has not approached the Australian Customs Service or any other government agency seeking a more relaxed entry arrangement, especially with the Olympic family. They might be bringing certain drugs into the country. Is that going to be more relaxed? You will not be requesting a search of that?

**Mr Parmenter**—No. We have not requested special treatment in that regard. The only thing that we have raised is that paralympic family members, athletes and coaches may require certain drugs for their condition. I think the intent is to develop a recognised list of those, but otherwise no, no special treatment.

**Mr BAIRD**—What about when they come in through other cities? Obviously this is all geared up for Sydney in a couple of weeks before the games. What happens about the teams that are coming in for advanced training in the other cities?

**Mr Parmenter**—As long as they arrive after 15 August, which is the start of the validity period of this special purpose visa, then they will be accorded access whichever port they enter Australia through. If they then wish to be accredited wherever they are training, we are looking at providing accreditation facilities at the interstate football venues and they can go there if they so wish before they come to Sydney. In fact, we are encouraging people to do that to spread the load as much as we can.

**Mr RIPOLL**—You have mentioned a chain of escalation in case DIMA records reveal something about a person coming through. Can you give us a bit of an explanation about what would happen and how many stages there are to that chain?

**Mr Parmenter**—We do not know yet. It is not established, but it is certainly a priority to establish this year.



**Senator McKIERNAN**—You mention in your submission that there will be a number of people employed from overseas. How many and in what capacities have SOCOG been involved in bringing in some people from overseas to work in Australia?

**Mr Parmenter**—I do not know. I can take that on notice if you wish.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Do you know of any instances that have happened so far?

**Mr Parmenter**—Certainly, there are people from overseas working with us, yes. I would say that that number is relatively small.

**Mr BAIRD**—Can I ask what relevance that is to this inquiry?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I asked Mr Parmenter because he mentions it in 2.7 of his submission.

**Mr Parmenter**—It is mentioned here in the context that we have been facilitated for some people from overseas to work with us as part of the organising committee team, but also to work with us in consulting or seminar capacities and things like that. It just stresses the good working relationship that we have established between our HR department and DIMA's business office in the Rocks.

**Mr BAIRD**—I thought that was outside the terms of our inquiry.

**CHAIR**—They have to have visas to come into the country and they also need to come through. We do not want any hitches from anybody. It certainly comes into the scope of the inquiry.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Do you want it expunged from your submission?

**CHAIR**—We actually allow submissions to widely canvass a whole number of areas.

**Mr Parmenter**—I should say that even in the last couple of months there has been a general memo around the office from senior management making sure that we do not bring anyone from overseas unless it is absolutely essential, unless that expertise does not exist in this country.

**Mr BAIRD**—Does that indicate there has been a problem?

**Mr Parmenter**—I do not think so. I think it is in the interests of maintaining our good relationship with DIMA.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—In 2.5 of your submission you mention test events and you say that all technical and operation aspects will be tested. In particular reference to this inquiry, the issuance of the special purpose visas will not be tested under these provisions, will they?

**Mr Parmenter**—That was a matter under some discussion when we met with DIMA yesterday. It is our—that is, DIMA's and the organising committee's—preference to try to

test the production environment of that interface in some way prior to the games. If the test events this September offer us an opportunity in some limited way to enact that interface to make sure that it works, then that is our preferred course of action.

Obviously, we understand that, in enacting that interface in the production environment, special purpose visas would be created. We understand that there are issues there that remain to be resolved. We do not intend to offer to any individual coming to Australia to participate in test events any sort of formalised immigration assistance in terms of special purpose visas like the Olympics or Paralympics.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—We were told when DIMA appeared in front of us that persons arriving prior to the games commencing on 15 August would have to utilise the normal visa processes of Australia. Are you saying here, in your comments just now, that you are now seeking to go further than what was agreed in 1992 and subsequently between SOCOG, the International Olympic Movement and the Australian government?

**Mr Parmenter**—No, I do not believe we are. As I say, we are not intending to offer anybody any sort of special purpose visa to be valid in advance of 15 August. All we are seeking to do is to test the technical interface. The fact is that, if we do test the technical interface in the production environment, special purpose visas will be created. The chances are that we would look to do it within a very controlled population, who would be told that they had to make their own visa arrangements anyway.

The special purpose visa always in any case exists at a second level to any existing visa in that individual's record. The only instance where it might come to light is within a very small population who have been told that they need to make their own immigration arrangements. If an individual did not, only in that circumstance might you see that a special purpose visa existed. I should say that this is very much a matter that is on the table being discussed. It was an item on an agenda yesterday so it is very much not resolved.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Yes. Obviously we have to come back to DIMA on that. Has the MOU between SOCOG and DIMA been formalised yet?

**Mr Parmenter**—I believe the MOU between the federal government and SOCOG has been formalised, but the schedule relating to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs has not been formalised.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What is the hold-up?

**Mr Parmenter**—I do not know actually. I know it has been drafted and it has been backward and forward a couple of times. I know that there was a financial issue that needed to be resolved and I believe there were meetings in that regard yesterday, inasmuch as what the adjustments to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs' systems were going to cost and things like that. It was certainly discussed at a meeting yesterday.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What involvement has SOCOG had in the government's visitor information campaign? Perhaps the first question is: are you aware of the visitor information campaign?

**Mr Parmenter**—Yes, I have heard of it. I do not know what involvement we have had formally. I know that we have seen some documentation that the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and the Customs Service have prepared. We have had the opportunity to comment on pamphlets and that sort of thing.

One of the things on our operational agenda, in working with the department of immigration over the next 18 months, is how we integrate our information provision to our clients. Certainly the success of the process that we have been talking about is quite dependent on how well our clients understand what they have to do to benefit from it. It is certainly on the agenda.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What can you tell the committee now about the government's information campaign?

**Mr Parmenter**—I can only tell you that we are aware that there is one that exists. That is all.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Do you know how much it is costing?

**Mr Parmenter**—No, I do not personally.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Do you know where it is targeted to?

**Mr Parmenter**—No, I do not.

**Mr BAIRD**—Government information campaign on what?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Visitor information campaign.

**Mr Parmenter**—That is not to say that SOCOG and the Paralympics organising committee do not know. I do not personally.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What is your position within SOCOG?

**Mr Parmenter**—I am program manager for the accreditation program.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—So it probably would be outside your sphere of influence then.

**Mr Parmenter**—The overlap is only inasmuch as it relates to the specific Olympics and Paralympics immigration arrangements we are working with DIMA to provide.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Thank you.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—I am sorry I have only just arrived from Melbourne. I notice the submission mostly deals with the people that are being sponsored by you. Is SOCOG at all concerned about the more general question of visitors to the Olympic Games and the immigration visa arrangements for them?

**Mr Parmenter**—I believe that in a general sense SOCOG is concerned that people seeking to travel to the games have a pleasant experience, and part of that is their arrivals experience.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—I am not talking about that; I am talking about whether they can get into the country. Are you concerned about the possibility that there could be problems for ordinary people, visitors, who want to come? Never mind the ones who have been sponsored officially by you, I mean the rest of the people, people wanting to come from different countries of the world.

**Mr Parmenter**—Speaking specifically from my position in accreditation, I cannot really comment on SOCOG's position on the rest of the population who fall outside the accredited population. I can take it on notice.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—This submission does not deal with this issue, and I find that concerning; I find it concerning that the SOCOG committee gives us a submission which deals exclusively with the issue of those people. This is not a problem I have with you. But I would have thought that there would be somebody else here today from SOCOG who might be able to tell us something about whether they have any concerns in relation to ordinary visitors from all these countries of the world, because this is part of this inquiry. We are concerned—certainly I am concerned anyway—about potential problems about people who may seek to come to Australia from certain countries being rejected.

**CHAIR**—Can I just make sure I understand your question. You are not actually suggesting that SOCOG should be taking over DIMA's role of looking at immigration requirements for visitors, but you are concerned if SOCOG, from its experience worldwide from previous Olympics, has concerns about any interruption to visitor flow.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Exactly; you have summed it up perfectly. I am concerned that SOCOG should be concerned.

**CHAIR**—You are not responsible for immigration, Mr Parmenter—let me make that clear.

**Mr Parmenter**—No, but there is a multicultural affairs program in SOCOG and I could take that question on notice and ask what SOCOG's position is.

**Mr BAIRD**—Can I just support Dr Theophanous. Geoff is obviously highly skilled at his area. What we would be interested in, Geoff, is how we are going to cope with the significant number of people coming out and if we do need a visa-free entry period, for example. It would have been nice to have somebody from SOCOG to advise us of that.

**CHAIR**—Could I presume, Mr Parmenter, that if SOCOG were concerned enough to require a visa-free entry games, they would have put it in their submission that you have presented us today?

**Mr Parmenter**—I think it is reasonable to assume that.

**CHAIR**—So at this stage, unless there is information to the contrary, we will assume that SOCOG is not asking us for a visa-free entry games. We are aware that we will have submissions today which actually make that request. You might get back to us on that, Mr Parmenter.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Madam Chair, with respect, I think that we need a further submission from SOCOG to address the question of whether they have any concerns about general visitors. A number of concerns have been raised in hearings this committee has already had, and with DIMA. I certainly have many concerns—for example, about the fact that DIMA is saying that it is going to implement the existing policy. The existing policy is a policy that differentiates between countries.

**Mr Parmenter**—I said we were trying to operate within the existing parameters, particularly the technical parameters in place for DIMA.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Yes, I understand that.

**Mr Parmenter**—Whether DIMA adjust their policy is—

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—I am not referring to the special arrangements you have for the Olympic family. I think DIMA and you can work that out. I am referring to general visitors, and I am very concerned about what will happen with general visitors in the Olympics. I think SOCOG should be concerned. I think SOCOG should look at what the proposals are from the department of immigration, as put before this committee, and see what they think about that. And I think that matter ought to go to the top levels of SOCOG.

**CHAIR**—I think you will have to get us some information subsequent to the inquiry.

**Mr Parmenter**—Certainly.

**CHAIR**—We would appreciate that. Do we have other questions?

**Mr BAIRD**—Your deputy head, Mr Sloman, has had quite a bit of experience with visa problems for coming into the country. I am sure he would be more than willing to make a comment.

**Mr Parmenter**—Sure.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—If the government were now of a mind to change the universal visa system that applies to Australia, what could that do to the arrangements that SOCOG have now put in place for the accreditation of athletes and other Olympic family members for next year's Olympic Games?

**Mr Parmenter**—Are you asking if visas were not required?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—If we turned the visa system on its heels now, what would it do to you? You have built the accreditation process around the universal visa system, haven't you?

**Mr Parmenter**—We have built the operation on the understanding that people require visas to come here. The way that has been manifested is the plan to build this interface between our databases. If there was no requirement for visas we would not have to build that interface. The process, in terms of sending a document out in advance, would not change.

**CHAIR**—Would we then have slower lines at immigration because we would not have the pre-accreditation process and, with no universal visa, we would have to check passports more thoroughly as they go through?

**Mr Parmenter**—The potential exists that there would be less incentive for an organisation to meet the deadline. At the moment they are meeting the deadline because they believe they need to do it in order to get this document to travel. So if they did not appreciate that they needed to meet a deadline in order to be able to travel, and if they could get accredited when they got here, the possibility exists that there would be less incentive for them to meet a deadline.

**CHAIR**—We could have slower immigration lines as a result?

**Mr Parmenter**—Not necessarily immigration lines, but the accreditation process would be impacted: the more people that do not meet a deadline, the harder it is to provide a decent accreditation process. So any incentive we have for people to meet a deadline is a good one.

**Mr BAIRD**—Conversely, if a number of these people that you are sending out to do not appreciate that they do need a visa to get into Australia, is it likely to be embarrassing as they hit Australia and have not got their visa?

**Mr Parmenter**—Provided they have applied for accreditation, a special purpose visa will have been created for them.

**CHAIR**—If they have not, there is a system to pick them up.

**Mr BAIRD**—I understand that, but I am not talking about the technical requirement; I am talking about the embarrassment for SOCOG if there is some problem with them. If they have not gone through, if they have not sent their papers to you, if they have not appreciated that they need a visa to get into Australia—which may not be surprising, considering that we do have a fairly unique system—is this likely to be embarrassing in terms of senior officials coming from various parts of the world?

**Mr Parmenter**—Let us keep the two things separate. If you apply for accreditation, by default, because of this interface, you can travel.

**Mr BAIRD**—Yes.

**Mr Parmenter**—However, if a person does not apply for accreditation, then we have a problem. If somebody does not let us know that they want to come to the games, then we have a problem. We have in place this response team and this chain of escalation to resolve

those problems. I anticipate that the number of people who come to the games but who have not submitted any application for accreditation whatsoever will be very small.

**Mr BAIRD**—I am sure you will have a follow-up system in place for those who have not responded to you.

**Mr Parmenter**—If we have heard nothing from an entire responsible organisation, certainly.

**Mr BAIRD**—It sounds as if you have a good handle on it all.

**Mr Parmenter**—Thank you.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Suppose they bring other people with them who are not accredited—for example, members of their family, or friends—what happens then? Suppose they do that in the belief that these people will be given automatic access to Australia, what would you do?

**Mr Parmenter**—That is an issue that we have not thought about. As policy stands at the moment, special immigration arrangements are only being provided for people who are eligible to be accredited. Unless those relatives form part of a team delegation from a NOC, they would not be eligible to be accredited and they would be expected to undergo normal immigration procedures.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—This is the point that Mr Baird is getting at. It is not just the question of those who are getting accredited, the actual individuals, what if some very senior official turns up with a group of people, and he has his own and perhaps his wife's accreditation but not accreditation for the rest of them, what happens then? You could find yourself in an embarrassing position.

This is why I raised the earlier question. It seems to me that you need to have in place a clear understanding of what is going to apply to other visitors. They would obviously be classified as other visitors but if some of the current rules that are applied to other visitors from some countries of the world were to apply, those people would never get in in the space of the time of the Olympics simply because a visitors visa entry from some countries, even if they are let in, and often they are not, involves a very substantial process of interrogation. This is what concerns me about the possibility that we could be embarrassed.

**Mr Parmenter**—In response to that, as far as people arriving with an athlete or with an official is concerned, that would fall within the remit of this emergency response team. Their brief would be broad enough to deal not just with eligible members of the accredited Olympic and Paralympic families but also with people who arrived in those sorts of circumstances. Although the formal brief of that response team has not been created, I am sure that that would fall within it.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Why are you so sure? I do not think Immigration is so sure. You just told us that those who are actually accredited will be all right, but why would people arriving with them be all right?

**Mr Parmenter**—I am not saying they would be all right; I am saying that the team could address that situation. I am also saying that that is a different thing to the general visitor for the games who would not be part of the brief of this emergency response team, as far as I am aware.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—It does seem to me that we need some clarification of this question as well.

**CHAIR**—Taking Dr Theophanous's point a little further, and getting away from the Olympic family, would SOCOG be embarrassed if it came to light that there were people who were trying to get to the Olympic Games from some countries—not ETA countries, but others—who had not had their visas approved in time, or who had been refused visas? Would SOCOG see that as an embarrassment?

**Mr Parmenter**—Members of the Olympic and Paralympic families?

**CHAIR**—I mean ordinary, non-family members, tourists. Would publicity about that embarrass SOCOG, if people had applied to get in here from non-ETA countries and either had not had their visa issued or had it refused?

**Mr Parmenter**—I have to say that that is not part of my brief to respond to that. I can take that with this and include it in the information we come back with to you.

**CHAIR**—All right. Deputy Chair, do you have a couple more questions?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Yes, I do, and it is in relation to the visitor information campaign and why exactly such a campaign was put in place. I come back to DIMA's submission to the committee. I have picked up the details of that at paragraphs 7 and 7.2. I note that SOCOG was not at all mentioned on the way through that campaign, and if you are not involved it is probably not the best thing. Perhaps it is not too late to get involvement from SOCOG.

Can I also go back to an earlier question I asked you about the MOU between SOCOG and the department. You said there was an MOU in existence between SOCOG and the government. The department's submission at 5.21 states:

DIMA is entering into an MOU with SOCOG detailing entry and accreditation arrangements. One of the critical issues will be to ensure that SOCOG does not accredit persons who have not been cleared by DIMA for entry. The MOU will also spell out these services for which cost recovery principles will apply.

If you can follow up on that question I asked you about what is reason for the delay in formalising that MOU, the committee would be grateful.

**Mr RIPOLL**—There has been a lot of discussion about the accreditation process, but most of it seems to revolve around Sydney airport itself. Given that people will be travelling to other airports, what is being done at those other airports to ensure the same standard?



**Mr Parmenter**—I know that the Australian Customs Service people have put together a group of individuals representing each of the ports to try to ensure that there is consistency of service wherever arriving Olympic and Paralympic family members may enter the country. I am not aware of work done to date with the other airports in Australia, but I can check the status on that for you.

**Mr RIPOLL**—I think there needs to be a consistency, but further than that, if there is any special work that Sydney airport is doing, I think that should be shared with the other airports.

**Mr Parmenter**—I agree completely.

**CHAIR**—Dr Theophanous, can you ask your last question please?

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Yes. It follows on from the question from Senator McKiernan. We really do need to see this MOU because we need to know what is going to happen in the case where Immigration says at the beginning of the process, ‘We are not very happy with this individual coming into Australia.’ If you are going to clear them, what happens if Immigration raises objections? What are you going to do then? Is there in the MOU some process which would cover these potential conflicts, especially from some countries where we are extremely tough with visitor visas?

**Mr Parmenter**—The draft that I have seen of the MOU, as it stands today, does not. But the MOU is drafted at a high level of detail.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Perhaps we had better try and get hold of this MOU and have a look at it, and also—

**CHAIR**—Why do we not ask DIMA for it?

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Perhaps you should address this issue specifically because this is potentially an area of some concern, especially from those countries where visitor visa applications are treated in a very tough way.

**CHAIR**—Mr Parmenter, thank you very much for appearing before us today. You will be sent a transcript from the *Hansard*. If you have any questions on that, please get back to us. In the meantime we might get back to you if we find there is more information that we require. Thank you very much for your patience with us today.

**Mr Parmenter**—Thank you.

[10.08 a.m.]

**CASH, Mr Phillip Laurence Ernest, Manager, Olympics and Industry Relations, Sydney Airports Corporation Ltd**

**DOWNY, Mr Christopher John, Manager, Corporate and Government Relations, Sydney Airports Corporation Ltd**

**ELLIS, Mr Kimber Chisholm, Manager, Passenger Services, Sydney Airports Corporation Ltd**

**CHAIR**—I remind you that these are proceedings of the parliament and any misleading information is regarded as a contempt of parliament. Do you wish to make any amendments to the submission you have already given us?

**Mr Cash**—No, we do not, but I have a brief statement that I would like to read out if that suits and I can table it if you wish.

**CHAIR**—Please go ahead.

**Mr Cash**—Sydney Airports Corporation Ltd has an Olympic related corporate objective of providing the best arriving and departing impressions of Sydney for our Olympic and Paralympic visitors. Its infrastructure investment program has been brought forward to provide sufficient capacity and enhanced services to handle demand over the games period. Redevelopment of the international terminal will provide an efficient platform for the safe, secure and friendly transfer of passengers from their aircraft to ground transport services and customs, immigration and quarantine processing. Particular attention was given to design requirements for the baggage handling system and passenger check-in to ensure that they met forecast demand and service performance levels. The majority of these improvements will be delivered by December 1999 and the balance of finishing works by May 2000.

Planning and facilitation of Olympic and Paralympic visitors has been undertaken in concert with customs, immigration and quarantine agencies under the auspices of the Sydney Airport Olympic Planning Group. Issues in relation to entry and exit arrangements during the games period include: firstly, dependency of Australian Customs Service, the ACS, planned processing rate of 6,000 passengers per hour on a 60 per cent uptake of advance passenger processing, APP, by airlines; secondly, flexibility in the nomination of travelling groups to be streamed through inwards and outwards immigration lines; thirdly, flexibility in the siting of Olympic and Paralympic accreditation and validation processing areas upstream of the inwards immigration line; fourthly, flexibility to deploy ACS officers to additional processing points within the terminal and off airport, including Bankstown airport, if service levels warrant; and, lastly, delivery of CIQ services at a level consistent with customer service levels across the airport community.

Sydney airport's submission responds to the issues raised in the joint standing committee's information guidelines. We would be pleased to provide any further information required.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Mr Cash. How well are the changes at the international airport going? Is everything on track there?

**Mr Cash**—Yes, it is. Perhaps Mr Ellis can fill you in on the details for the international terminal.

**Mr Ellis**—The program for development of the international terminal—that is, the upgrade that is currently underway—is on schedule. The steel works have been delayed by about a week given the current weather, but the internal works are moving ahead. We are over a week ahead on the works in the basement. So we are ahead anywhere where we are under cover. We are confident that the program will be completed on time.

**CHAIR**—So you are absolutely on target.

**Mr Ellis**—Absolutely.

**CHAIR**—That is good to know.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—In relation to the government visitors information campaign on the Olympics, has Sydney airport had an involvement anywhere along the line with that campaign?

**Mr Cash**—Most of that has been developed through the CIQ agencies. We have made ourselves available to be involved in that. Certainly, as time progresses, we will work with the various agencies, including the tourism agencies, to have linked Internet sites so that we can spread the information as far as possible.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Have you been intimately involved in it so far?

**Mr Cash**—No, we have not.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You are aware of it?

**Mr Cash**—We are, yes.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Do you know what they are actually doing there? What is the campaign actually doing?

**Mr Cash**—The intent of the campaign, as I understand it, is to provide information to travel agents, NOCs and people who will be travelling to Australia on the arrangements they are likely to meet here in Australia—that is, the requirements for documentation, the requirements on quarantine and so forth.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You mentioned Bankstown airport. Is there provision to bring Bankstown into the operation for aircraft for the Sydney games? I thought the nearest airports we were looking at for spillover was larger ones like Canberra and that.

**Mr Cash**—Bankstown airport is an important airport as part of the Sydney airport group. It will accept much of the corporate aviation that would perhaps come to Sydney. It does not have any processing capability at this stage. It has a terminal. What we are suggesting is that there be some flexibility available so that, if we can look at particular windows of processing, the intercontinental aircraft coming across to Australia can perhaps come to Bankstown for their processing within a certain window and be processed at Bankstown instead of stopping at Sydney, Cairns or Brisbane on the way in for their processing. That offers visitors to Australia a high level of service.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What size aircraft can Bankstown handle?

**Mr Cash**—Bankstown can take up to Gulfstream 4 corporate aircraft, and it will probably move on to BAE 146 size aircraft.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What are the implications of that for air traffic control in the Sydney region? Are there any?

**Mr Cash**—No.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—The other matter you mention in your submission is the curfew at Sydney airport. Have there been any requests for changes to the curfew that operates now?

**Mr Cash**—The Department of Transport and Regional Services is a member of the Sydney Airport Olympic Planning Group. They have been involved in the work-up of demand studies with us. They are aware of the demand profiles for each day. All of the work that we have done has basically been in line with the curfew and the cap. We are saying that we can accommodate the demand under normal operating conditions within the curfew and within the movement cap.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—That is to your knowledge. The Sydney Airport Corporation are not seeking alterations to the curfew in order to facilitate your role in the Olympics?

**Mr Cash**—The planning that we have done has been with those constraints in place.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Thank you.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Mr Cash, in your submission you refer to the possibility of providing off-site check-in facilities. Can you explain how that would work? In particular, if it is on the Olympic village, what other airlines would get access?

**Mr Cash**—That issue is being dealt with at the moment by SOCOG, the official carrier, Ansett, and their partners. At this stage, Ansett is the sole handler that has access to the village; they will actually have a check-in point there. But the scope of the off-airport check-in is basically that we will be checking in bags and passengers up to six hours before their flight time. Given that the peak is, in fact, on the day after closing, it gives us the opportunity to do those check-ins either after people come back from the closing ceremony or beforehand. So we are actually moving their bags from the village and processing them at the airport, so when they arrive they can go direct to the departure lounges.

**Mr RIPOLL**—So it is only for people leaving? There is no entry off-site check-ins?

**Mr Cash**—No, it is for people who are departing from Sydney.

**Mrs IRWIN**—So it is only Ansett that would have this facility—no other airline?

**Mr Cash**—We are hoping that it will be extended. We understand that SOCOG has been having discussions, certainly with Qantas, and with other carriers. The off-airport check-in is not necessarily restricted to the Olympic village. United Airlines conduct at the moment off-airport check-in at the Sheraton Hotel just near the airport. This can be extended to other hotels and accommodation centres during the Olympics simply by virtue of setting up the appropriate check-in facilities.

**CHAIR**—Is that desirable for the efficiency of departing passengers?

**Mr Cash**—It certainly is. It means that those people who go through the off-airport check-in are going to have a good level of service as they pass through a very busy terminal at the international airport. Because of the community mix in Sydney, there will be a lot of visiting friends and relatives, so usually there are a lot of meeters and greeters farewelling people. That means our check-in areas will be quite crowded, the kerbside will be crowded. So, if we are able to bring people through and bypass that check-in process, that has a benefit, firstly, for the passengers and, secondly, for the airport processing.

**CHAIR**—Are you actively encouraging airlines to do this at hotels?

**Mr Cash**—Yes, we are. There is initially a cost involved in doing it, and that is something they are weighing up against the service levels that they can provide.

**CHAIR**—Can you tell us what that cost is?

**Mr Cash**—No, I am sorry. I cannot.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Will you be giving the same access to any airline that applies through you to do this off-site? Will you give them the same access?

**Mr Cash**—Absolutely, yes. It is certainly in our favour.

**CHAIR**—You have given 7,200 as your scheduled arriving and 7,630 per hour as your scheduled departing as your maximum, I believe. That was on page 3 of your submission ‘to cater for growth in traffic to the year 2003 and to facilitate maximum busy hour rates of 7,200 scheduled arriving and 7,630 scheduled departing’.

**Mr Cash**—They are the departing seats. It is important to note that. Mr Ellis could speak to the difference there in terms of seats and passengers.

**Mr Ellis**—When we talk about capacity, we talk about seat capacity. That is based on a factor that is applied, based on the type of aircraft and the number of passengers that are likely to arrive on those aircraft. When we talk about 7,200 scheduled arriving seats per

hour, that may equate to a different number of actual passengers coming through the terminal—less than that 7,200; it will depend on the factors that are applied for the capacity over that period. The figure of 7,200 seats would equate to around 6,500 passengers, based on what we expect to get over that Olympic period.

**CHAIR**—What happens if you have scheduled arriving aircraft, and then you have a couple of extra aircraft arriving off schedule for weather reasons or whatever? What is your ability to cope then?

**Mr Ellis**—This is an issue that we deal with on a regular basis. Quite a large number of the aircraft that arrive at Sydney arrive off schedule. We have in our capacity a buffer to handle that off-schedule capacity. For example, in the number of parking bays that we have allocated for aircraft, we schedule for 28 and, at the end of this construction program, we will actually have 34 bays. So we will always have a capacity; at the peak of our capacity of 2,300, for example, we will always have four bays as an off-schedule capacity at our terminal. In the terminal processing capacity, throughout the terminal we have a buffer that we apply all the way through that allows us to handle a degree of off-schedule activity.

**CHAIR**—You are confident about your end of the set-up: that when people arrive, no matter what the situation, you can cope. Are you confident about the arrival when it gets to the immigration booths and the customs? Are you confident that the plans that you have put in to move these people, even when you get extra people, will be carried through into immigration or do you fear that there may be a build-up at that level?

**Mr Ellis**—It is important to note that the terminal will be very full at the peak operating days of the Olympic period. We understand and appreciate that there will be a lot of people processing through the terminal, and that is why, as Mr Cash mentioned earlier, we will encourage wherever possible to have off-airport check-in and processing. Certainly for arriving passengers, we appreciate our capacity that we are building for now, at 2,300 capacity, will be sufficient to handle the peak loads that come through over the Olympics. Based on the figures that Immigration and Customs have given us, we are confident that as they move through the terminal and get to the processing lines we will be able to maintain a level of service—we have used IATA level C as a guide for that—through those processing points.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Why are you so confident? Qantas Airlines, in their submission to us, say that they are very concerned at the number of booths.

**Mr Ellis**—I am only estimating now and not having seen that submission, but my guess would be that their concern is based on the processing rate at those booths. If you apply the number of booths to the processing rate that we have been advised by Customs, then we are confident that there will not be congestion at the immigration booths. As Mr Cash just read out, one of the issues or concerns that we have expressed is that Customs is able to meet those processing figures that we have used as a planning guide for the construction of the terminal.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—If a number of people arrive who have problems with their visas, given the number of booths you could have thousands of people waiting, couldn't you?

**Mr Cash**—I understand that the Australian Customs Service, and Immigration, will have a special group of people who will be able to deal with that by moving those people to the site to ensure that the streaming continues.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—When you say you understand, have you got anything in writing from Immigration about that? Have you worked out any practice.

**Mr Cash**—No, I haven't, but we have been told that they will set this team up during the Olympic period.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—You have been told in what? Formal discussions?

**Mr Cash**—Yes, in a number of meetings—the Sydney airport planning group meetings that we conduct.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—If you have got any minutes of those meetings we would be interested to have a look at them. The immigration department do say a lot of things, but it is very important to have actual commitments. If you have got any commitments we would be interested to see them—I certainly would.

**Mr Cash**—I will take your advice on that point and will request that in writing.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—And forward it to the committee?

**Mr Cash**—It is a very important issue and, as I think we mentioned in our submission, the uptake of APP is critical in this whole process. It is critical in terms of the number of desks, and we want to see a risk management plan to cover that issue.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Will you actually be able to physically increase the number of counters through which people go in immigration or will that not be possible?

**Mr Ellis**—We have discussed this with the Customs Service, based on if, for some reason, we were to be advised later down the track in the construction program that they were not able to meet the 6,000—for example, if the take-up of APC or APP is less than expected. We have a number of options for increasing the counters in that area. We have modelled those, we have got those prepared. If the issue were to arise, I believe we would be able to put the extra counters in.

**CHAIR**—It has been noted that at present there becomes a backlog in the customs area and that it pushes back into the baggage collection area. Are you, as the corporation, aware of that?

**Mr Ellis**—Yes, definitely. We have been working very closely with Customs over the last 12 months to assist them in improving the processing rates at the current international

terminal: the current number of baggage reclaim devices, the current number of inspection desks at the secondary line—that is the second point of inspection. Right now we are engaged in a smaller building program that will enhance the number of secondary line exits—places where people can present their second lot of documents once they have picked their bags up—and so reduce those lines that run back into the baggage reclaim areas.

As part of the construction program we will be delivering a significantly increased number of inspection desks in the northern part of the terminal. We will actually go from nine to eighteen inspection desks, so the lines that currently occur in those areas will be significantly reduced. Obviously, we have a desire to manage those right now so that it does not occur, but those initiatives that we are putting in now will also have benefit during the Olympics.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—They will be ready by the Olympics?

**Mr Ellis**—Definitely. In fact, the additional exits into the secondary line will be completed within the next two months and those additional inspection desks will be completed by December this year.

**Mr BAIRD**—A couple of things. Firstly, I wonder about your statement that you can manage it, given the cap, given the curfew and given the fact that on certain days you are up near the cap without having the Olympics and the numbers coming through. One of the advantages of this type of inquiry is that you can lay it all out. If you think there is a problem, then it is an opportunity to highlight it. The first part of my question is: are you confident that you can manage it?

The second part is related to having spoken to James Stogner, the manager of the Atlanta airport. He said that one of the things that he had not quite expected was the upgrading of the aircraft: where previously they had 737s, it suddenly became 767s, and 767s became 747s, et cetera. Have we anticipated that we will see with the Olympics that we are not working on the current configuration of aircraft and that we are likely to see a big escalation in size? Have we the capacity to handle that?

**Mr Cash**—On the first part of the question, on managing demand across the day, the runway slot regime or system that is in place now will be very much a demand management tool for us. Working with the group that coordinates the slots, we are actually going out a month earlier seeking bids for runway slots for that particular period, so we will then be able to get an appreciation for the demand over the games period. What we will do in terms of managing that demand is allocate slots to the airlines that have traditional services and particular slot times, but also we will look at moving the additional services and charters into the off-peak periods. So we can say to an airline seeking a slot at Sydney airport, 'First of all, you need an entry slot, an exit slot and a parking slot to be able to operate into Sydney airport.' That way we can manage the demand and spread it across the day.

There is also the issue of a situation of inclement weather and reduced runway capacity. Our demand management then goes into a contingent mode and we look at how we can spread aircraft across the remainder of the day. That is an issue that is being addressed by the Department of Transport and Regional Services.



**Mr BAIRD**—Does that mean that, yes, you think it should be okay but you will not really know until a month before what it is like when you go out and ask people for slot times?

**Mr Cash**—We are seeking slot times a year ahead, so we are working well ahead. The forecasts that we have now of demand for aircraft are based on passengers. We look first at what are the passenger flows and then we look at how the aircraft distribution is likely to carry those passengers, the types of aircraft, whether there will be an increase in size of aircraft—and that is something that we are anticipating. In Atlanta airport you would have noticed that they largely have quite small aircraft operating there—their international component is quite small—so they feel an increase in the size of aircraft far more than we would. The domestic airlines are looking at moving larger aircraft into their domestic services where required, and certainly the international carriers are as well.

**Mr BAIRD**—I will follow up with a question to Mr Downy. How do you anticipate the community reaction to these increased flights? Is there a possibility that we may see blockades of the airport to express the concerns of community groups about the noise factor?

**Mr Downy**—I do not think that would be the case. The whole development that is happening now at Sydney airport, the Sydney Airport 2000 Project, is based upon our projected figures for the year 2003. That number of movements, the type of capacity that we are talking about bringing forward for the Olympic Games, is very well known out in the community. We regularly brief the Sydney Airport Community Forum on all capital works projects that are taking place at Sydney airport. We regularly brief local councils. We brief other community groups that are not represented on the community forum. We keep them fully informed of all the issues concerning the Olympics, so I would not see that as being a problem.

**Mr BAIRD**—Thank you.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Hasn't your figure on the number of people arriving gone up between the first submission and the second?

**Mr Cash**—Yes, it has. That is based on information that we have received from SOCOG in the interim. What we have done is adopt the travel figures or demand figures from SOCOG for the Olympic family and Paralympic family and also a suggestion of the sponsored guest numbers. That information was not available when we first started our forecasting process. In December we did an update of our forecasting which has now been out to industry comment.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—What happens if that figure increases dramatically?

**Mr Cash**—Our feedback from the industry is that the upper forecasts—we had planned within an envelope—are in fact high. Comparing them against the Department of Transport and Regional Services forecasts, again, they are high. But we are saying that they are upper forecasts and we have looked to ensure that our facilities have the capacity to meet those upper forecasts.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Do those figures take into account other visitors or are they just based on the Olympic family?

**Mr Cash**—No, they take in the base traffic which will be travelling, and certainly there will be base traffic which is displaced during the Olympics period, and the Olympics spectators and the Olympic family—those three categories.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—How would you be able to estimate the total Olympics spectators at this point?

**Mr Cash**—That is the most difficult and critical issue. The number of tickets per person visiting the games has been estimated at around 2.4 tickets on average across the board. That is the best information that is available at the moment. That figure will be able to be refined as time goes by and tickets are actually purchased by groups, by NOCs, as they look at their allocation and either accept or send some back. We need to start with a forecast which we can then refine as time progresses.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—If the figure does go up beyond the 43,000 or whatever, would you be able to cope?

**Mr Cash**—It depends on how far above that figure. It is a question of how far do you go.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—What is the maximum level you could cope with the day before the Olympics?

**Mr Cash**—On the day before the Olympics? We have said in our submission that there are capacity constraints and we have outlined what those constraints are, so we are saying basically that we can manage those levels of passenger throughput. And they are above what the forecasts are.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—So you could handle a significant figure above the 43,000, if you had to?

**Mr Cash**—The capacities and demand are outlined on page 2 of our submission.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Rather than me reading the whole graph, could you just give me a straight answer to this: how many more than the 43,000 can you handle on the day before the Olympics?

**Mr Cash**—The capacity is considered more in terms of hourly throughput because, for a day, it depends on the profile during the day. If we look towards the figure here, we are saying that the capacity for inwards is around 6,000 per hour and a departure check-in of 4,200.

**CHAIR**—Presumably we are going to have some backloading on the aircraft coming in—they will be offering cheaper fares for Australians to leave Australia. Have you looked at what number that is going to be and what sort of pressure that is going to put on the airport

because we are not going to have only the incoming visitors and family, we will also have Australians taking advantage of the cheap fares on the backloading.

**Mr Cash**—I guess the key issue on that is that there are a certain number of aircraft that can come in and out of Sydney airport within one hour, so the backloading will simply be part of that equation.

**CHAIR**—And does the added number of people not place any pressure on your actual physical structure?

**Mr Ellis**—It is probably worth noting that operations at the international terminal are quite segregated in arriving and departing activities. We have a capacity for departing passengers and that is contained on an upper level. The arriving passengers will largely be contained on the lower levels. So they are almost separate operations and the only constraint on that, as Mr Cash has pointed out, is the actual number of parking spaces available for aircraft. I am confident that we will have the level of capacity that is outlined in here. So, given our check-in, that would be around 4,200 people an hour that we will be able to process outwards as outgoing passengers.

**Mrs IRWIN**—In your figures you are saying there is going to be an increase of 1,600 passengers, but there has been no equivalent increase in the number of inward bags, which still remains at 10,000. Why is this?

**Mr Ellis**—I am not sure that I can actually find the reference you are talking about. I can just assure you that the new baggage system we are in the process of installing now will have an inwards capacity of 12,400 bags an hour. It is actually mentioned in the submission at page 4 in the fourth paragraph. It is worth noting that that is the baggage system capacity. Our baggage system is made up of a series of conveyors which deliver bags from the apron level, either up to reclaim devices—the big carousels—for inwards baggage, or from the check-in down to the apron for outgoing baggage.

The actual part of the operation from the end of the belt to the aircraft, or from the aircraft to the end of the belt, is controlled by the airlines. The capacity of 12,400 per hour is a capacity that the baggage delivery will give us. We are then dependent on the airlines to maintain a rate of bags up to those belts to meet that.

**Mrs IRWIN**—I know I am getting away from baggage now, but I would like to go on to visas. The Tourism Council of Australia is advocating that visa-free travel to low risk visitors should be introduced in time for the Olympics. Do you support this proposal?

**Mr Downy**—We do not actually have a position on that. We just abide by the policies of the government of the day.

**Mr RIPOLL**—In your own submission you say that the key issue for Sydney airport is the rate of APP take-up and how that risk will be managed. If that take-up does not reach the 60 per cent that you are looking for—if it stays around 20, 25 or 30 per cent—what will be the ramifications?

**Mr Cash**—The ramifications will basically be that there will be increased demand during the Olympic period and the processing rates will not match those arrival rates, and there will be a need for additional desks to be able to handle that processing.

**Mr RIPOLL**—It is fairly significant if the take-up rate does not reach 60 per cent.

**Mr Cash**—Yes, indeed.

**Mr RIPOLL**—What are we doing to ensure that we do get a higher rate?

**Mr Cash**—I understand that the Australian Customs Service are pursuing that, and certainly the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs is one of their key priorities. They have been working with Singapore Airlines and the other airlines to get that uptake to the target.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Quite a number of submissions have relied on that figure also. Everything seems to revolve back around this APP and, if we do not get that, then we have significant problems.

**Mr Cash**—It is quite a critical issue.

**Mrs IRWIN**—Has Sydney airport made any special arrangements for the assistance of paralympians at the airport?

**Mr Cash**—Yes. The paralympians are obviously a key group for us. In the design of the terminal we meet all the statutory requirements in the provision of facilities for the disabled. The facilitation process that we will put in place for the Paralympic Games has been tested with the recent gold cup. We are looking at how we will move people expeditiously from the aircraft gate, getting wheelchairs to these people and then moving them through discrete passageways to their transport.

The transport will be set up in such a way that there will be ramps providing quick access into buses that have been specially designed or cleared to carry the paralympians. Given also that there is only a certain percentage of paralympians who are in wheelchairs, it does not mean that the whole 6,500 will be a problem.

**CHAIR**—If there are no more questions, I would like to thank you for appearing before us today. As you would be aware, the committee in the last parliament came to the airport and the deputy chair has suggested that that would be useful for the new committee.

**Mr Cash**—Yes, indeed. I would be very pleased to organise that.

**CHAIR**—We will be contacting you to set that up. You will be sent a transcript. If you have any questions about that transcript, please get back to us and, of course, we will get back to you if we have any more questions. Thank you very much for appearing here today.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.44 a.m. to 11.01 a.m.**

**KERR, Mr John Charles, General Manager, International Relations, Qantas Airways Ltd**

**LONG, Mr Trevor, Manager, Group Facilitation, Qantas Airways Ltd**

**O'DONNELL, Mr Brian Michael, Manager, Airport Systems, Qantas Airways Ltd**

**CHAIR**—I would like to welcome representatives of Qantas here today to give evidence to the committee. Is there any amendment you would like to make to your submission?

**Mr Kerr**—No amendments.

**CHAIR**—Is there any opening statement you would like to make before the committee asks questions?

**Mr Kerr**—Could I have an opportunity to raise a couple of matters by way of summary? We thank the committee for the opportunity to comment on this issue. While not the official Olympic carrier, we hold a position in the market which will mean that we will be carrying a substantial number of members of the Olympic family as well as many of the spectators and other people associated with the games. We are contracted to provide a range of services such as check-in and unloading and loading and so on to the vast majority of foreign airlines that will be participating in the carriage of people for the Olympics. That is the perspective that I think we bring before the committee.

You will be in receipt of our submission and essentially we have raised three issues. We have some concerns about whether the targeted 60 per cent of passengers that might be cleared under the APP process—the express process—will be achieved. The significance of that is that that has been a key assumption in the planning that has been undertaken for the arrangements at the airport. To that extent, we are a little concerned that alternative plans have not yet been made evident. No additional primary modules are being planned for pier B arrivals. We have also expressed some concerns about likely congestion at the secondary exit channel, the green secondary channel. What we have said in the submission probably speaks for itself on that matter. The third major issue is that we acknowledge that passengers will arrive at Sydney in a staggered manner but I think experience of other games has shown that there will be a mass exodus at the conclusion of the games. We are concerned that departing members of the Olympic family using Qantas's services and those of our client airlines may receive different processing services from other family members. There may well be the possibility of adverse consequences for some departing passengers should that happen. They are the three particular issues we are focused on. There are others, of course, and we would be happy to receive questions on those or any other matters.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Mr Kerr. What do you think is the likely uptake of APP and APC?

**Mr Long**—It is difficult to pin an actual figure. I know that DIMA and the ACS have been working on developing a memorandum of understanding for airlines to try and increase the numbers. At the present moment, Qantas processes about 20 per cent of its passengers

under the APP system. It is conceivable that we may increase that by another seven per cent or eight per cent before the Olympics are upon us.

**CHAIR**—In your submission you have given reasons why it may not be taken up by other airlines. What is the attitude of Qantas to this system? Do you find it problematical at all in the use of it?

**Mr Long**—If we can step back a little bit into history, the APP came from an initiative from Qantas, DIMA and the Australian Customs Service in developing the advanced passenger clearance scheme, which we now collectively call Express. The APP goes slightly forward in terms of the computer links between the airlines and the border agencies. The MOU which is being developed offers a number of incentives to participants in the scheme, such as remission of some immigration fines down the track. We are in the process, at the present moment, of determining our attitude to the MOU, trying to take all of these objective points of view, in terms of immigration fines, and subjective points of view, in terms of facilitation, into consideration. I am afraid that is incomplete as at this stage. I have had some initial findings which indicate to me that, at the end of the day, may not be a great development forward but we still have a long way to go.

**CHAIR**—I think what you have said then is quite crucial. I think we would be very interested in exploring with you your attitude to this because, as you say, the games entrants have been predicated on 60 per cent although there are some contingencies for less. Qantas's experience with this is very important. Before I leave that, and I am sure the other committee members will take it up, when people are checking in at international ports do you find that at any time this will slow down your lines and therefore create problems, not on board in Australia but people coming to Australia in international terminals?

**Mr Long**—That is part of the assessment we are doing. Yes, it does take longer to check a passenger in using the Express system, for want of a better way to describe it, in terms of the fact that we have to collect certain data. That adds to our processing time offshore and increases the size of queues. There is a cost inherent in doing that; there is a cost inherent if we have to look at increasing the number of check-in positions in order to reduce the dwell time of the passenger. I might add that at some airports we simply cannot increase the number of check-in counters, because the counters are controlled by the airport. They have allocated us only X number, and we cannot go X plus one or X plus three because we simply cannot get it.

**CHAIR**—Would I be fair in saying that while it speeds up arrival at the Australian port it has some certain detrimental effects on passengers coming to Australia because they are caught in the queues if this takes longer?

**Mr Long**—Yes, there is certainly an added time to the check-in which has an impact upon passengers standing in line.

**CHAIR**—Have you estimated the average length of time that people have to wait in international ports because of the system?

**Mr Long**—That is, in fact, part of the study that we are undertaking at the present moment. The result is that it is between 45 seconds to a minute in time. I might add that the benefit to our customers, of course, is quite good when they arrive in Australia.

**CHAIR**—Yes, I pointed out that this is the advantage but then it may be offset. The 45 seconds is not much if you only have two or three people in the queue. If you have 30 people in the queue it obviously adds up. Could you tell me what sorts of queues you look at at international ports?

**Mr Long**—I am sorry, Madam Chair, I do not have those figures. At each airport it is very different.

**CHAIR**—I imagine that it would be. When will you have your study completed?

**Mr Long**—I have to have it completed by the middle of March.

**CHAIR**—Will this be confidential, or will that be available to the committee?

**Mr Long**—It is being done for our purposes. However, I can see that there are some elements of it we can release to the committee.

**CHAIR**—The committee would be very grateful to receive that, thank you.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Could you just describe the difference between the two systems—the electronic as opposed to the visible visa that is contained in a passport?

**Mr O'Donnell**—I think there are two issues there. The ETA, electronic travel authority, which replaces a visa, is not necessarily a component of APP. We are not on APP at the moment; we are using the APC, the original link that we developed with DIMA. Every customer that we process will be listed in the DIMA database by virtue of the fact that they have a visa or a resident return authority, they are an Australian passport holder, they are a New Zealand passport holder or they are the holder of an ETA. So virtually every person who is preparing to come into this country and basically leaving this country has a record in the DIMA database.

All we simply do is, via a systems interface, capture the passport number. More than likely we type it in or sometimes we use some automation by swiping the document, but by and large it is typing it in with the check digit or with the first four letters of the family name. That information is passed to the DIMA database, whereby they come back with a response saying, 'That number belongs to Mr Bruce Baird'—name, sex, date of birth and so on, in the same format that appears on the front page of your passport. Our check-in agent simply looks at that, confirms the data that has come back out of the system and basically presses the button, confirms the process and prints the automatic card.

The spread of ETAs is not necessarily linked into the APP in my mind. Maybe there are other views about that but from looking at it from a systems perspective where you are interfacing your check-in process with a database managed by a government organisation, it

makes no difference to the system whether it is an ETA, an Australian passport, return authority, business visa or whatever.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I am trying to understand what you have just said. I turn to your submission about the ETAs and how the ETA consumes more time for check-in than a manual operation.

**Mr O'Donnell**—Absolutely.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Can you relate that to what you have just told the committee?

**Mr O'Donnell**—That is just on a pure processing perspective, because the customer does not have any visible visa in their passport. So there has to be an electronic check, regardless of whether you are processing using APC or whether you are using the department of immigration SITA system to check whether that customer actually has a valid ETA. Does that make sense?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Yes. Where does the extra time come in?

**Mr O'Donnell**—The extra time is generated by an ETA by virtue of the fact that there is no visible evidence in the passport to determine whether an ETA exists. Previously the check-in agent could look, open the passport and find the hard copy of the visa, read that and be satisfied that a visa exists for entry into Australia. Now the agent is compelled to make an electronic entry into the SITA CPS DIMA database to determine, firstly, whether an ETA exists. I think where the confusion lies is that doing that, making that check, is not necessarily creating an Express clearance entry or an APP.

**Mr BAIRD**—How long is that process taking?

**Mr O'Donnell**—To check?

**Mr BAIRD**—Yes.

**Mr O'Donnell**—It would be a minimal amount of time, let us say 60 seconds. I would be surprised if it was longer.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Where a visa physically appears in a passport, what are the checks that are undertaken then, because 35 per cent of those coming to the Olympics will not be on the ETS? What happens electronically with somebody who fronts with a passport and a visa to enter Australia? Is that not checked at check-in as well?

**Mr O'Donnell**—It is not necessarily checked. It is a visual check.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—How then is it checked against the MAL, the movement alert list, or a document alert list?

**Mr Long**—It is not checked by us against MAL. It is, in fact, checked against MAL by the Customs acting as agents for the immigration department when the passenger arrives. As



far as we are concerned, if a passenger has a paper visa in the passport and the visa is valid, and it is for that individual, that individual can travel.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—If on arrival at the Australian port that visa is found to be not valid and the passport, indeed, may have been doctored in some way, and the person has to be removed from Australia, the cost is then borne by the airline, is it not?

**Mr Long**—According to the Migration Act, yes, it is.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—In reality, irrespective of the act, if you bring somebody in here, aren't you compelled to remove them?

**Mr Long**—That is correct.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—And you do do that?

**Mr Long**—Yes, we do.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—And you get fined for bringing them in?

**Mr Long**—The fine depends upon how good, in fact, in this example, the forgery was. If it is not possible for us to detect the forgery, then there is no fine applied.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Is there a benefit to the airlines in having the ETA system in place as opposed to the manual system? Is there more protection offered by this electronic system than there is by the manual?

**Mr Long**—I do not think there is. It is the same thing. People, of course, can get the ETA, as you know, through travel agents rather than a visa which is issued through the mission.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—As we come to the Olympics then, essentially, they are getting a visa through SOCOG, an organisation of high repute. This is where we are at though. The special purpose visa will essentially, or effectively, be issued by SOCOG, will it not?

**Mr Long**—As I understand it, the special purpose visa to the Olympic family will be issued once the individuals arrive in Australia. That is my understanding, as of yesterday. The Olympic family will have some form of identification, yet to be determined, which they will show us offshore to demonstrate that they are bona fide. Like a New Zealand citizen who arrives here they will be issued with a special purpose visa at the border. I do not know whether that answers your question, but that is my understanding as of yesterday.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Are you aware of the government's information campaign on Australia's migration requirements, quarantine requirements, and customs requirements?

**Mr Long**—I am aware that it is going on. I have not been party specifically to it.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What is the level of your awareness of the campaign?

**Mr Long**—Simply that it is occurring.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Could you say one way or the other whether it is an effective campaign or not?

**Mr Long**—I do not know sufficiently enough about the campaign nor about the distribution methods that the barrier agencies are using to get the message out.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What proportion of the arrivals to Australia does Qantas—Australia's national airline—carry?

**Mr Long**—I think from the last figures that it is approximately 40 per cent.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—One would have an expectation that Qantas, carrying that level of passengers, would be aware of this campaign. You are a direct and immediate beneficiary if the campaign is going to be effective.

**Mr Long**—If the campaign is going to be effective, Senator, it really needs to get the passengers prior to us seeing them, and that is really through the travel agents. One issue relative to quarantine that I have been involved in previously was how to educate passengers not to carry things which are subject to quarantine restrictions. I have been fairly vocal in talking to AQIS about the fact that they really need to get that message to the passenger before the passenger packs. It is too late us telling them at the check-in counter when they are about to depart. We do tell them on board the aircraft; we have an undertaking to do that. We do show a video on board the aircraft. But in reality, if a message needs to go to somebody they really need to have it before they start considering what they are going to put in the suitcase. Therefore, that message needs to go through the travel agency network and certainly, as I understand it, AQIS has pursued that method of sending out the message.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Have you seen any of the publications that have so far been produced in this campaign?

**Mr Long**—I have seen one. It was a combined leaflet put out by AQIS and Customs. I do not know whether DIMA had a participation in it, but certainly it was a coloured, multi-paged leaflet, yes.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—So you have actually seen it?

**Mr Long**—Yes.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I suppose that is an example that some of the taxpayers' money that has been spent on this campaign is having some little effect if it has actually been seen by the major carrier into this country.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—If I understand from your answers to Senator McKiernan, in relation to the ETA system and those who have the approval from travel agents and the like, when that person comes to the airport, do you check them electronically?

**Mr Long**—Yes.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—So you have to check whether they have a visa electronically?

**Mr Long**—Yes.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—If I understand you, there are three types of people who are going to be coming—that is, those who have the electronic visa from travel agents, those who have the normal visa in their passports and those who have SOCOG approval but who have no visa until they arrive. Is that correct?

**Mr Long**—That is as I understand it. My understanding of the Olympic family and what they will use is not complete yet. I have no doubt they will have some form of specific identity such as the members of the Australian team had when they were flying to Atlanta.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—What happens if somebody arrives in Australia with one of these SOCOG visas and it turns out that they are not accepted by immigration?

**Mr Long**—Depending upon the method of how the visa is going to be issued, and I would suspect that immigration will issue them as a quasi-ETA—that is, we could check it electronically and we would do that—it would be exactly the same as a passenger turning up today who has a document which appears to be valid and the Australian government decides not to let them in. We will be required to remove them back whence they came.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Let us say somebody turns up with one of these SOCOG visas for himself and his wife and there is also a party of people travelling with him but they do not have any of these visas. What do you do then?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Panic, don't you?

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Let us say they have Qantas tickets, but they do not have any of these visas.

**Mr Long**—I would hope it would not come to that. If the special purpose visa for the Olympic family is issued in the form of an ETA, then we can conduct a check offshore before we uplift the people to see that there is in fact somebody on the database that matches that. If there was a family or a group with officials, we would do the same for each and every one of those.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—No, I am not talking about the case where two people have the SOCOG visa. We are talking here about a non-ETA country obviously. Say they also made a booking for six others to come with them and they maybe even paid you some money. What happens then?

**Mr Long**—It is quite simple. As each group turn up and each person turns up, they would be subject to an examination at our check-in desk before we proceeded to ensure that the documentation they had was valid for Australia.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Say the athlete in question turns up and has papers for himself and his wife but he has brought six people with him. Do you say, ‘I’m sorry, these six people don’t have the papers.’

**Mr Long**—That is correct.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—They have a booking with Qantas but they do not have the papers.

**Mr Long**—That is correct.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—You do not think that that might be potentially embarrassing for Australia?

**Mr Long**—It may be potentially embarrassing for Australia, but the reality is that, and our obligations in accordance with the Migration Act, if the people do not have the required documents for Australia, we do not carry them. We refuse carriage to people all around the world all of the time if they do not have the correct documents.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Presumably you have some interest besides Qantas. You have some interests for Australia. Let us say this kind of event actually happened. Would you have any process to put in place at that airport?

**Mr Long**—Yes. We already have a process where if somebody turns up without the appropriate documentation DIMA has a 24-hour entry operation centre that we can contact either by telephone, fax or telex. We can refer it to them for advice.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—This is in Australia?

**Mr Long**—Yes, it is. We use this entry operation centre fairly frequently. Our staff offshore will pick up a phone and dial, talk to an officer, explain the circumstances and ask for advice—that is, either permission to uplift or, if that is not forthcoming, we simply say to the passenger, ‘Sorry, we can’t carry you.’

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—You say you have actual concrete experience of this.

**Mr Long**—Yes, we do.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Perhaps you could let us know some facts and figures. For example, how many applicants have come with this sort of request? We are talking here about non-ETA countries obviously. How many have been approved in this way and how many have been rejected?

**Mr O’Donnell**—Can I suggest that the department of immigration should be able to provide you with more efficient stats than we could. We do not keep a record of our 28 offshore airports as to who is calling, but my understanding is that the entry operations centre would keep a log of the approvals that we have requested. That would probably be a

more concise view, and that would be other airlines outside of us as well. Maybe that would give you a better view of that.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—We would be happy to do that, but I am a bit surprised to hear you say that you do not keep a record of this. Surely this is a matter of some concern, is it not?

**Mr O'Donnell**—We do whatever we possibly can to uplift the customer and to assist their travel and facilitate their movement. I would not say that it happens to the extent where you would have a daily or a weekly report of these incidences coming back.

**Mr Long**—Essentially, it is an operational issue. We deal with it. The passenger travels or does not travel. As far as we are concerned, that is the end of the circumstances. As Brian said, DIMA do keep a log in which they record these things and they record the outcomes.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—We will try to get it from DIMA, but I think it is very relevant information.

**CHAIR**—It is relevant. Dr Theophanous's point is a good one. Just for clarification, say the Olympic athlete has arrived with his accreditation and with his de facto partner who has no visa at all. They arrive at the Qantas counter and they have no visa, and presumably they have arrived two hours before the flight goes. Do you have the facility there to contact Australia and get them cleared if they have their passport?

**Mr Long**—Let us step back one. Assuming that the special purpose visa will be built on an ETA-type system and for the purposes of Australian immigration, it will be deemed to be an ETA. At most airports around the world we can do that at the check-in desk. We can actually check the ETA to see if it is correct. There are a number of airports where we do have some limitations in doing that, and I think I explained that in the submission. We have a fall-back position which is that, if the passenger sounds bona fide and explains to our agents that there is a problem, we can actually pick up the phone and ring. We do not like doing that, let me be quite honest about that, because it diverts our staff from something else that they are supposed to be doing in order to ring Australia and determine the bona fides of an individual. We prefer to deal with it in a process manner rather than the exception.

**CHAIR**—We understand that, but we are looking at an unusual situation of the Olympics. The last thing we need is reports around the world that people have got to the counter with their tickets and then been refused on the flight when they are legitimate tourists because they have somehow missed some information. So there is the capacity to have it checked and get them on board, although we do accept that Qantas is not going to enjoy that role, as would neither airline. Would you think that Qantas would be a little more inclined to facilitate this than other airlines that are not based in Australia?

**Mr Long**—We are more aware of it than other airlines that operate to Australia. Certainly we would have to look at it. We would also have to determine what the likely impact would be upon our operations if we expected large numbers. Of course, at the end of the day not only does it divert our staff from their primary function, which is customer service, but there is an inherent cost in doing this as well.

**CHAIR**—Have you talked to DIMA about this particular issue?

**Mr Long**—Not specifically, no.

**CHAIR**—Do you think this would be a good idea?

**Mr Long**—It is certainly something we will raise.

**CHAIR**—Dr Theophanous, have you finished that line of questioning?

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Yes, but I do have another line.

**CHAIR**—We will come back to you in a minute.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—If you issue a Qantas ticket overseas, do you issue any additional information about the visa requirements for Australia?

**Mr Long**—Eighty per cent of our tickets are issued through travel agents. Travel agents provide information to passengers about their destination, not necessarily as a routine matter, as you would have seen from our comments about the ETA. Far too many people turn up without an ETA assuming that they can travel to Australia under a visa-free regime. Through our sales offices overseas—and there are very few of them—we would certainly provide information to passengers on their requirements. We would be more aware of it than most travel agents would be.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Thanks.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—It is not uncommon for travel agents, say, in non-ETA countries to give people a ticket to come to Australia with the assumption that they can get in.

**Mr Long**—I would suggest that that would be correct. I would not necessarily restrict it to non-ETA countries. If you are essentially a travel agent in Mountain Home, Arkansas, selling a ticket to a passenger to come to Australia, it is unlikely that that travel agent would necessarily know about our requirements.

**CHAIR**—Mr Baird is champing at the bit.

**Mr BAIRD**—Not champing at the bit, just waiting for my turn. I did not actually write down the three major points that you had but, as I understand from your submission, you have got concerns about, first, the number of the primary inspection booths—it seemed to have been answered in the presentation by Sydney airport that they were providing for these—second, the level of uptake of APP and, third, as I understand it, the question of the concentration of other gateways. Is that right or have I missed one?

**Mr Kerr**—The second or the third one, depending on how we count, was the secondary channel, processing the congestion that might be forced through the secondary channel.

**Mr BAIRD**—What is the definition of a secondary channel?

**Mr Kerr**—Through the green and red lanes—once you pick up your bags and head for your final exit point.

**Mr BAIRD**—Yes.

**Mr Kerr**—Our fear is that the process as it exists may create congestion at that point. The third issue was the question of off-airport processing and the relationship between Qantas and, not being the official Olympic carrier, what access we will have to members of the Olympic family for off-airport processing.

**Mr BAIRD**—It is fairly logical that, having paid the amount that Ansett did, they should have first bite at it?

**Mr Kerr**—Our concern is obviously that we are going to have a sizeable number of customers as well and we are concerned to see that they get a high level of service.

**Mr BAIRD**—In some of the issues that you have been raising, there is the question of how many people are actually returned each year by you. We are talking about this issue of returning people because they have not got the right visa or some irregularities. How many would actually arrive in Australia with you and then you, at your expense, take them back?

**Mr Long**—That is difficult to say because we do not count them. There are people returned for a whole host of reasons and a lot of them actually have return tickets which are utilised. For example, we are talking here about a mix of what we would call in the industry inadmissible passengers, that is, people who are illegal and people who are quite bona fide who the immigration department considers are arriving here for totally the wrong reason. Therefore, we simply do not keep a count of how many people we send back out of the country. It would not be terribly high.

**Mr BAIRD**—Is that higher than 10 and less than 50?

**Mr Long**—I would say it probably would be in the vicinity of 20 to 30.

**Mr BAIRD**—In terms of the whole visa issue, is there any benefit to you, as you see it, in this being a period of visa-free trial from some countries? Would there be any benefits in this or do you feel that the electronic travel authority can assist at times of special events, such as the Olympics?

**Mr Long**—Our view has been and still is—it was put to this committee a number of years ago when it was inquiring into the visa system—that we believe that there should be visaless entry for a number of safe nationals. But we would qualify that by saying that, if that were so, we should not be slowing the processing of the passengers by collecting the type of data that you would normal collect in the application for a visa. So, if you could find some way for that to actually meet both requirements—

**Mr BAIRD**—What types of requirements are we talking about? As I understand it, if you come from India they want copies of your bank accounts and all types of things. Is this the type of thing you mean?

**Mr Long**—The type of data that is necessary on a visa application or an ETA application: individual biographical data, where they live and any other types of details—I must admit I have never filled in an ETA application—or data that is required there. If we were to trial this as a visa-free period for the Olympics, then I would hate to see us discount any value out of that by trying to collect, at the primary line, all that data that we have collected previously.

**Mr O'Donnell**—In the case of visa-free travel where there is no record of the individual's intention to move before they get to Australia, we cannot do APP or APC or any other sort of forward processing because the dynamic link is into the Immigration database. If the individual is not listed there, there is no record. Therefore, you cannot provide any information. So the view would be that visa-free travel would have to be acceptance, as in most parts of Europe where you virtually show your passport, they see it is a passport from an acceptable country—Australia or the US—and they wave you through without necessarily having to collect all that data and do all of the border control checks—police, whatever they need to check. I think that is the big decision.

**Mr BAIRD**—So, as far as Qantas's position on this is concerned, are you saying that you would prefer that approach or that you feel that the information that is collected through the normal visa application form is pretty helpful and you would want that to continue? What exactly are you saying?

**Mr O'Donnell**—It is a double-edged sword. You have to get a balance. Obviously, the Qantas view is to support visa-free travel. But, in an environment where the border controls are dependent upon prior information being provided by the airline and there is no database to access to find that information, there has to be a decision as to what visa-free travel is. The government agencies need to acknowledge that, if they are going to grant visa-free travel to an individual, a country, a type of person or a category, that should mean nothing more than an ID check at the border. How that sits with the border agencies is up to the border agencies.

We support visa-free travel as an incentive to inbound tourism. However, if you simply move the application and checking process from an embassy or from a travel agent doing an ETA check and put that at the border, I personally think that you would have major disruption to the air terminals. We have concerns, and I think we are expressing those today, that the air terminals, particularly Sydney, probably will not cope for the Olympics, based on the 60 per cent APP. We have significant doubts as to whether it will be achieved. If you add to that collection and checking at the primary line, I think you would have severe problems.

**Mr BAIRD**—Let me understand it. There is a submission there from the tourism council that calls for such a thing. So Qantas is saying that they would prefer the existing system rather than removing the requirement for visas on a short-term basis—if that requirement meant that you had a check at the entry point, as they do with American entry which is visa-free—but they would still do the checking at the entry point. Is that right?



**Mr O'Donnell**—I think it would be proper to say it is the other way round: we support tourism incentives for visa-free travel, but there needs to be an understanding by the border agencies of the impact if the data collection were to take place at the point of arrival.

**Mr BAIRD**—But where else would you be doing the checking? If you are advocating just straight entry without checking, that is removing border control. So, if you take away the requirement for a visa, then there surely must be checking at some point. Where are you recommending that that take place?

**Mr O'Donnell**—All I am doing is raising the issue that one is dependent upon the other. I do not believe it is Qantas's position to make a statement. I would be concerned if the checking were taking place at Tom Bradley air terminal at check-in; I think we would have a big issue with that.

**Mr BAIRD**—It has to take place at one end or the other.

**Mr O'Donnell**—All I am saying, Mr Baird, is that there is a price to pay. I would imagine that, if the government border control agencies insist on collecting data and checking it through whatever system, there is a price to pay for visa-free travel. If the data collection and analysis point is Sydney international airport, that is where the price will be paid. All I am saying is: yes, visa-free is supported, but all of these things have to be considered.

**CHAIR**—Mr Baird, I do not want to interrupt you, but for those of us who are ignorant here, could you, Mr O'Donnell, please tell us what you mean by the 'Tom Bradley' air terminal?

**Mr O'Donnell**—I am sorry. It is the terminal that we operate through in Los Angeles—and I am sure many of you have experienced that pleasure.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for that.

**Mr BAIRD**—So, in summary, Mr Kerr, are you clear on that? Qantas, as the major carrier of people into this country, are saying that they are pretty lukewarm, if anything, about visa-free entry; that, because of the requirements, you are shifting the checking either at the entry point or into the airport—if, for example, people are going LA-Sydney—or at Sydney airport because of the requirement of data collection, and that you would actually support the current program of ETA?

**Mr Kerr**—You have used the term 'lukewarm'. I think Qantas is on the record as saying we support visa-free travel. I think the only points that are being made here are ones of balance. We accept that there will still be some checking in terms of the traditional use of visa security and other things. From our point of view, it is just a question of being alive to the sensitivity of the issue or being alive to the risk in the issue—that you may replace one thing with something else which is just as difficult.

**Mr BAIRD**—So what you are saying is that, if you are going to have a trial, the Olympics is hardly the right time to do so because of the problems of shifting the checking to either the check-in airport or the arrival point?

**Mr Kerr**—I am not sure I am saying that either in such a clear way as you are putting it. I am not sure just what the period of the trial would be. Would it be a trial that predated the Olympics by some considerable period or would it be a shorter term trial just during the peak periods in summer?

**Mr BAIRD**—I think the TCA one is talking about shortly before and after, so it is really Olympic related. Obviously that is important in looking at this submission. So, as one of the major players, it is important that we get your views on this.

**CHAIR**—Do I understand you there in that, really, what you are looking at is convenience versus border security; as long as you require border security, you are going to have to have the checking somewhere and, if you bring it onshore, we are going to slow down our queues?

**Mr Kerr**—We certainly accept the need for border security. We also have been promotional of visa-free travel, and it is a matter of finding a way between the two.

**CHAIR**—What do you suggest is the way between the two?

**Mr Kerr**—In a practical sense, I do not have a solution. All I am doing is identifying an issue here. I think it is something which the government agencies and those who have a border security need can better comment on than we can.

**Mr BAIRD**—If you as the airline, being one of the major people who would want this, do not come out definitely and say you want it, why should the government move, since it is likely to be a position that is criticised by groups such as the RSL? If you say, ‘Look, that’s going to shift it in terms of the queues at the airport,’ why should the government shift? It is really up to you to convince the government that this is something you want. From what I have heard, it is hardly compelling reasons that are coming out.

**Mr O’Donnell**—I thought we were talking about the issues facing processing of the airport.

**Mr BAIRD**—That is right. But this obviously is part of it. If you removed the requirement, unless you could go straight through and show your passport—I think there would be few people who would support that removing of border controls—you are clearly going to have the checking at the airport, and the queues would be so long. It would be interesting to see the transcript of what you actually said. It would be so difficult to manage that it would be a real problem. So, having heard that from the lead carrier coming into Australia, you would say, ‘Why would you shift?’

**Mr O’Donnell**—The point I was making, Mr Baird, was that, if there is no data in the Immigration database on which to base a transaction, you cannot have APP. If the processing at the airport is contingent upon 60 per cent of the customers having APP, all I was trying to

point out to the group was that those people that have no record in the database would not be subject to that 60 per cent. I do not know whether the comments can be construed as non-support of visa travel. As Mr Kerr said, it is on the record that Qantas supports visa-free travel for inbound tourism. I thought we were talking here today about what is going to happen at the Olympics, the impact at Sydney airport and passenger processing. I was simply making a statement to ensure that the people who are making the decisions are aware of what the issues are.

**CHAIR**—Mr Ripoll has been waiting very patiently to ask a question.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Actually, most of my questions have been answered. They were on the subject of visa-free entry. But I am still wanting an answer on this: if you do support the idea of visa-free travel, what advantage do you see to you as an airline, as a carrier, from that? Also, what advantage would you see Australia gaining from that?

**Mr Long**—The principal advantage would be, we believe, that tourism would increase; that numbers of people, because they can get here without having to go through the rigmarole of obtaining a visa or getting an ETA, would increase. This, of course, is a knock-on advantage in that our immigration fines would decrease. That would be useful. There is the problem that Mr O'Donnell has referred to and that has been the product of some discussion here in terms of the queues. If the government agencies still wanted all of that data, it could perhaps be addressed by government in determining what they want and how they are prepared to accept it if we went into a visa-free trial.

**Mr RIPOLL**—If you are saying that is an advantage, do you have any evidence to say that because of our visa entry system people are not coming here?

**Mr Long**—We have covered this in the visa inquiry. It has been impossible to provide any hard evidence—and the TCA went quite a long way to try and work that through—that visas actually stop traffic, because there is no way in which you can measure it. On the other hand, if you look at countries which have removed visa restrictions to certain nationalities and you have a look at what has happened to tourism from those particular countries, you will find an increase. I am not saying the visa is the be-all and end-all for that increase, but it certainly had to have an impact.

**Mr RIPOLL**—I am personally a bit sceptical about those sorts of comparisons because they are often made with countries where they have internal borders rather than Australia's unique position in terms of people wanting to come here for any specific reason. But I will not go into that. To go on to a slightly different area, you have mentioned in your submission that there are a number of options for improving passenger processing utilising new technologies. I am interested in what those options might be.

**Mr Long**—We were talking about new technologies. At the time we had in mind something along the lines of the US Immigration automated system, which uses a biometric. It is an unmanned desk at a number of airports around the United States where as a frequent traveller you can register and arrive at a US port—Miami, Los Angeles, JFK—and be processed without an immigration officer being present.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Is that an internal process within the United States?

**Mr Long**—It is for foreigners. I have one and use it. It ensures that I get clearance into the United States, generally speaking, in about 30 seconds.

**Mr RIPOLL**—One other question. You have also mentioned in your submission that, despite a number of requests within the off-airport working group chaired by the ACS, you have been unable to ascertain what, if any, access Qantas will actually get to Olympic families and so forth. Could you elaborate on that and give us some idea of what those efforts are comprised of?

**Mr Long**—They are principally within the working group, and we have been attempting to ascertain what access Qantas can have and under what conditions. At this stage it is still contingent upon an agreement between SOCOG and Ansett. We are simply waiting for a response. It is very hard for us to plan how we are going to move our passengers and the passengers of our client airlines out of the village unless we know what sort of access we have got.

**Mrs IRWIN**—You are virtually saying to the committee that you have been able to secure nothing at this stage to be able to go into the Olympic village, to be able to get your passengers out as quickly as possible.

**Mr Long**—We have had some responses from SOCOG, but it is still not totally clear to us yet.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—The submission from the Tourist Commission does not just focus on the question of visa-free entry; it focuses primarily on the problems of non-ETA countries, if you read it. I would be interested in your view about that. It seems to me that some people might be offended by the fact that they go to a travel agent and they have to also fill in a visa form, but the agent has the power to grant the visa on the spot. The problem that the Tourism Council is focusing on is those from non-ETA countries where they have to go to the embassy, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and all the rest of it and can in fact often be rejected, as was shown in the evidence given by the department at the last hearing on this issue. For example, the whole of Latin America is not in the ETA system. So are you concerned about the question of whether potential visitors from countries in the non-ETA system may be dissuaded because of the relatively onerous requirements of having to go to the embassy, et cetera? Are you having any feedback on that? Is this a concern that you have?

**Mr Long**—It is a concern to us. We have raised with DIMA in another forum the fact that we would like access to ETAs to Argentinian nationals, for example, because it is a developing market for Qantas. The DIMA attitude is that they are giving access to ETAs for large-scale, relatively safe markets, and that when they have finished those they will probably look at other options. We think, ‘You have covered the majority of those now. We would actually like to see the ETA become available for developing markets.’

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—When you make these sorts of submissions, are they sympathetic or not?

**Mr Long**—It is hard to tell. The forum in which I raised it has not produced any results one way or another yet. They seem to be listening, but I believe the government has its agenda and will follow it.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Do you have any comment on this, Mr Kerr?

**Mr Kerr**—No. I think Mr Long has covered that from our point of view.

**CHAIR**—We have gone over time, but if there is one final question that any committee member feels should be asked, I am happy to take it.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Qantas said that it supported visa-free entry to Australia. Have you a number of parameters about that? You are not talking about open slather on the broad issues?

**Mr Kerr**—That is correct.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You would not, for example, want any old journalist coming in and being given free access to anything. A sportsman coming to this country would be required to have a sporting visa; somebody coming in on business would have a business visa. The qualification that you put to the committee some years ago is on tourists, is it not?

**Mr Kerr**—Yes.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I thought I might add that to the record.

**CHAIR**—I thank Mr Kerr, Mr O'Donnell and Mr Long for appearing before us today. A copy of the *Hansard* will be sent to you. If you have any questions, please let us know. We will get back to you if we have any more questions and you will provide us with the information we have asked during this session. Thank you very much.

[11.57 a.m.]

**ADAMS, Miss Geraldine Cecilia, Project Manager, Olympics and Related Facilities, Ansett Australia**

**KIMPTON, Mr James Victor, Adviser, Government, Ansett Australia**

**ROBINSON, Mr Ian, Manager, Airport Asset Development, Ansett Australia**

**TULLBERG, Mr Jason Mark, Information Technology Business Adviser, Ground Services, Ansett Australia**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. As you would have heard, these are legal proceedings of the parliament and should be treated as such. Giving misleading evidence is a contempt of the parliament. Would you like to make any amendments to your submission?

**Mr Kimpton**—No, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR**—Would you like to make an opening statement, Mr Kimpton?

**Mr Kimpton**—Very briefly, as I think has been acknowledged this morning, Ansett is involved in the Olympics as the leader of the official airline team. In our submission, we basically raise two broad themes. Firstly, we raise the need for the education of the various participants in the Olympic travel process as to not only the operation of the ETA, API and APP systems but also the special accreditation arrangements to be applied to the Olympic family. We see those educational arrangements as being very much a matter of communication not just to the traveller but also, as I have said, to the intermediaries who deal with them—that is, the travel agents and the airlines. In its submission, Ansett indicates that it is willing to help with that.

Secondly, Ansett is seeking to encourage the take-up of API and APP directly, with its own market and with its Olympic partners and alliance partners, which I think is coming through as a critical element in facilitating the Olympic travel process. In our submission we raise, as have others, the need for adequacy of resources on the part of the ACS, depending on the ebb and flow of Olympic travel arrivals. This is at Sydney airport in particular but also airports in general.

I will make another comment in the light of what we have heard this morning and what has been said in some of the submissions—that is, the question of other airline access to the Olympic village at the time of departure of the Olympic family. That is a matter that we see as being dealt with by SOCOG and the airlines involved. Ansett's position is that we entered into contractual arrangements with SOCOG as a consequence of our being the successful proponent for the official airline team leader status. We assume that, as a result of SOCOG's deliberations with the other airlines, they will indeed be able to obtain access to the Olympic village for the purpose of handling their passengers consistent with not only their contracts with those passengers—and the airlines that they handle—but also our contractual entitlements that flow from the arrangements that led us to being the official airline team leader.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Mr Kimpton. I will call the deputy chair and then Mr Ripoll.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Mr Kimpton, I was a little surprised that you did not seek to change your submission after hearing the evidence this morning. Your submission continually refers to visa-free entry during the Olympics. I think it would have been obvious to you, from listening to the witnesses, that there will not be a visa-free entry system in operation during the term of the Olympics. Can you explain why you did not seek to change it? The reference is there on a number of occasions throughout the submission.

**Mr Kimpton**—I hear the question. I am not sure that in the light of what we have heard this morning we would necessarily change our submission. People sometimes use words that do not mean what they appear to be very precisely saying. I think this ‘visa free’ concept is a good example of that. As we have moved from the physical incorporation of a visa to passports to the use of information technology to produce such outcomes as the ETA—the electronic travel authority—I think there has been a tendency, as the physical process of issuing the visa becomes less perceptible, to talk about moving to ‘visa free’. I think sometimes the expression ‘visa free’ is used in that sense. I think what we are hearing today is that, whether it is the particular form of accreditation issued by SOCOG in conjunction with DIMA, or the ETA issued via the travel agent referring back to DIMA in Canberra, in the end we are probably talking about some form of visa travel. Given the way this terminology is used, I did not see that it was necessary for us to change our submission.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—It gives me grave concern then, as you are the official airline for the games, that you could be out there flogging tickets to passengers to bring them into Australia visa free.

**Mr Kimpton**—I do not believe so. The reason I say that is that the arrangements that are currently in place with the travel agency community and with the airline community would mean a very high degree of awareness; that without either the physical visa that has been talked about or the ETA—

**Senator McKIERNAN**—With due respect, I put the question to you as the official airline, Ansett, not to you on behalf of travel agents.

**Mr Kimpton**—Yes. We could go out and not go through the processes. We could say, ‘Yes. Here is a ticket to Australia—buy it,’ and give no more information and not suggest to the passenger that they go through the processes. But we certainly would not do that, nor would partner airlines do that for this reason: if we do it and the traveller arrives in Australia under the Migration Act, we have got the burden of taking them back. There is a very strong incentive to operate the procedures as they are intended to operate, namely to make sure passengers are informed.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—That is exactly the point that I am coming to. Let me just take a discrete group of people who will be coming to Australia for the Olympics. There will be the media, some of whom will be accredited and some of whom will not be accredited. On the basis of what you have put in your submission, those that are accredited will not need a visa and those that are not accredited will need a visa. Can you see the confusion that can be

caused by the interpretation that you, as the official airline, are putting on this system as it is purported to operate?

**Mr Kimpton**—I think in the end, whether we are talking about accreditation or visas, you have to have one or the other. You have to have something. You have to have either a visa or—to use the term that has been used in the SOCOG submission—accreditation, which I think, from what we have been hearing today, is in the end a de facto visa. I do not think that there is a gap in the middle. There has been discussion this morning about what happens when people arrive without either, and there would appear to be processes in place to deal with that. I do not think anyone is going out there and saying that you do not have to have anything to come to Australia for the Olympic Games.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Can I come back to your submission, not my submission. Let me quote:

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs have advised Ansett Australia that this policy will be temporarily suspended in that members of the Olympic Family, irrespective of country of origin will be permitted to enter Australia leading up to and during the Olympic and Paralympic games without requiring a visa.

I put it to you that what we heard this morning was information of the accreditation involving a special purpose visa.

**Mr Kimpton**—Again, I think we are talking about terminology here. We are not saying that people do not have to have either accreditation or a visa; we are there drawing on what I think DIMA has told us. As I say, when people talk about these things, they use words without using them with absolute precision. I think when people talk about visa free, they do not mean you have got to have nothing. It is certainly not my impression or Ansett's impression that you have got to have nothing. It is not an impression that we want to give to the Olympic family or other attendees to the games—that they need to have nothing. What is being sought to be achieved—and I think it is the thrust of DIMA's efforts, SOCOG's efforts, the airlines' efforts—is to make that border-crossing process as near to imperceptible as possible.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—It is more than border-crossing; it is the actual happenings before the people leave their home country and get on your airline, which might impose a penalty on you in having to return them—the fines that go with that.

**Mr Kimpton**—I understand the thrust of what is being said, but I think we would not be willing to uplift somebody unless we knew they either had the visa or the form of accreditation issued by SOCOG, which, in the end, achieves the same outcome. We would not be suggesting to people that they could travel to Australia without one or other of those.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Could you provide the committee with a copy of that information you received from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs that advised you that the border control systems would be suspended for the duration of the Olympics?



**Mr Kimpton**—I am prepared to seek what the basis of that advice was. The reason I come back to you using different words from the words you have used is that I am not directly familiar with the advice that we received. I think that it would be appropriate to slightly widen the ambit of the inquiry.

**Mr BAIRD**—So that we are not having a doubling up of where we have been before, I presume that with the question of off-airport check-in your views would be similar to those of Qantas in relation to the primary inspection booths, the secondary channels, the level of uptake of APP, other gateways, et cetera? You do not have any discrepancy with their views on those?

**Mr Kimpton**—Broadly, our views are similar. I think we see more needing to be done by ourselves, DIMA and ACS to raise awareness in overseas locations of the importance of APP and API in getting the throughput rates that we seek to accommodate passengers through Sydney airport during the inbound peaks.

Sydney Airport Corporation Ltd gave some evidence this morning on terminal capacities. Capacity is very much dependent on the uptake of API and APP. We would certainly be encouraging everything that can be done to make sure that the participation rate moves from about 20 per cent for inbound passengers now to the 60 per cent that is postulated to be in place by the time of the Olympics.

**Mr BAIRD**—The rest of it is fairly similar to the Qantas presentation. I also take you to the question of visa free, on which Qantas gave a divided answer, I thought. What is Ansett's view on this question of visa free? Do you support the view that, during the period of the Olympics, we have a visa-free trial? Maybe it would not be for every country; it would be a limited trial for limited countries, and there would be a process whereby you do not need a visa before you come to Australia?

**Mr Kimpton**—It is interesting what people mean when they use these expressions. If it truly meant visa free, that on the presentation of a passport, the passport holder was admitted, without more, to Australia, for certain categories of visitor, that might be attractive.

**Mr BAIRD**—There are very few countries where just the presentation is enough. Let us take, for example, the American or New Zealand equivalent, where they have abolished the visa requirement for short-term stays, for 27 in the case of the USA and 32 in the case of New Zealand, and there is checking to take place at either the point of embarking on the aircraft or else at departure—arrival at the gate at Sydney airport. Do you then support it? Obviously, there will be a need for further information gathering, checking?

**Mr Kimpton**—This is the difficulty. Once there is a process of information gathering at the point of check-in and maybe at some point subsequent to check-in, but at or before arrival in Australia, the authorities have the right to say, 'No, we don't want that person to enter Australia.' We could have some difficulties with that.

The benefit of the current system is that, at the point of check-in, when the passenger arrives and is able to either produce a physical visa or demonstrate that they have got an ETA, we in effect can take that data and provide instant feedback, or very close to instant

feedback. As Qantas was saying, there are even ways in which, if the documentation is not complete, contact can be made with Canberra and the documentation can be completed at that point.

If we were to move to an environment where we were gathering data but we were not getting that instant feedback, that may be more difficult than the current arrangements, even though the current arrangements, to the extent that they are not visa free, may be impeding certain types of tourist movements. Hence the advocacy of ultimately visa-free arrangements for certain types of visitors from certain types of countries. What follows from that is that if visa free were to be trialled, we would suggest that maybe the Olympics might not be the time. One needs to be a bit cautious about that. There will be enough going on as it is.

**Mr RIPOLL**—As the official airline, are you satisfied that everything that can be done is being done in terms of entry requirements and other procedures that will be done at the airport? Are you confident that, come the Olympics, your customers will not be in some way impeded in the processing?

**Mr Kimpton**—As things stand, we are confident. We listened this morning to SACL giving public assurances as to the timing of their terminal redevelopment works. We are in close consultation with SOCOG and, through them, with DIMA. We are part of a working group convened by the department of transport, and I think we are confident. But having said that, I will give my colleagues the opportunity to offer any concerns that they may have.

**Mr RIPOLL**—In that case, just to go back to the point of visa free. Can you sum it up in one sentence or give us your definition of what visa free means to you? If you are asked what it actually means, in your view, what does it mean?

**Mr Kimpton**—I would prefer to turn it around and say that I would want to know what the expression meant, from whoever was using it. In different context we talk about open skies, and there are many versions of that. You talk about liberalisation in this industry, and there are many versions of that. I think we would want to know. We want to minimise transaction time at the check-in. We want to provide our passengers with the minimum of formality to get into and, for that matter, out of the country, whether at the airport or at the time they purchase travel. To that extent, we would seek that basic information requirements be minimised, that the role of the airlines in that be minimised and systematised, as far as possible, and that, at any stage in the process where the passenger's journey is at the point of no return—that is, a check-in subsequent to that point—we have a high degree of certainty that that passenger will not be turned back on arrival.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Thanks.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—In your statement, you give a definition of visa free. You talk about the need to establish and implement processes for making the ETA system available in countries and to airlines that are not participants in the ETA program. You say:

In countries where ETAs are not normally available, DIMA must ensure that operators have the relevant computer access.

**Mr Kimpton**—I am probably being a bit pedantic here, but ETA is not visa free. It is a form of using information technology to accelerate the process of visa issue. But it is not visa free.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—I am just trying to understand what you are saying. I agree that the term ‘visa free’ should not be applied in that.

**Mr Kimpton**—If you have a passport, you then get entry. To me, that is visa free. The reality is that visa free, on that basis, is not something that is readily contemplated by any country concerned about barrier security. Without repeating the fairly long answer I gave a moment ago, the less hassle about gaining whatever approval is required for entry into this country the better—consistent with this country protecting its barriers.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—This is what I take to be the substance of your statement that during the Olympics at least those who have been approved by SOCOG are going to be given a more expeditious, computer style approval. Are you talking about extending that system for those who have been approved by SOCOG—the so-called Olympic family—or are you saying that that expeditious system should be introduced for all visitors to Australia during the Olympic Games? You are aware, of course, that the ETA system operates on the basis that agents can approve the visas, whereas in non-ETA countries you have to go to the immigration department and all the rest of it and it may take months to get approval.

**Mr Kimpton**—My understanding with the ETA—and I will stand corrected by my colleagues—is that there is, via the system, a reference back to DIMA. In other words, the travel agent cannot issue an ETA without DIMA clearing that.

**Mr Tullberg**—That is correct.

**Mr Kimpton**—So that in every instance in Australia, whether it is ETA or physical visa—for want of a better way of putting it—DIMA have the right, prior to the issue, to say, ‘No, we do not want that person coming here.’

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Are you saying that every person that goes to a travel agent in the ETA countries is checked by DIMA?

**Mr Kimpton**—That is my understanding. The critical element of the system and, arguably, the success of the system, is that when you get your ETA, or you purchase travel to Australia, you give passport details. Those details are fed back to Australia, and it depends on whether you are on the list kept by DIMA as to whether that ETA issues. Either way, Australia has mechanisms that protect its boundaries. We do say that the ETA system, subject to the systems to back it up being available, ought to be available as widely as possible. It is a convenience for the traveller. It avoids the \$50 physical visa issue fee and provides all parties with certainty that the journey can be taken sooner rather than later.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Have you made any submission to the department of immigration about this matter?

**Mr Kimpton**—That I cannot answer and we do not have anybody here from Ansett International. I do not think we have, for this reason: ETA is not that old in terms of the history of passenger processing in this country. The number of countries in which it is now available is quite substantial for something that is maybe five years old.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—In 1996, there were 29 countries—Hong Kong is coming on stream in July this year.

**Mr Kimpton**—We think DIMA have not done a bad job but we would encourage them to accelerate the process. We are talking about the integrity of our borders here, under current arrangements. We need to do that in a manner that is consistent with preserving the integrity of those borders. That means that those systems that are put in place to provide this facility need to have system integrity.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Are you the official airline, in conjunction with a number of other airlines?

**Mr Kimpton**—That is correct.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—How many others—nine or 10?

**Mr Kimpton**—Nine apart from ourselves.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Are any of those airlines from countries that do not have the ETA system?

**Mr Kimpton**—That I would need to cross-check.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—For example, are there any from Latin America?

**Mr Kimpton**—We think that South African Airways, which is one of our partners, and obviously from South Africa, is not on the list. If that is a question that you would like to explore in detail, we will give you an answer on notice to that.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—I am a bit surprised that you have a major partner and you have not taken up the issue as to whether people coming from that particular country are going to have to get visas from the department of immigration through the kind of physical checks that are required. As you correctly say, the ETA system is much more flexible and much faster.

**Mr Kimpton**—It is, and I am just quickly glancing at the list. I think that probably the countries where we have partner airlines, but which may not have the system, are Thailand and South Africa. We are working with our alliance partners on these issues, as well as the broader range of commercial issues that are involved in maximising the potential benefit—not just to them, but to Australia—of their role in supplying travel to the Olympics as official carriers.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—With respect, you say you are working on it, but you have made no submission and you have no knowledge of this issue until I just raised it.

**Mr Kimpton**—I am not saying that Ansett does not have the knowledge. What I am saying is that I do not have the knowledge.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Maybe we could find out whether Ansett has made any submission to the department of immigration in relation to these issues, especially in the light of those two partners that you mentioned.

**Mr Kimpton**—Point taken.

**Mrs IRWIN**—Regarding the visitor information campaign being run by the government to inform visitors of their visa requirements: what sort of impact do you think this campaign has had on educating passengers of their need to have a visa or ETA prior to arriving in Australia?

**Mr Kimpton**—I think the answer to that is that it is not just that campaign but the ongoing provision of information about Australia's visa requirements that has raised, and probably continues to raise, awareness. We are aware of that campaign, but we have not been directly involved in that campaign. We would expect to be involved in that campaign as it matures and it produces tangible materials that we can use in our aircraft and in the materials that we provide.

**Mrs IRWIN**—What sorts of methods would you use to increase awareness amongst potential visitors of Australia's entry requirements?

**Mr Kimpton**—I think we would do it a number of ways. One is that we would want our partner airlines in offshore markets to make the requirements known through their connection and relationship with the travel agency industry, as well as making their own retail offices aware of it. It may be appropriate for them to incorporate appropriate material in publicity material, if they issue to the public direct, about the opportunities that they are offering the public in the countries in which they operate to come to the Olympic Games. We would want them to inform their employees as to what these requirements are so that as passengers arrive at airports or to booking offices they can be adequately informed.

The critical thing about the information campaign—and I think the point was made by Qantas—is that the measure of its effectiveness is not just what we know about it or our partner airlines know about it; it is what travel agents in countries from which people will come to the Olympics and Paralympics know about it. Indeed, it could even get to the point where adroit use of the media in those markets will be important, if the widest possible degree of awareness is to be created and people are not to be caught out at the last minute.

**Mrs IRWIN**—Do you feel the campaign might be successful if they had more resources or do you think that it has got enough resources?

**Mr Kimpton**—We notice that there is a two- or three-year period during which the campaign will take place. It is intended to build up. It is difficult for us to comment on the

adequacy of the resources, but DIMA can leverage those resources by working with us. In the Ansett submission we have indicated in a number of different ways how we can assist in getting that message across—and we would expect to do that. I come back to the rather negative incentive, if you like, that if we do not get it right we could have problems with the Migration Act. If we do not get it right we might not get the potential travel volumes that all of us want and expect to come to Australia for the Olympics. So there is a vested interest in us making that campaign work.

**Mr RIPOLL**—I have one quick question. In your submission you say the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs had advised Ansett Australia that their policy will be temporarily suspended for members of the Olympic family, irrespective of country of origin. Could you provide that advice to this committee?

**Mr Kimpton**—I think that is what Senator McKiernan asked us for. The qualification I have put on that is that we will endeavour to ascertain what the basis of that advice was. I am not sure whether it was a written piece of advice or verbal advice we were given, or whether indeed it is this question of use of terminology. I do not think there has ever been any proposal other than that, notwithstanding SOCOG's apparent up-front role in that, DIMA will be in the background—or not even in the background but with, in a sense, a right of veto with respect to people applying for Olympic accreditation.

**Mr RIPOLL**—The reason I ask it is that I am still not clear. You are very clear here in what you say: you say it is irrespective of country of origin—

**Mr Kimpton**—For the Olympic family.

**Mr RIPOLL**—for the Olympic family. That is not the impression I got from the submission we got from DIMA. We need to clear that up in terms of what you have been advised and what we are being advised. Whether it is a meeting, whether it is verbal; there will be some explanation.

**Mr Kimpton**—We will come back with an explanation of how and why we said what we did at the time we wrote that submission.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Sure. Thanks.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—This is my final question. I am still unclear as to the extent to which you would like the ETA system extended: whether this is for permanent extension or whether this is an extension for the period of the Olympics.

**Mr Kimpton**—I think broadly we would like it extended to the widest possible number of markets on a permanent basis. There may be an option for short-term extension for the period of the Olympics. If that is an alternative to a long-term extension—a permanent emplacement—that may be something that we would accept. It is a system that I think is a success story. It has been rolled out in relatively short order to a variety of markets, not just the European markets but some Asian and other markets as well. It has been readily well taken up. I understand the figures of usage are somewhere of the order of 80 per cent from those countries.

The momentum with which it has moved out is perhaps one of the reasons why we have not pushed it harder, because it may well be that there is a resource commitment in getting it pushed out that far that quickly. But certainly, from the point of view of facilitating access to Australia for the Olympics, extension of that system into more markets, either for the duration or for ever, would appear to be highly desirable. I do not think there is any qualification on that.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—You may wish to make a supplementary statement on this after you have talked to the other people involved.

**Mr Kimpton**—Yes.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—From how many places does Ansett fly directly to Australia, at the moment?

**Mr Kimpton**—Ansett International?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You are still doing Hong Kong?

**Mr Kimpton**—Hong Kong, Indonesia, Taiwan, Japan, Fiji.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—So Ansett International does not really have a great deal of experience about ETA yet, directly?

**Mr Kimpton**—Yes, we do because it opened up, initially, in markets to which we were flying. We have worked with the DIMA people in setting it up, as have Qantas.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I understand that. But it first opened up in the United States. You do not fly into the United States?

**Mr Kimpton**—No, we do not fly into the United States.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—It is not in place in Hong Kong now. It is not in place in Fiji. Is it in Japan?

**Mr Kimpton**—Yes, it is.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You have got it in Japan. Of course, you will do into Osaka. It was not in place in Kuala Lumpur either, was it?

**Mr Kimpton**—It is in Malaysia, according to that list.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—But you are not in Malaysia?

**Mr Kimpton**—Yes, we are. We fly to Malaysia.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You are back in again?

**Mr Kimpton**—Not at the moment.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You are not in Malaysia?

**Mr Kimpton**—No, we do not fly at the moment, but we have—

**Senator McKIERNAN**—So your only direct experience now is with Ansett directly out of Japan?

**Mr Kimpton**—Right now, yes. But we handle carriers who do operate to the countries where ETA operates.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—To the countries; but—with due respect—ETA really operates from the countries coming into Australia. You would not be directly and immediately involved with your partner airlines in the United States coming here?

**Mr Kimpton**—I do not want to make too much of the involvement with partner airlines but, when you handle an airline at this end, you very quickly become aware of the problems that carrier has in its country of origin. For that matter, if the system is not working we deal with the problem here because the passenger cannot be landed. We do have derivative knowledge as to the operation of ETA, from those carriers that we handle and with whom we have partnerships. I do not want to overstate that knowledge, but we do, because if it is not working we will have flights where either passengers have been unable to embark or, the passengers having arrived in Australia, we have to deal with the question of sending them back or otherwise arranging for them to be accommodated because they have not met Australia's entry requirements.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Take as an example South African Airlines, which is one of the partner airlines coming from a country where an ETA does not operate. If they have a problem with a non-visaed passenger on arrival in Australia, would Ansett get involved in that?

**Mr Kimpton**—Qantas is the handling agent for South Africa.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I thought you told us earlier that South African Airlines was one of your nine partner airlines.

**Mr Kimpton**—It is a complicated world we live in!

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I am sorry to ask complicated questions but you did tell us—

**Mr Kimpton**—You have that entitlement to ask complicated questions. One of the points Qantas was making about access to the Olympic village is that they in fact ground-handle some of our partners, whether Alliance partners or Olympic carrier partners. Equally, we handle other carriers who also operate to ETA countries and we handle some of those airlines that are our Alliance partners and our Olympic team partners.



**Senator McKIERNAN**—I understand that bit, but am I correct—and we can check the transcript—that you told the committee a short time ago that South Africa was a partner airline?

**Mr Kimpton**—Yes, it is.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—It is a partner airline?

**Mr Kimpton**—It is a partner airline.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I will repeat the question I asked a little while ago: if they, in flying into Australia, encounter a problem with any passenger on their aircraft who does not have a proper visa or a proper ETA, would Ansett then get involved with that at the ground level?

**Mr Kimpton**—No. Qantas, as handling agent, would.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—So Qantas might get involved. It goes back to my earlier question about Ansett's experience with the ETA. When I asked you about that, we eventually found out how many ports overseas you fly from to Australia. Then you talked about your experiences with your partner airlines. But now you are telling me that your partner airlines are actually handled by Qantas, rather than by you.

**Mr Kimpton**—Some are.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I think it is that African one because that was the one that you mentioned. Can you give me another name? Although I think I have got the point, anyway.

**Mr Kimpton**—There are a number of different groups of relationships here. There are the airlines that we have in Star Alliance, which is our long-term strategic alliance. We then have a somewhat different but overlapping group of airlines which are in our Olympic airline team. In each of those instances, we have commercial relationships with those airlines relative to marketing, promotion and so forth. We also have relationships with a different group of airlines again. They are not so much partnership arrangements or team arrangements in the sense that was just described, but we provide ground-handling services there.

The point I was making—without trying to link it all together with too much detail—is that you learn about how systems operate offshore, both directly because you are there in your own right, and also vicariously through the airlines with whom you have relationships. The message that is coming back is that ETA is working.

**CHAIR**—We will close now. Thank you very much, Ansett, for coming to us today. You will receive a copy of the *Hansard*. If you have any queries, please get back to us. We will get back to you if we have any queries, and I believe there is some information that you will forward to us. Thank you very much for appearing today.

**Mr Kimpton**—Thank you very much.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.38 p.m. to 1.39 p.m.**

**LARCOS, Mr Andrew, Government Relations Officer, Australian Tourist Commission**

**WHITE, Ms Maggie, Manager Olympic Games Liaison, Australian Tourist Commission**

**CHAIR**—You have made a submission to the committee. Do you wish to make an amendment to that submission at all?

**Mr Larcos**—If I could.

**CHAIR**—Is this an amendment or is it a statement?

**Mr Larcos**—It is a statement prior to taking questions.

**CHAIR**—Please go ahead, and we will ask questions after that.

**Mr Larcos**—I would like to thank the members of the committee for this opportunity to appear before you today in relation to your present inquiry into immigration entry arrangements for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

As a Commonwealth government statutory authority the Australian Tourist Commission's role is to promote Australia internationally as a tourist destination. It is our belief that the worldwide interest surrounding the staging of the Olympic Games will irrevocably change the way the rest of the world sees this country. It is our hope that the rest of the world will see Australia as the most exciting and desirable travel destination of the next century.

Essentially our objective as a Commonwealth government agency is to broaden this country's international image by associating Australia with the Olympic Games. We have been doing this by implementing a four-year strategy commenced in 1996 to maximise the benefits of escalating media tension and Australia's growing attractiveness.

In order to achieve our objectives, we are forming alliances with global Olympic partners and Olympic Games sponsors as well as SCOG, the Sydney Olympic Broadcasting Organisation, the Sydney Paralympics Organising Committee, Tourism New South Wales and other states and territories as well as the tourism industry.

With the increased tourist arrivals due to visit Australia both in the year 2000 and beyond, the ATC has an indirect interest in the immigration arrangements that are in place and how these will affect the overall visitor experience. In particular, whether temporary entry provisions facilitate with ease or frustrate the visitor's time in Australia is an area that has the capacity to affect the overall tourist experience. Our views on some of these areas are set out in our submission to you and we will be pleased to take any questions now which you might have about this or any other area.

**CHAIR**—You have made your submission. Looking at what you have seen for the preparations for the Olympics and what you know about Australia's preparedness for tourism—especially in its entry arrangements—do you have any outstanding or particular concern?

**Mr Larcos**—Not really, no. Maggie might like to elaborate on this. Our concerns are really to bring more visitors to Australia. Essentially that is what we seek to do. Maggie, as the manager of our Olympic Games unit in the ATC, has been working closely with SCOG in particular to try and achieve that. We do not have any particular concerns about the arrangements to date, no.

**CHAIR**—Is there anything that you can think of that would facilitate the entry of those tourists and make their stay in Australia a more enjoyable one, either in entrance or departure?

**Mr Larcos**—The key factor would be the visa arrangements and visa issuance practices that the government currently has. I am sure that the committee has already heard evidence from a number of groups that have appeared before you about the electronic travel authority, the ETA, in particular. It is our view that that has gone a long way to eliminating a lot of the problems that we have had in the past about visitor entry arrangements to Australia. We view it as one of the successes, and we would be more than happy to work with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to ensure that it works well.

**CHAIR**—Would you like to see it extended to more countries?

**Mr Larcos**—That would be our dream. Our concern—and we have raised this in this submission—is that, whilst we have been glad with the way ETA has worked in that it has facilitated and made it easier for visitors to get here, at the moment ETA currently covers only around 70 per cent of international visitor arrivals to Australia.

It is true that most of those arrivals that are coming under the ETA system are coming from our major markets, the US, the UK, virtually all the European countries, a lot of the Asian ones and Japan as well. Around 30 per cent of arrivals to this country still come here with the ordinary paper visa. That is causing us problems, particularly in the markets of Latin America and the Middle East. We receive constant feedback from organisations that we work with in both of those markets that potential visitors to Australia are being turned off from coming here because they need to get a paper visa.

**CHAIR**—Is that because they actually need to get a paper visa, or because getting the paper visa has other problems, that is, the length of time or information they have to bother to collect? Is the fact that they have to get the piece of paper, or does getting the piece of paper require other things that they object to?

**Mr Larcos**—It is probably a combination of both, probably more the latter feature of that. In particular also, in regions like Latin America it is unfortunately the case that Australia does not have missions in every Latin American country. For instance, to give you an example, a potential visitor to Australia from Peru has to send their passport crossborder to either Brazil or Mexico, or whatever. Potential visitors have an aversion to sending their passports through the mail; I think anyone does. It is that feature that makes them think twice about going ahead with their travel plans.

Particularly with Latin America, with our marketing strategies in that region, we are essentially competing with Europe. Those are the two options that Latin American potential

visitors will think about. Most European countries are essentially visa free. So, if you are a potential visitor and you have got unlimited budget, all other things being equal, you will go for a country that does not require the same visa conditions as Australia.

**CHAIR**—Do you have any idea, for instance if you were in Peru, how long it would take from the time you sent your passport off before it came back with the visa?

**Mr Larcos**—It varies. We have often found that over the Christmas period, for instance, a potential visitor could be waiting for something like up to two or three months to get the visa through. In other periods, it is less than that, but it gives you an idea that visitors do get frustrated with the process. By word of mouth or whatever, they will often consider other options than travelling to Australia.

**CHAIR**—If you were living in Peru, you would not decide on the spur of the moment that you would like a three-week holiday in Australia?

**Mr Larcos**—I think you would find it very difficult to do that. It has to be said that really the non-ETA situation applies to 30 per cent of international visitors to Australia. So it is in the minority; nevertheless, it is a problem for us in those two regions in particular—Latin America and the Middle East. We have been encouraging our friends in the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to consider expanding the ETA system. That would be ideal for us, if they could take in both those regions.

There are other countries, for instance like China and India. I think we had something like 75,000 visitors from China last year, which is probably the biggest market for non-ETA travel to Australia. But we accept the department's arguments that it will not be possible to introduce ETA to a market like China at the moment. In their language, I think they consider it to be high risk, with overstay rates and illegal entries to Australia. We accept their arguments, but China is another market that down the track we would be looking at expanding the ETA system into.

But certainly, our arguments in relation to Latin America and the Middle East at the moment are based on our view that they are not high risk, and the department has nothing to fear about expanding the ETA system to those two regions.

**CHAIR**—What percentage of tourists at present come from Latin America and countries that do not have the ETA? It would be quite small, wouldn't it?

**Mr Larcos**—It would be quite small. To give you an idea, in the 12 months ending November 1998, Australia got about 27,000 visitors from Latin America and over the whole year Australia got about four million visitors.

**CHAIR**—It is a very small percentage.

**Mr Larcos**—It is small as a percentage.

**CHAIR**—Do you believe that if we extended the ETA in Latin America that that 27,000 would increase?

**Mr Larcos**—That would be our view in Latin America because, as you may have heard from Qantas, they have just re-introduced the direct air links between Australia and Latin America—Buenos Aires. It has been something that the ATC has been agitating for for quite a while. One of the factors that facilitates visa visitor entry is direct air links. Qantas is one of our biggest marketing partners overseas. We do a lot of marketing exercises with them and we spend a lot of dollars with them. It is our view that we will be doing a lot of marketing, promotional activities, with them in the Latin American market in the coming year, particularly in the lead-up to the games period. Therefore, it is our view that that figure will pick up significantly.

**CHAIR**—Have you any idea how many Latin American tourists go to any country in Europe each year? I am just trying to get a comparison of their tourist trade.

**Mr Larcos**—I would have to take that on notice.

**CHAIR**—It would be interesting just to see what percentage of Latin American tourist trade we actually get.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Where is the ATC's office located in Latin America, South America?

**Ms White**—We actually do not have an ATC office but we do have a representative office in the Argentine and also in Brazil.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—How long have they been operating?

**Ms White**—About two years. They do more along the lines of public relations activities and then working with the travel industry.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You provided some figures, and amended figures, in your statements of projected visitor arrivals in the period between 1996 and 2000. You have amended them. In those tourism forecasting council figures, how many were they forecasting would come from South America? I cannot pick it up from the figures here.

**Mr Larcos**—That falls into the category 'Other countries'.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—That is why I am asking the question.

**Mr Larcos**—Of what the breakdown is as a proportion?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Yes. It just seems to me that you have spent some time focusing on Latin America and that is why I am asking the question. Because you have a focus on Latin America, what are the details of that focus?

**Mr Larcos**—In terms of increased visitor arrivals?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Yes.

**Mr Larcos**—As we said, Latin America is one of our smaller markets. It is not a big market for us. The point I was seeking to make in relation to Latin America was more along the lines that the electronic travel authority system applies to 70 per cent of international visitor arrivals to this country and, of the remaining 30 per cent, the biggest regions of those remaining 30 per cent are Latin America and the Middle East. In terms of overall comparison they are small.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Is that an eastern Australian outlook on things, being that Latin America is closer to Sydney than perhaps Africa would be to Australia?

**Mr Larcos**—No, not really.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What would you say is a bigger market then—Africa to Latin America as the comparison?

**Mr Larcos**—I am not sure I am following your point.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You have identified Latin America as being a very important market where we are not getting the focus from and we are not getting numbers from at the moment. I put it to you that perhaps Africa is an even larger market but closer to us, but is not receiving the same attention. I am offering you an excuse in that you are an eastern Australian based organisation with a very big focus on eastern Australia rather than Australia wide and that perhaps your thought processes should be wider than they are.

**Mr Larcos**—I would not agree with that. A lot of our budget is spent on South Africa, for instance. It is a bigger market for us than Latin America. We do a lot of work in South Africa; I would say more than Latin America. South Africa is an interesting market because it has a high proportion of what we call the visiting friends and relatives segment.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I was not talking about South Africa. South Africa is a country in Africa just as Peru is a country in Latin America. I am talking about the region which you were talking about. That is why I have come back to you because you have focused your argument on regions.

**Mr Larcos**—I know the point you are making, but the reality is that we do not really obtain many international visitors from Africa itself as a continent.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—With due respect, we do. Africa includes places like South Africa.

**Mr Larcos**—Yes, but take South Africa out—

**Senator McKIERNAN**—We can't, unfortunately. It is rather like removing Tasmania from Australia. It just cannot be done.

**Mr Larcos**—I see your point, yes.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You know what I mean?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes, I do.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—The ATC focus on eastern Australia is something that has bugged me for some period of time. From the revised figures that you have given I cannot discern an appreciable difference other than in other Asia. Am I correct in that—from one submission to the other?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes, I think you are right, actually.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—How accurate are the Tourism Forecasting Council's figures?

**Mr Larcos**—That is like the 'how long is a piece of string' argument.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—No, it is not. They put out a forecast. They say, for example, in the year 2000 there are going to be 4,227,000 visitors. At the end of the year 1999 we should be able to check that, shouldn't we?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes. The forecasts are rolling forecasts.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—How accurate are they when they are made?

**Mr Larcos**—They are reasonably close to the final figures.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—How close were they for last year? What were the forecasts for last year and what were the outcomes?

**Mr Larcos**—We still have not got 1998 in yet but, to give you an idea, they are forecasting 4,012,000, and the year to date, November 1998 as a comparison, we had received 4,157,000, so it is reasonably close.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—If you go back to the first submission you made, they are not so reasonably close, are they?

**Mr Larcos**—That is why they update them twice a year.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—The point I am making, though, is that they make a forecast and then they revise the forecast.

**Mr Larcos**—Yes.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—But you rely on that forecast as it appears at that particular point in time. What I am saying is, how reliable is that forecast when we get it, for example, for the year 2001? If the ATC put a big campaign into South America and are successful and you quadruple the number of visitors, you are going to throw the forecasting council's figures right out the window, are you not?



**Mr Larcos**—Yes. The Tourism Forecasting Council invite information from a whole range of tourism industry groups and we all feed into it. They throw it into the pond and come up with their figures.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Those figures, then, are untested. Tell me about the applications required to get an ETA in those countries where an ETA is applicable. What would you advise a visitor to Australia to do when coming to Australia from an ETA country?

**Mr Larcos**—A lot of the electronic travel authorities are issued at point of sale at the travel agency. For instance, in the UK, to take that as an example, it is issued once they walk into the travel agency and they make their travel arrangements to Australia. The ETA is issued within a couple of minutes while they are there.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—The ATC has made that easier for people in that regard, haven't you?

**Mr Larcos**—The ETAs?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—No, the ATC. The Australian Tourist Commission has made it easier for people to apply for an electronic visa—in your publications.

**Mr Larcos**—Yes. I am happy to table some of the material that we currently produce—for instance, the travellers guide. I will leave this with the secretariat. This is obviously one of our key points of outlining the features of visiting Australia and in it there are details about visa arrangements, entry arrangements. There is a whole section on visas and so forth. We also have a great deal of detail on our Internet site which gives a potential visitor an idea about how to obtain a visa, what they need to be aware of in relation to quarantine, entry arrangements, that sort of thing.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Can you from your Internet site take an application form off the net?

**Mr Larcos**—For visa entry? I do not think so.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—In the publications you have got there, have you now got application forms included? There used to be, didn't there?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes, they used to be, but since the introduction of the ETA they are no longer there. That was in the days when it was a paper visa issuance system. These days the section really talks about how to obtain the ETA from the travel agency or the airline. Most of the markets that we are producing these information kits for are really markets where the ETA exists already.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—So they are English language productions?

**Mr Larcos**—English, German, Japanese and so forth.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What do you know about the visitor awareness campaign that the government has embarked on for the Olympics?

**Ms White**—I am very aware of it, and have assisted the department of immigration with contact details; also information for contacts to whom this booklet can be distributed, and generally I guess providing an advisory capacity for that particular thing. I think the thing, certainly with the Olympics, is that it is a very targeted group of people who will be coming to the games that you can identify through the national Olympic committees, through the official tour operators who are appointed to handle the ticket distribution for the games, the sports marketing companies who will be looking after the corporate hospitality guests of the sponsors et cetera. We are certainly helping to facilitate some of those contact leads to the department of immigration.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I am pleased to hear that. Would you say the campaign so far has been effective in its early stage?

**Ms White**—I think it is certainly a campaign that is constant, that it is being reinforced, but you can never take anything for granted or think that just publishing a brochure and sending it out once will do the trick. It is that constant reinforcement and working those particular contacts who are working with the various Olympic and also Paralympic organisations who at the end of the day will bring people to Australia.

**Mr BAIRD**—I am sorry I missed the earlier part of your presentation, but I am sure I would agree with it. The only thing I noticed, Maggie, is your comments on visa and ETA. Are you saying this because you get a lot of your funding from the government and you do not want to upset them? You can be honest. You are probably aware that TCA has put in a submission saying they should take the opportunity for a visa-free trial. What is the official position of the ATC on the question of visa free?

**Ms White**—I think Andrew is handling all our government relations there.

**Mr Larcos**—How can we answer that diplomatically?

**Mr BAIRD**—All you have to do is be honest. There is no prize.

**Mr Larcos**—Let me put it this way: we are aware of the reasons why the Australian government policy is to continue to insist on visa issuance. Prior to the ETA system being introduced, our view was that visas were a hindrance to our efforts in trying to bring international visitors to this country. However, and this does need to be said, the ETA system has gone a long way to overcoming a lot of those obstacles. It has made it easier for a lot of people to come to this country.

**Mr BAIRD**—Okay. But is it as good as a visa-free situation, and do you believe that having a requirement for a visa impacts at all on the number of tourists to Australia?

**Mr Larcos**—I do not think it would be accurate any longer to say that the ETA system prevents people coming to this country. The ETA system is not a barrier.

**Mr BAIRD**—Are you sure the entire industry agrees with you on that?

**Mr Larcos**—Well, we are aware that the industry is very keen to see visa-free arrangements in place. However, I guess our view is very much based on the idealistic as opposed to the realistic, if I can put it like that.

**Mr BAIRD**—What do you idealistically want to happen?

**Mr Larcos**—We idealistically would like to see the ETA system expanded to cover all our markets, including, as I said earlier, Latin America and the Middle East, because we think that in those markets it is a barrier at the moment. It is causing us problems getting visitors here. But in markets like the UK, the US and Canada, for instance, the visa policy is not an issue in terms of bringing—

**Mr BAIRD**—So you are no longer pursuing visa free?

**Mr Larcos**—I do not know if we ever did, really. Our emphasis is not on pursuing visa free; our emphasis is on trying to convince our colleagues in the department of immigration to expand the ETA system.

**Mr RIPOLL**—That has already answered some of my questions. In relation to the visa-free arrangements—and you have probably answered this—we have heard differing views from the airlines. We heard from Qantas and Ansett this morning. In principle, they said, ‘We want a visa-free system.’ But then, when we pursued it and asked them, ‘How do you see this working; would it be a benefit to you,’ they could not really give us an answer. So you are saying now that you are not really pursuing it, that you would not support it. I suppose what I am getting at is what do you define as being visa free and how would you see a system like that being of benefit?

**Mr Larcos**—There are some that would argue at the present moment that the ETA system allows us to get as close as we are going to get to being visa free. The reality is that a potential international visitor to Australia walking into a travel agency in London obtains a visa within two minutes of being in that office. That is essentially visa free.

The reality is, I think—and this is really a personal assessment as opposed to an agency assessment—that, even in a visa-free climate, the Australian government will still want to provide some sort of checking and monitoring of who arrives in this country, and, therefore, if it does not happen before they leave the UK, the US or wherever, it will happen once they arrive here at our airports, which will mean further delays at point of entry, customs, quarantine or wherever it is in monitoring who gets into the country.

**Mr RIPOLL**—What you are really saying is that the issue is not so much whatever the definition may be, whether it is visa free or not, but how quickly it takes to get one?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes.

**Mr RIPOLL**—It is all about the processing speed rather than whether it is visa free. I do not think we have really had a definition of what visa free is, but it is certainly about speed more than—

**Mr Larcos**—Processing time was always the big issue prior to ETA. That was always the problem that we encountered. We had loads of anecdotal evidence from the agencies that we worked with in other countries that potential visitors to this country were being put off by the delays that they were encountering in obtaining a visa. That is essentially no longer an issue because they are obtaining it within minutes in most of those countries—in 70 per cent of markets, essentially.

**Mr RIPOLL**—One of the other points you make in your submission is that the \$50 visa charge acts as a deterrent in countries where ETAs are not available. I just question the validity of that. Do you have any evidence? Are there any case studies? I just cannot imagine that somebody planning a holiday for a week or three or four—whatever period of time—in Australia would go to all the trouble and expense and then, at the last minute, decide, ‘No; \$50 will put me over the line. I can’t afford it’—that it is a deterrent.

**Mr Larcos**—That was particularly an issue in two of our markets. Taiwan and Hong Kong are in the top 10 of our markets internationally in numbers of visitors coming from both of those countries. If you have a look at an earlier part of our submission, I think it is on page 5, towards the bottom of that page there is a table in which we outline countries that currently have a fee applying for visitors from Taiwan. It compares Australia’s charges to other potential countries—New Zealand, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, Canada and the US. You will see that a number of those countries have a visa-free system applying in Hong Kong. Certainly, all those competitive destinations have charges applying to Taiwan, but the \$50 charge that the government imposed in last year’s budget effectively priced Australia out of the market. It made us the most expensive destination. It was our belief, and we had—albeit anecdotal—evidence at the time that travel groups were making decisions to go elsewhere.

We have not pursued this matter because the minister for immigration, Mr Ruddock, announced a short while ago that the \$50 charge would no longer apply to either of those two markets and that will cease to be applied from 1 July this year. So for us that is no longer an issue. They were two of our big markets. However, the \$50 charge still does apply to Latin America, the Middle East and a number of other markets. It our belief that any charge—all other things being equal—will effectively act as a deterrent to travel.

**Mr RIPOLL**—I have one final question. You also mention in your submission that new passenger cards require that certain questions be non-compulsory. Can you elaborate a bit on that to explain what types of questions and why you see this as a problem? It is in the last paragraph on the first page of your submission.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—When was the \$50 charge for the visa for Taiwan and Hong Kong dropped?

**Mr Larcos**—Sorry?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—The \$50 visa charge for Hong Kong and Taiwan, when was the announcement made on that being dropped?

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—It is in the supplementary submission at the bottom—August 1998.

**Mr Larcos**—Yes, thank you. In August 1998 it was announced that the \$50 charge would no longer apply to those two markets only, Taiwan and Hong Kong, so it will continue to apply in China and India and various other markets.

**Mr BAIRD**—I was interested in one of the other answers that you gave, but I have nothing more on that charge. You mentioned the time it would take at the airport if you did not do it beforehand. How much extra time do you think it would take at the airport in order to complete the visa requirements? If you came in visa free and then it was processed at the airport, how much extra time would it take?

**Mr Larcos**—I could not give an answer to that.

**Mr BAIRD**—I wanted to take you back to the logic that, if you are saying that it takes 90 seconds to issue the visa and they are already processing in that information, the same information that they process in is what is processed in when they come to the airport, so wouldn't the length of delay be minuscule?

**Mr Larcos**—It would be roughly the same. You are essentially right, but, if you get four jumbo jets arriving at the same time—

**Mr BAIRD**—No, per passenger.

**Mr Larcos**—Per passenger it would be the equivalent, 90 seconds.

**Mr BAIRD**—No. They are already feeding in part of the information anyway when the person arrives, and that takes approximately 90 seconds anyway. Wouldn't that be part of the same process? So wouldn't there in fact be no additional time? It is probably something we should go back to the department of immigration on.

**Mr Larcos**—I see the point you are making. We are really in the field of guesstimates whether it does have an overall impact or not, what sort of time limit it has. I do not know. That is something the department might be in a better position to answer.

**Mr RIPOLL**—That has brought up another question to do with my original one which is the line that Mr Baird is going down about this additional time. Wouldn't the problem really be not so much that the time might be the same, but, if you have a problem in the country of origin, it is more easily fixed than if you have a problem at the gate, as it were, waiting to get into the country here?

**Mr Larcos**—That is true. A lot of problems are ironed out before the visitor leaves their country of residence and comes to this country, so it is ironed out either at the travel agency or at the point of entry. The airline—Qantas, Ansett, whoever—might be ironing out the

problem as opposed to it being a problem that needs to be ironed out once they arrive in this country. I do not know if Qantas talked about this when they appeared, but they have often made the point that they are stuck with ironing out a lot of problems when the passenger is boarding the plane before coming here, and that is a cause of some concern on their part. It either happens before they leave or when they get here, if there are problems.

I understand from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs that there have been continuing problems with the ETA system, particularly with visitors from Asian countries, and that is more in relation to how the data is entered before they leave. Those problems are still likely to occur here, one would think.

To go back to one of your earlier questions in relation to the passenger cards—and this has been an issue for us—these are the small cards that are issued on the plane just before you arrive in the country. On the back of the card there were a number of questions that were asked of passengers. In particular, there was a question that asked visitors to identify the main reason for coming to Australia, whether it was for a convention, business, visiting friends or relatives, employment, education or a holiday. This question is no longer compulsory, which means that international visitors no longer need to answer it. At the moment, we do not know why 10 to 15 per cent of those arrivals are coming to this country.

The reason that particular statistic is important is that we use that information in our marketing strategies. We work out what segment of a market we are going for. If we are going for a holiday segment in Japan, for instance, we want to work out whether or not our marketing strategy is succeeding. If there is an increase in business arrivals, as opposed to holiday and leisure arrivals, then obviously we are doing something wrong and we need to compare ourselves with our competitor destinations. That is why we are a bit concerned about losing that piece of information at the moment. It is causing us some concern because we have no other way of working out why people are coming to this country.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. Dr Theophanous.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Sorry. I was a bit late. The general thrust of your submission is that the ETA system should be significantly expanded to other areas, and I agree with that. What evidence do you have, if that were to be the case, that you would in fact increase tourism from those areas—the Middle East and Latin America, for example?

**Mr Larcos**—Our evidence really relies on the current information we are receiving from both those regions, from travel agencies we are working with who advise us that potential visitors inquiring about a holiday to Australia are being dissuaded from that decision by the indication that the visa issuance process would be likely to take some while.

**CHAIR**—We discussed this before and the example given was that, if you were in Peru, it could take up to three months to get a visa through.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—In some countries it takes even longer. Besides the delays, are you aware that some of these countries have high rejection rates for people?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes. That is particularly true in China, for instance. We are constantly in discussion with the department of immigration about how better to issue visas for potential visitors from China to this country. The department will argue that China is a high risk country. Unfortunately, that is causing us considerable problems at the moment. China is quite a large market for us.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Have you made a submission to the department about China?

**Mr Larcos**—Not about China. In the 12 months to November 1998, we received 76,000 visitors from China. By comparison, we only received 27,000-odd from Latin America, so that gives you an idea. One would say that our emphasis should be in trying to convince the department to expand ETAs in China. However, it is our belief that it would be very difficult to convince the department of immigration at the moment to expand ETAs in China because it is their view that China is a high risk category. They have evidence to suggest that visitors from China have high rates of overstays and illegals, which makes it a high risk category. We would rather not spend our resources in trying to convince the department of the impossible on that.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—But it does not have to be black and white, does it? Up to 25 per cent, I think, or is it 30 per cent of applicants from China are rejected?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes, 20 to 25 per cent.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—If you accept that there is a higher risk in relation to China than other countries, have you put forward any proposal which would reduce that level of 20 to 25 per cent that are rejected and make it more realistic?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes, that really is a matter of a difference of opinion between us and the department of immigration, unfortunately. It is our view that, even allowing for the high risk, they are being unnecessarily stringent in their reviews of visa applications. We have had a number of representations from industry groups that work in that market to suggest that visa applications by legitimate groups are being rejected for reasons that are very difficult to fathom. That is a sore point of contention between us and immigration. It is our view, as I said, that I think the department is being unnecessarily stringent in that market in particular.

**Mr BAIRD**—Is it not also, from what I heard, that when you get one person who is deemed unacceptable, the whole group often cancels out?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes, that is our understanding.

**Mr BAIRD**—And often the cancellation is at the last minute. So flights suddenly have got 20 less on them.

**Mr Larcos**—Yes. That is bad for Australia's corporate image—to reject someone within 24 or 48 hours. The China market is a very immature market, as you know. A lot of the travel from that market to Australia is in groups. So if you have a group of 20 or 30 people and one gets rejected, the whole lot get rejected, whereas the other 29 may be legitimate

travellers to this country. That is causing us a lot of problems at the moment, but it is just in that market.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Can you give us details of dates, times and airlines when these actually occurred?

**Mr Larcos**—I can provide you with some instances where that has occurred, yes.

**CHAIR**—Is it from the Australian point of view that the whole group is cancelled? It is not that the group itself takes umbrage at one person being excluded. The actual decision that the whole group cannot go is an Australian one. Is that correct?

**Mr Larcos**—That is our understanding.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—If I might pursue my point: I think the whole committee is interested in this matter. We heard from you that those who are in the system can get a visa within two minutes. Does that involve also contacting the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs?

**Mr Larcos**—That goes essentially to how the ETA system works. My understanding is that in the UK for instance—that is a classic market example—a travel agency is hooked up to a system where they will punch in the details of the visitor applicant and that will come back with the information about whether that potential visitor can be granted a visa by Australian authorities.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—So unless that person is a banned person, or something of that sort, it is granted within 10 minutes?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Are you aware that people from China could be subjected to interviews about the most detailed situations of their lives for more than an hour when applying for visitor visas?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—What sorts of reports do you get back from travel agents and other people when this sort of thing happens?

**Mr Larcos**—It goes against our efforts to try to sell Australia as a tourist destination in that market. I have to say that this is really only an issue in the China market, which is an emerging market. It is our belief that the impending decision by the Australian government to grant approved destination status to China will go some way to overcoming some of these problems.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Can you explain more about that status?



**Mr Larcos**—The improved destination status is a system that the Chinese government introduced some time ago. Basically, it means that Chinese outbound visitors can travel to a select number of countries. There are six countries I think at the moment. From memory, they are all in South-East Asia—Malaysia, Thailand and Korea, of that ilk. We have been engaged in negotiations with the Chinese for a while now to allow Australia to be included in that select group. If that were to happen, Australia will be the first Western country to receive that status which would be quite an honour.

**Mr BAIRD**—Wasn't that agreed 12 months ago? When Chairman Ho came out 12 months ago, he announced that we had actually got that status, along with New Zealand.

**Mr Larcos**—It was announced that approved destination status would be granted in the future. That is more than 12 months ago. We are still waiting on the final details.

**Mr BAIRD**—Further to Dr Theophanous's question, is it not true that the process of fairly lengthy interrogation also applies to applicants from India, with bank accounts being required, et cetera? So if you were a young person from India without any substantial history of financial backing, your chances are somewhat limited?

**Mr Larcos**—I have not heard instances of bank accounts being inquired into with potential Indian travellers. It is true that we are having similar problems in India in terms of visa issuance. I think some of the questions that you have asked, Mr Baird, and some of the questions that you have asked, Dr Theophanous, might be better addressed to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—You mentioned the problems essentially with China—we have just mentioned India—but you also mentioned the Middle East. Is it not true that you have similar problems with people from some Middle Eastern countries who want to visit Australia? They are being excluded?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes, that is true.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Have you got any details, either from China or the Middle East, that you could give to the committee? We would be interested in some detailed documentation on this matter.

**Mr Larcos**—Yes. I have taken a question from Senator McKiernan on examples that we have over China. I am happy to do that for the Middle East as well.

**Mr BAIRD**—Could you look at India at the same time?

**CHAIR**—Perhaps we could widen it to any countries where we have these problems.

**Mr Larcos**—Okay.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—To clear up the matter I mentioned earlier: I note in your supplementary submission that the minister announced that the ETA would apply to Hong Kong and Taiwan from 1 July 1999. You do not say here that he has dropped the \$50

charge, which was why I queried you at the time. The intimation I received from you was that there was no charge now for a visa from those two countries. Can you clarify that?

**Mr Larcos**—I apologise if I have misled you there. The \$50 non-ETA charge still applies in both Taiwan and Hong Kong until 1 July.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—So it has not been dropped?

**Mr Larcos**—No. The intention to drop it was announced.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—It is still not quite correct. If it was going to be dropped, that would be seen as discrimination where it would apply to some countries and not others. The ETA will come into operation on 1 July?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—There is no charge for an ETA?

**Mr Larcos**—That is right.

**Mr BAIRD**—I think there was an important question to ask just following on that. Isn't there also a \$50 processing charge in Taiwan as well for a visa?

**Mr Larcos**—Yes.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—There is a charge in Britain; there is a charge in Japan.

**Mr BAIRD**—This is an official government processing charge though, is it not? It is different from the others. This is an official charge from the Australian government? It is the only country where that applies.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Is that right?

**Mr Larcos**—There is Taiwan.

**CHAIR**—Yes, because of the special status of Taiwan, vis-a-vis China.

**Mr Larcos**—That is correct.

**CHAIR**—We are clear. Mr Larcos and Ms White, thank you very much for coming. Is it the wish of the committee that the four brochures be accepted as an exhibit today? There being no objection, it is so ordered. Thank you for coming.

[2.30 p.m.]

**JACKSON, Commander Stephen, Director, Specialist Operations, AFP Operational Commander, Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, Australian Federal Police**

**CHAIR**—I believe that the Federal Police have asked that their evidence be heard in camera. Is it the wish of the committee that the evidence from the Federal Police be taken in camera?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I would like to ask them why they want it in camera.

**CHAIR**—We are not yet in camera and we would like to question you on your reasons for wishing to go in camera before we do so, if in fact we do so. Would you like to tell us why you feel that your evidence should be heard in camera today?

**Cmdr Jackson**—If the committee wished to probe the Federal Police submission, because a number of examples cited in that submission touch upon current operations I would be concerned that aspects of operational methodology may be revealed. Furthermore, any subsequent questioning on the submission that the committee may wish to put to the AFP may explore processes that belong to other Commonwealth agencies such as the Australian Customs Service and the department of immigration. As I may discuss or wish to discuss in camera current operational matters, there is also the fear of a sense of alarmism, which needs to be guarded against. It is for those reasons that I ask for my evidence to be taken in camera.

**CHAIR**—Are you satisfied with that, Deputy Chair, or do you have more questions?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—No, I am not satisfied with it. I do have a difficulty with any parliamentary committee receiving in camera or confidential information. It makes it that much more difficult for us, when we are reporting, to source and reference matters that come before us.

The submission that has been put in by the AFP was provided in confidence, but I personally could not see anything in it that could not have been out in the public arena. In fact, I would suggest that having it in the public arena would aid the committee in its deliberations. It would certainly aid other witnesses who appear before the committee. That is the basis, the point I am starting from.

I have never been on a parliamentary committee yet where the AFP have appeared before us—and the AFP have certainly appeared before me on many occasions—when we have forced the evidence out of them; twisted their arm behind their back to get the evidence. We have never sought to do that. With those concerns on the record, I would agree to proceed with it, but I am very uncomfortable. I have expressed this same degree of uncomfortableness to the Attorney-General's Department when they appeared before us and, I think, also to ASIO when they appeared before us. The secretiveness that has been part of the law enforcement agencies on this matter is not needed, in my opinion, but I am not going to labour the committee any further.

**CHAIR**—Mr Jackson, I will give you two choices: you can actually require, as you are giving the submission, that we go in camera straightaway, or you could take a middle course and decide on an open hearing at this stage and then ask to go in camera if you find that you are stressed. It is your call at this moment. The deputy chair has told you his concerns, but I will leave it entirely up to you to decide how you want to go from here.

**Cmdr Jackson**—Thank you. Accepting the deputy chair's comments—and I note them—I would be prepared to adopt the middle ground and, if there are any issues touching upon operational sensitivity or methodology, I will consider my position at that point.

**CHAIR**—In that case we will conduct this hearing openly. You may indicate any time during it that you wish to be heard in camera. At the end, I will give you the opportunity to enlarge on any of your answers in camera if you wish to do so.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What do you know about the visitor awareness campaign?

**Cmdr Jackson**—The Australian Federal Police was consulted in the early stages of the preparation of the visitor information campaign. I sat on a reference group convened by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet when the rationale for the campaign was discussed and evaluated. The AFP supports the general advisory nature of the campaign. It has been quite evident for a number of years that perhaps there has been a dearth of information made available to intending visitors to this country. It gives the AFP some comfort to see that that has been redressed by this initiative, and it receives our fullest support.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You said your involvement was at the earliest part of the process. Have you got an ongoing involvement?

**Cmdr Jackson**—Yes, we have an ongoing involvement from the aspect of it being indirectly related to security issues, particularly in the Commonwealth law enforcement arena. We would like to think that the AFP's approach these days is more to prevention as opposed to simply a law enforcement response. We simply do not have the resources to be able to respond to all aspects of breaches of Commonwealth crime. For that very reason we have asked that we be consulted.

We accept that we are not a front-line regulatory agency when it comes to providing an awareness campaign to the public, but we can certainly see a benefit to the Federal Police and to the community as a whole. The short answer to your question is yes, we have maintained that involvement, but not within the inner circle of preparation.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Do you think that the campaign is adequate from what you have seen so far, bearing in mind the large number of additional visitors who will be associated with the games?

**Cmdr Jackson**—Yes, I do, because it provides an interface between prospective visitors to the country, contact details, and points of contact for those visitors who might be a little bit unfamiliar with the lay of the land.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You would be aware of the pamphlet that has been produced by AQIS, DIMA, the Australian Customs Service, and Foreign Affairs and Trade?

**Cmdr Jackson**—Yes.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—How can you say the campaign is adequate so far when this has only been produced in an English language form?

**Cmdr Jackson**—There obviously would need to be further dissemination of that document. I am aware of the continuing strategies for a wider spread of the document to be circulated overseas, and within the country to cover those non-English-speaking people that we have. It is for those people that Australia wishes to target in a tourist sense.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Let me just stay with you for a moment. You said the campaign is adequate, but there is no other foreign language production of the pamphlet. Therefore, how can the campaign be adequate?

**Cmdr Jackson**—It is certainly adequate in terms of philosophy. As for how the production of that document is articulated into the wider community, I take comfort in accepting that it would be the same as many other brochures and information documents which are produced in a wide cross-section of languages, other than English.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I need to digest what you just said there. I am not exactly sure what you have told us.

I was very surprised when I found that there was only an allocation of \$0.7 million over three years for this campaign. Is that an adequate sum of money to be allocated to a campaign of this nature, to be focused worldwide, because we will have visitors from every country in the world, including some from countries that we do not even recognise?

**Cmdr Jackson**—As an operational law enforcement officer I would quite simply not be in a position to comment on the sufficiency or the quantum of the money involved.

**CHAIR**—Commander Jackson, it occurs to me that in our talk of in camera hearings I did not give you the courtesy of making an opening statement, nor did I warn you, which I think you already know, that any misleading statements are regarded as a contempt of parliament, and that is not to suggest that you would do such a thing. Did you wish to make an opening statement?

**Cmdr Jackson**—I have prepared a brief statement which I would like to place before the committee.

**CHAIR**—Is this the one that you have actually given us?

**Cmdr Jackson**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—I would rather you did not actually read from it but, as not every member has it, perhaps you could just briefly go through the points you wish to make.

**Cmdr Jackson**—When the Federal Police prepared its original submission, we focused on specific issues that we considered to be of relevance to the committee’s deliberations—those of direct impact on the AFP. One of the things that occurred to us, as a consequence of some recent and contemporaneous inquiries, was the nature of transnational crime as that impacts upon not just Australia but also other countries throughout the world.

The point that I tried to make in the preamble was to draw the committee’s attention to the macro issue as far as global law enforcement is concerned. The FBI director Louis Freeh made a comment, upon his departure from Sydney yesterday, that the threat of terrorism in the world—not just Australia—is one that transcends all boundaries and can transcend boundaries regardless of immigration controls that are in place.

We guarded against the risk of painting a worst-case scenario in the preamble, but wished to draw out a number of recent examples. I cited an example in the penultimate sentence of paragraph No. 2. It would be the AFP position to recognise not only the potential for aspects of transnational crime to impact upon Australia and our ability as a law enforcement agency to guard against them but also the requirement for the AFP, as a part of the Commonwealth, to help strike a balance between our strategy to combat those incidents in a proactive and a reactive sense yet, at the same time, not provide a police state—or even any suggestion that we are wanting to provide a police state.

In my second-last paragraph the point I make is that, should there be any changes—global or otherwise—to current immigration entry processes, the position taken by other countries in the world would also need to be considered. The collateral impact of weakening Australia’s current immigration processes may very well be to flag, to those with sinister motives that may wish to come to this country, that we are a softer option. Because the AFP is suffering from restricted resources, our approach is predicated on a proactive, strategically driven response as opposed to responding onshore once those people with less desirable motives arrive. Basically, those are the points that I wanted to make.

**CHAIR**—Following up your last point, I understand you to say that, due to the limitation of your resources, you do not have the resources to deal with transnational criminals once they get here. So you are very much reliant on border controls to stop this happening?

**Cmdr Jackson**—Very much so. We would be faced with a situation—if I could use a colloquial expression—of ‘if things were allowed to fall between the cracks’. I am a realist and a pragmatist at the end of the day and realise that, regardless of any controls, we will still have elements of organised crime and transnational crime operating within Australia. If we are in a situation where we have to deal with those then, because of the basic system of prioritisation of resources, we would need to redirect resources from other activities. So I guess, in a sense, I am suggesting that it bases itself on the basic economic principle of opportunity cost.

Commissioner Palmer’s directive is that, wherever possible, the AFP will use its position overseas to strategically target organised crime and transnational crime before it hits Australia’s borders. A secure border integrity regime that we are part of, as strategic partners

with DIMA, Customs, ASIO, AQIS and others, is yet one tool in the kitbag, if I can put it that way.

**CHAIR**—Are you satisfied with the extent of our present surveillance? Let me put you in context. We did get a submission about much more technologically sophisticated instrumentation to examine passports. Have you got any position on that?

**Cmdr Jackson**—My position and that reflected by the AFP is that technological advances employed by agencies to detect crimes relating to passports are extremely well advanced. We need always to try and keep one foot ahead of the game and keep on top of emerging trends overseas, particularly where information technology is used. In short, from my observation, having conducted inquiries in many overseas countries, the Australian system of detecting issues relating to forged or counterfeit passports is world class.

**CHAIR**—That is good to hear. Could it be better under present technology?

**Cmdr Jackson**—Under present technology I would have to suggest that it could not, with the current limitations that we have. But I add the qualification that we continue to make progress by continuous development and research, which is an inherent part of all law enforcement agency strategies. I would describe that progress as being the best that is available under the circumstances.

**CHAIR**—On the question of transnational crime, obviously the first thing that comes into mind is drugs. What else would you include with that? What are your concerns?

**Cmdr Jackson**—Transnational crime essentially is an effort on the part of criminals to exploit any commodity, whether it be narcotics or people. It concerns the AFP that Australia may be seen by some countries in the world, perhaps those that sponsor state terrorism, as somewhere that people smuggling for terrorist related motives may achieve a gain. In that sense, that is also an example of transnational crime. The burgeoning trade worldwide in counterfeit currency and counterfeit credit cards is also an example of transnational crime. Essentially, from the AFP perspective we define it as crime which occurs offshore, designed to infiltrate a number of countries, not just Australia, that has obvious or a perceived impunity to law enforcement strategies and border controls. I make that comment with the qualification that it is relevant to the world—the global stage—not just Australia.

**Mrs IRWIN**—In your submission you refer to a recent number of arrests in Perth of passengers arriving on an ETA. Can you provide some more details of those incidents? Also, would they have been denied a visa if they had gone through the normal process?

**Cmdr Jackson**—I will answer the second question first. It is likely those people would not have been denied a visa. That is the short answer.

**Mr BAIRD**—It is likely that these people would not have been issued a visa?

**Cmdr Jackson**—No, they would not have been refused a visa. It is likely they would have been issued with a paper visa. To answer your first question, that matter is before the court and there is a sub judice issue.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—I want to follow up on this. You say in your statement that you rely very much on the existent immigration. You say:

And in instances where such persons may seek to enter undetected, the AFP relies almost entirely on the existing immigration safeguards.

You would be aware that there are the two systems—the ETA and the non-ETA.

**Cmdr Jackson**—Yes.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Your answer to that question—and I am not sure where these people were from—was interesting. Obviously in the non-ETA system we very often have very detailed interrogations of these people, whereas in the ETA system there is, from what we understand, simply the putting in of the name and that goes through electronically and is checked. I want to follow that procedure through. Do you supply to the department of immigration the names of people, from ETA countries, that your resources have supplied as being undesirable, so that they have them on a list and they then pick that up when they apply for an ETA?

**Cmdr Jackson**—The AFP's position is, in partnership with Immigration, to provide certain law enforcement material that we obtain from our own agency as well as from others within the country. There is no suggestion that the AFP performs a role to facilitate the transmission of information, personal as it may be, to DIMA from other countries.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—How does DIMA make a determination whether a person is undesirable, if not on the basis of some list provided by you or by others?

**Cmdr Jackson**—The AFP provide DIMA with information. We have a memorandum of understanding with DIMA to do so, and, equally, for the AFP to access that information. I quite simply would not be in a position to provide an educated comment on what other elements of information DIMA rely upon. I could suggest that police information would be simply one of many.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—It is fairly possible, isn't it—especially, say, with the inclusion of countries like Taiwan and Hong Kong, from where you have had some problems in terms of people getting into Australia—that when we have the ETA system there, those people would not be detected in any way in the two-minute processing? Is that correct?

**Cmdr Jackson**—China and Taiwan and Hong Kong are but a number of the countries that we, as a law enforcement agency, experience difficulties with. I would be reluctant to provide a statement that focuses on one particular country because there are many countries in the world that provide the problem.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Perhaps I can generalise my point. There are a number of countries that are under the ETA system which, experience shows, have in the past produced these transnational criminal elements.

**Cmdr Jackson**—Yes.



**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—So aren't you concerned that with the ETA system, where an agent actually gives the visa within a couple of minutes, we have heard here today, there may be such elements getting through the system?

**Cmdr Jackson**—Yes, of course we are. One of the things that strikes a balance to that, though, is that members committing transnational, or organised, or state or territory specific crime more often than not have to start somewhere. If a person who engages in such activity is a first-timer, then in a lot of cases no amount of intelligence in the world can help us to profile that person.

We do rely on the material that is currently available. There are the purists in law enforcement who suggest that a more concentrated visa processing system would provide the best product for law enforcement. That is an obvious statement to make. However—and I make this point in the AFP submission—the AFP and other Commonwealth law enforcement regulatory agencies are conscious of striking a balance to help the facilitation process yet, at the same time, ensure that the requisite levels of scrutiny that could assist us in protecting Commonwealth interests are maintained.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—The kind of problem I am referring to is that, because we have this ETA and non-ETA distinction, some non-ETA cases—for example, a young woman, falling within the category of being single—may be subjected to an interrogation for more than an hour, yet someone who may be a criminal element, who may actually even have a criminal record, can apply in an ETA country and simply pass through, unless they are on some international file or are known through your resources. This is the concern that I have about the way we are distributing our resources.

**Cmdr Jackson**—I recognise the concern that you have. I am quite certain that situation, albeit a hypothetical raised here today, does materialise in the real world. I really would have no remedy to offer, other than that that is an opportunity cost of the present system that we have by attempting to strike the balance. Law enforcement agencies throughout the world recognise that it is an opportunity cost. That is one of the reasons there are intuitive reasons at the barrier to further an investigation. We would like to think that law enforcement criminal intelligence, both in Australia and overseas, in the majority of cases helped us target the right people and the right groups of people in a proactive sense. However, we are realists and we realise that on some occasions we get it wrong and that on other occasions the balance that we are striking does not provide the purists in law enforcement with the comfort that they would ideally like.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Can you tell us how the migrant alert list, the MAL, works?

**Cmdr Jackson**—The AFP operate that as an investigational methodology. On that basis, I would say that the department of immigration, which maintains that system, would be the appropriate department to ask. In terms of how a law enforcement agency uses it to further its own investigations, I would have to adopt the position that that is a matter touching upon operational methodology, and I would seek the committee's tolerance in that regard.

**Mr BAIRD**—I am interested in the database that you have and the use to which it is put, particularly your relationship with DIMA. In terms of border control, I presume that there is

one source of information, the list which is compiled of those you do not believe should receive entry into the country. Is that right—there is one list?

**Cmdr Jackson**—There is. There is a master list, if I could describe it that way, and there are agencies such as the Australian Customs Service that maintain their PASS—the passenger automated selection system, soon to be replaced by PACE. There are also the systems referred to by Dr Theophanous that are operated by DIMA which provide a more detailed repository of information.

**Mr BAIRD**—I am wondering about the advantages of a visa system where you apply beforehand. I presume that an electronic travel authority with the normal visa process would still go back to the main list—that is, if somebody were to apply for and get a visa, it would go back to the same list, in terms of checking, as if the person were to arrive in the country. Whether they were checked beforehand or at the border, the same source of information would come up. If the person was on the no-go list—

**Cmdr Jackson**—It is essentially the same source of information. One contains more detailed information. I will be quite frank: the business of law enforcement is to operate on the best information dividend that other agencies can provide us. I appreciate there are privacy issues involved in that.

The other response I would like to make to your question is that prechecking often provides law enforcement with a degree of important information in terms of an advanced warning, particularly if we are targeting a particular group of individuals as part of a current investigation.

**Mr BAIRD**—So you are saying that a group who gets visa entrance to Australia gives you advanced warning of its coming?

**Cmdr Jackson**—Yes, precisely. With the strategic partnerships that we enjoy with other Commonwealth border agencies, we are able to use that information, subject to appropriate controls.

**Mr BAIRD**—I would like to pursue that but, as we are an open session, it is a bit difficult.

**CHAIR**—Mr Jackson, we are getting quite a few questions pushing towards your methodology; would you like us to move into in camera so you can answer these questions more clearly?

**Cmdr Jackson**—I would certainly take comfort in being able to be a little bit more frank.

*Evidence was then taken in camera—*

[3.28 p.m.]

**BARNES, Mr Peter Charles, General Manager, Business Development, Society of International Telecommunications Aeronautic**

**ENGLEFIELD, Mr John Henry, Airport Services Sales Manager, Society of International Telecommunications Aeronautic**

**THOMAS, Mr Alan, Sales Director, Society of International Telecommunications Aeronautic**

**WOOD, Mr Richard, Business Development Consultant, CPS Systems Pty Ltd**

**CHAIR**—I welcome the Society of International Telecommunications Aeronautic, otherwise known as SITA. I note that your submission to us is confidential and therefore it is not published. You have heard that we would prefer that we do not go in camera, so I ask you seriously to consider if we could proceed as a public hearing or whether this creates some problems for you.

**Mr Thomas**—Several aspects of our submission are confidential. We would like to be in camera.

**CHAIR**—So you would like the whole hearing to be in camera?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Which aspects are they, without going into the detail of them? I have read the submission. Which ones would you deem to be problematic?

**Mr Thomas**—As we would work through the document, and not understanding where the questions will be coming from and what they would be related to, several aspects of the submission may well be confidential. It is difficult to say unless we have read the questions first.

**CHAIR**—I see the problem.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—We have never had that put before. You are claiming commercial-in-confidence on the basis that you might be asked some questions from us which might be commercial-in-confidence?

**Mr Thomas**—They could be, depending upon who is in the public gallery listening at the moment.

**Mr BAIRD**—I am sympathetic to the commercial-in-confidence part of it.

**CHAIR**—I do not think we have any choice. You have appeared, you have given a submission, you have asked to be in camera. Obviously you have come here of your own free will and I do not think we can refuse that of you, if you are sure that that is what you

require. My apologies to the members of the public who have just traipsed in here again. I would have it otherwise, but unfortunately I cannot.

*Evidence was then taken in camera—*

[4.07 p.m.]

**McMILLAN, Mr Robert Ian, Managing Director, J. S. McMillan Printing Group**

**MUIR, Mr Royal Kenneth, Visa Strategies Manager, J. S. McMillan Printing Group**

**MURPHY, Mr Steven Gordon, Canberra Manager, J. S. McMillan Printing Group**

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for appearing. We apologise for being late. You have given an additional piece of information. Do you wish us to take that as part of your submission?

**Mr McMillan**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—There being no objection, it is so ordered. We accept your information as part of our records. While you are not required to take an oath, these are the proceedings of the federal parliament, and any misleading statements are regarded as a contempt of parliament. We have your submission and your supplementary slide show. Do you want to make an opening statement?

**Mr Muir**—Yes. As an opening statement, we would like to make the slide show, as you refer to it, an introduction to us and where we are and make a summation of our submission. The McMillan Printing Group is a wholly Australian owned company. It is a major provider of publishing, print and distributional services to the Commonwealth government. The company has provided services to the department of immigration since 1992. That involvement with the department essentially took us into the visa ETA activity, which we will refer to later. We were able to assist the department of immigration in the early days with the distribution of visitor visa application forms, which was a major problem in the UK at the time we joined the department.

Coming out of that, we developed a system to process paper visas. It was an add-on to the distribution of forms and the moving of information between the department of immigration and the client. It was at that point that we established Australian Visas Ltd to deal specifically with that part of the relationship with the department of immigration. That culminated in an agreement with the department to provide visa and ETA services in the UK initially and, more recently, in the United States.

We have operated in the UK since November 1996. We have now provided visas and ETAs to some 50,000 UK residents and provided forms and information to another 180,000-odd clients. Since starting operations in the UK in October last year, we have provided ETAs to some 3,000 clients. The system we developed was very much designed to make it as simple as possible for the traveller. The basic query was whether we could do it by telephone. We were working on this system somewhat in parallel with the department's efforts to develop the ETA, so the two systems in a sense converged.

We work with partners in the UK and the USA, and those partners are approved in a formal way by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. The special arrangement we have with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs is that

persons contacting official missions in the UK and the US are made aware of our organisation as a potential provider of their visa ETA service. We have also more recently made arrangements with the Australian Tourism Commission in the United Kingdom for people who call their information lines to be alerted to our service as another option for obtaining their visa and ETA.

**CHAIR**—So if I am a resident of the UK and I suddenly have to leave that afternoon to go to a business meeting, I can ring up the airlines to book the ticket and say, ‘I want a ticket now.’ They say, ‘Yes, we have a seat on that plane,’ and they ring straight through to you. You will put that through, and it is done in a couple of seconds?

**Mr Muir**—Yes.

**Mr BAIRD**—Is there a charge?

**Mr Muir**—Yes, it is a commercial operation. We are purely a visa service provider. We do not have the luxury of offsetting that cost against other services that we provide.

**Mr BAIRD**—How much is the charge?

**Mr Muir**—In the UK it is £20.

**Mr BAIRD**—Is that \$45?

**CHAIR**—I do not know what we are at, at the moment—that is close enough. We will go with \$50. As they commence that conversation, they are told that there is a £20 charge?

**Mr Muir**—Part of our system says, ‘If you want to use the service have out your passport, your credit card and a pencil.’ When they ring us, we go through it and say, ‘Yes, there is a charge.’ Clients can choose to either use our service or go to other services.

**CHAIR**—I imagine for business people this is quite a facility?

**Mr Muir**—Yes.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Why would it be for business people particularly?

**Mr Muir**—It is the convenience.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—But if a business person wanted to come to Australia to do business, they would not apply for a tourist visa.

**Mr Muir**—We handle the business ETA as well.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—For the same charge? There are different types of visas and ETAs. How do you differentiate, and how will the client know which to apply for?

**Mr Muir**—We talk to the client and ask the purpose of the visit. We establish whether they are coming for business, recreation or a combination of both, which is often the case. If the primary purpose is business, we process under the business ETA arrangement. There are two options: there is the short-term ETA or, if they wish to pay the additional fee to the government, which we can collect on behalf of, they can get the life of passport business ETA.

**CHAIR**—The payment is just a direct deduction from their credit card?

**Mr Muir**—Yes. Some people who make contact with us are not necessarily prepared to proceed to obtain the ETA when they call. We do have an abbreviated form that we post out to those people and they can send that back, having either completed the payment details with credit card or sending a cheque. It sets out the details they need to get an ETA.

**Mrs IRWIN**—Are you saying that you charge people for issuing them with an ETA?

**Mr Muir**—For the service.

**Mrs IRWIN**—Do travel agents do the same when providing an ETA to their clients?

**Mr Muir**—Yes. It varies somewhat.

**Mrs IRWIN**—So you do not know the fee that they would charge?

**Mr Muir**—I can give you some knowledge of that. I could not go through a list of UK travel agents and list, but—

**CHAIR**—Approximately.

**Mr Muir**—The seven major travel agents in the UK that manage 80-plus per cent of tourism to Australia would be charging in the range of £14 to £18.

**Mr BAIRD**—If you are in Japan, you are charged about \$40 to \$50, so that is why the ETA system could not be called ‘free’.

**Mr Muir**—There are variations within that. Airlines might appear to offer a free service and absorb it in their total revenues if you are travelling with them, but they do not want to know too much about you if you are not travelling with them. I hear from fairly reliable sources that, if you happen to be at Heathrow and are searching for an ETA from your airline, you can pay £50 and perhaps even more—it is the burning platform, I guess—but the major players in the travel industry in the UK would charge between £14 and £18. Bear in mind that they have other commissions to help to offset their costs whereas we are a specialist provider of ETAs alone. We emphasise that.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Do you provide ETAs for people from the European Union or only from England?

**Mr Muir**—An isolated few that come through the system would learn of us, but primarily we deal with residents of the UK. Of those, it could be someone in the UK who is out of the 29 ETA-eligible countries but is resident there.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—You mentioned, in answer to Senator McKiernan's question, that you also provide business ETAs.

**Mr Muir**—Yes.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Do you provide those on the phone as well—by simply providing passports?

**Mr Muir**—Yes, it is the same process. We can take the details over the phone and process the application.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—And all of your applications are accepted by the department?

**Mr Muir**—No, some are declined.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—What proportion?

**Mr Muir**—It is a small proportion. If you looked at the 18 months or so they have been operating, it would be less than one per cent—probably less than half of one per cent.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—What are the grounds on which they are rejected?

**Mr Muir**—I could not tell you that. We provide information to the department of immigration. They put it through their system and they make a decision. As far as we are concerned, we do not tell that person that their visa ETA application has been rejected. The standing arrangement is that we refer that person on to the high commission or the consulate, which may well be able to resolve some problems, and the person may get their ETA or visa. If it is a refusal, then the department of immigration advises the individual of that refusal.

The system we have developed—and, in some ways it is very similar to the ETA; it sits with the ETA—is a very simple one. The person picks up the phone. They talk to us. They give us details. That information is electronically transmitted to the department of immigration. Immigration do their checks. They come back and say, 'Yes,' or, 'Please refer this person to see us.' We believe the UK system has been of considerable benefit to the department of immigration in terms of taking substantial workloads from them. We believe this is a very good illustration of how private sector agents like ourselves can help in the delivery of ETAs and visas.

We have dealt with some 230,000 clients in the UK who otherwise would have used the department of immigration to a large extent. Some would have used other sources in more recent times but, when we first set out—when we were using the paper visas—individuals had no other option but to go to the high commission or the consulate. We have taken a substantial workload out of there. We have handled—and still do handle—on behalf of the



high commission in London and the Manchester Consulate-General, requests for information and forms. They send those requests directly to us and we respond. That is a substantial saving for the department of immigration, and it is a cost we accept. Essentially, we are providing the option to take congestion away from official missions.

We think there are a lot of benefits to travellers, particularly the free, independent traveller. By obtaining their visa ETA from us, they are free to then shop for the best airfare and the best accommodation rather than necessarily being locked into a package which may or may not provide the best deal for an individual. We think that the growth in the free and independent traveller arena lends itself to the types of service that we and other agents can offer. We believe that there is a market there for us to serve. It is a market that should grow and it is one which we certainly are capable of growing.

We touched on the fees a moment ago. What we have done to ease the impact of our service fee in the UK is to put together a booklet of discount vouchers which cover transport, parking, meals, features and attractions. That has a value of at least £100 to the user. Some of those are redeemable in the UK, and some are redeemable in Australia. We are looking at putting together a similar package for our operation in the US.

In developing our arrangements, we have worked very closely with the ATC. We have looked very hard to partner the ATC in helping them to service potential tourists to Australia. The difficulty that some people have had in terms of ready access to visa ETA services has long been a concern. To some extent, the ETA has overcome that in 29 countries. There are still a lot of countries where that does not happen. We believe that we can do a lot in those countries to be the arms and legs of immigration and we have looked to work with the ATC to see how we can, on the one hand, learn from them where problems are and, then, how we might be able to work with relevant agencies to overcome those problems.

**Mr BAIRD**—Do you provide any financial support to the ATC because of that?

**Mr Muir**—Only through advertising with the ATC.

**Mr BAIRD**—How much is that worth?

**Mr Muir**—The commercials we are running this year are quite substantial. We have taken a full page in the *Traveller's Guide* in the UK. That cost something like \$30,000, I believe.

**Mr BAIRD**—It is on page 127.

**Mr Muir**—We are developing a fairly comprehensive promotional package in the US with the ATC, again using the Australian Vacation Planner and looking at the meetings incentives conference business through Walkabout. In that sense, we are contributing to the ATC. Does that answer your question, Mr Baird?

**Mr BAIRD**—Yes.

**Mr Muir**—We like to see ourselves as someone apart from the travel agents and airlines because, as has been mentioned, people look at the question of fees and see us as just as another travel agent. We are not; we are a specialist service provider. We like to be seen as that. We think that takes with it special responsibilities to do the task properly and we have been at considerable pains in developing our operating systems and in our relationships with Immigration to always do the right thing. We think we are a lot more vulnerable, if you like, than perhaps the travel agent on the High Street where we have, we believe, a particular obligation to look after Immigration's interests and in that sense Australia's interests.

But, that said, we do see ourselves as a partner in the travel industry and we want to work with the various parts of the travel industry, particularly airlines which may or may not want to be involved in ETA business. They might be happy to outsource that to a specialist group like ourselves and we are actively exploring those possibilities.

**CHAIR**—Do you intend extending this service to other countries as well?

**Mr Muir**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Do you already do it for other countries?

**Mr Muir**—When you say 'other countries', do you mean for the New Zealand government or—

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Mr Muir**—I guess it is part of our longer term plans, but the reality is that Australia is probably a fair way ahead of the rest of the world in the way it handles visas. I do not believe there are too many other countries in the world that make use of agents in any significant way. We have had some interest overtures and we certainly follow those through, but I guess our prime target has been to do as much as we can for the Australian government to start with. But we certainly see the potential to work with other governments.

**Mr BAIRD**—So Australia is the only government—

**Mr Muir**—Yes.

**Mr BAIRD**—Is it because we are one of the few which have such a system?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—It is an Australian company. That has to have a bearing on it.

**Mr BAIRD**—We have created our own market.

**Mr Muir**—If you look at the history of how this emerged, we were working with the department of immigration initially to deal with forms. As much as the ETA generally, I suppose, has some global application, our capacity of work in that environment has a global application.

**Mr BAIRD**—It is tending to go the other way, though, is it not, in so far as there is less and less, as people increase the number of exemptions. It is not my call—you keep on going.

**Mr Muir**—I think we see considerable scope to expand our activities into those that I call non-ETA markets, where individuals are still confronted or can be confronted with the difficulties of getting forms and of perhaps sending their passports and forms through various delivery systems from great distance. We have certainly had discussions with what we regard as reputable companies in various countries that we could be, if you like, the arms and legs of Immigration to get documentation to potential tourists, to take documentation from that person, to get it to the immigration processing office and ultimately to take the passport and visa back to the individual. This is something that we have been quite strongly encouraged by the ATC to look at. It is something we have put proposals to Immigration on, but we are still in dialogue, can I say. We think it is an area where a lot can be done to overcome the problem of a country where there is one immigration officer or official mission and it is often distant from centres of population, I guess, and potential tourists. As I say, we are confident that a lot can be done there and we would be very happy to work through that with the department of immigration.

We are reminded that an earlier inquiry by this committee in fact found that there was substantial scope for agencies to be used to supplement the resources of Immigration. We believe that the peaky nature of the demands of the Olympics and Paralympics is a circumstance where it makes sound economic sense for the department of immigration to make use of the private sector to supplement their resources in this time, rather than take on additional staff to meet a peak in their operations.

We believe we have proven our system, we have proven our reputation and we would like to see the opportunity to expand the system. We hope that the committee will re-endorse its earlier finding that there is a role in the ETA visa delivery network for the private sector.

For the future we see ourselves developing the UK to US markets. We look at our developing partnerships with airlines and major travel agents. We want to enter other markets and we, as I said earlier, have put proposals to Immigration over time and we are in dialogue with Immigration to see where they go. We are a serious and long-term player in the business. We are not a will-o'-the-wisp. We are a substantial company. I can leave with you a copy of the corporate profile as an indication of our bona fides. We have invested substantially in the promotion and marketing of our services through the ATC and, looking further along, we have thoughts of establishing perhaps a single call centre in Australia to service our global operations. Our scope to assist is only limited by the correct authorities agreeing to partner us in that.

In summary, we have demonstrated a substantial capability to provide benefits to Immigration and to individuals. We believe there is great scope to play a more global role and we think our services can do a great deal to help visitors from all parts of the world to obtain their travel authority to holiday in Australia.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much, Mr Muir. Is it the wish of the committee to accept the company profile as an exhibit? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—You say you have had discussions about extending your services to the non-ETA countries. Are you aware of the sorts of things that are done in terms of the processes involved in getting visitors visas in non-ETA countries?

**Mr Muir**—Yes, I am.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—You are aware that a whole range of questions are asked, documents are required and all sorts of things of that sort?

**Mr Muir**—Yes.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—So this is a very different thing from giving a passport and a credit card?

**Mr Muir**—Absolutely, but not all persons in the category to which you are referring are seen by an immigration officer, interviewed, interrogated, whatever you like. What we are saying is that we can get that batch of particular forms to that individual in the quickest possible way. We can take those forms from that individual and, again in the quickest and most secure way, put that in front of Immigration. They can make their decisions and we can get documentation back to the individual.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—It can act as a courier service?

**Mr Muir**—Yes, essentially, but we hear from many countries about the difficulty people have in getting forms.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Would you act as a service to help them fill in the forms?

**Mr Muir**—No. We believe that is something that is not within our charter but there is information available and there would certainly be cases where the department might want to see a person. That is their prerogative. They would call that person in. We are not involved in the decision process. We are not acting as a migration agent in that sense.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—You would not be like the migration agents in Australia that helped.

**Mr Muir**—No.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Basically you would be simply a kind of courier service going backwards and forwards helping them get their papers together more quickly.

**Mr Muir**—Essentially, yes.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—But that would not in any way necessarily speed up the system of visitors visas being considered, would it? In what way would it speed up the system?

**Mr Muir**—I believe it would go a long way to solving the process. You may hear differently from other people, but from conversations with the Australian Tourist Commission and particularly looking, say, at the South American market, people get told—

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—They want to introduce ETA—that is their solution.

**Mr Muir**—That may be or may not be, but that involves other—

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—We just heard them before.

**Mr Muir**—Yes, that is what they would perhaps prefer, but the question is whether that comes to pass. In the meantime there are people who have, we are told, significant difficulty in obtaining forms, in getting their passports to Brasilia, for example. It is not a very convenient service. They see it as a deterrent. We believe we can overcome that or go a long way to overcoming that.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—I am not persuaded that that is the core of the problem. If you have still got only one immigration officer dealing with the forms in Brasilia, it is not necessarily the problem as to how quickly the forms get there, it is a question of whether you need more people to process them or whether your processing procedures and questions you are asking might be different.

**Mr Muir**—I could not comment on that, Dr Theophanous.

**Mr BAIRD**—On my calculations, about \$11 million has been spent by British people wanting to come to Australia using your system, which seems to me to be an effective deterrent, because I am sure that people in Britain do not have to face similar types of deals if they want to go to the US, for example, anywhere in Europe or South-East Asia. I am all in favour of contracting out and getting the private sector to do it—I am sure you are much more efficient than DIMA would be—but isn't there a case to be made that if the department was more efficient you would not have a role in life? There is no reason why they could not provide the same service, is there?

**Mr Muir**—To some extent the department does provide the service. It does the processing. But what agents such as us do disperses the points of contact with the public. You do not come back to that one central point where you get the whole of the UK descending on London or Manchester. What we and others provide is a range of contact points, and, particularly in our case, you can pick up your phone from home and you do not have to move. From there the process is handled by the computer network; it does not necessarily involve anyone in the London office.

**Mr BAIRD**—Strictly speaking, the immigration department could do this themselves, though, if they had a telephone system that was available where you could just call in. Strictly speaking, they could do the same thing.

**Mr Muir**—Anyone could, yes.

**Mr McMillan**—This is operated out of a very large 24-hour-a-day call centre. The infrastructure that they would require to do that internally would be prohibitive and be more expensive than the result. You said \$11 million?

**Mr BAIRD**—That is just on your figures, if you issue 230,000—

**Mr McMillan**—No, we issued 50,000. We fielded 230,000 inquiries.

**Mr BAIRD**—At \$A50 each.

**CHAIR**—It is only the visas; inquiries could be free.

**Mr McMillan**—The ETAs issued were 50,000.

**CHAIR**—Two and a half million dollars, I believe.

**Mr McMillan**—And we do not charge for family groups either, do we?

**Mr Muir**—We do the family group at the one fee of £20.

**Mr McMillan**—So a family group only gets charged the one £20 fee. I think there is something that we should look at here. The £20 is not correctly converted to \$A45 because somebody in Britain does not look at \$A45, they look at it as £20, which is the equivalent of \$A20.

**Mr BAIRD**—I will take you with me when I go to London.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—However, when you put it to Australia's profit, it converts to \$45.

**Mr BAIRD**—I want to say congratulations. Obviously you have been very efficient. But I have a cousin who came out and was referred by the travel agent to yours and who thought it was run by the department of immigration. When she was out here she said, 'Have a look at this. I thought your visas were free. Look, I was charged.' That is what the indication was—the same as this ad here. It has got one side of an official government publication on page 37, the one that was shown. There is not a whole lot to say that that is not put out by the government and how to go about things. I just have a bit of a problem in the way that it is marketed. If I were in your position, I would say, 'Well done. Congratulations.' But, from a government viewpoint, I think there is a line which is getting extremely thin with what is seen to be a government publication about how you need a visa—one would assume that is the government body—and then getting a surprise, as my cousin did, and saying, 'I thought this was all for free.'

**Mr McMillan**—It is pointed out very clearly that it is not free, that it is a fee for service. If you have a look at the cost, and we have been into it in a great degree, it is the cheapest way—

**Mr BAIRD**—Can I take you up on that?

**Mr McMillan**—Yes.

**Mr BAIRD**—Where does it say anywhere in your ad how much you are going to charge for it, or that there is a charge involved, on page 127?

**Mr McMillan**—You start off in step 1 where it says that you need your credit card. That implies you need to pay.

**Mr BAIRD**—You get out your passport, credit card and a pen. Apart from that, there is no suggestion of a payment.

**CHAIR**—You could just assume your credit card is for a point of identification. You do not have to assume that you have to buy it.

**Mr McMillan**—Not if you are using a passport, I would suggest.

**CHAIR**—I guess so. But you need to think it through, that this is going to really give me a big charge. I take your point.

**Mr McMillan**—In most other countries in the world today there is a fee for service and people are very attuned to this. There are very few things that you get for nothing today. In Europe, and in particular in America, there is a charge for everything.

**CHAIR**—I have no problem with your charge, but I do take Mr Baird's point that, if somebody does not realise when they see the ad that there is a charge, this comes as rather a shock—even though you may believe the £20 is equivalent to \$20.

**Mr McMillan**—When you are over there, it is sort of that way, isn't it?

**Mr BAIRD**—It is obviously an excellent service.

**Mr McMillan**—The thing is that we often get people who are at the airport wishing to board their plane and do not have an ETA, and you could actually stand in front of the counter and use your mobile phone and be issued an ETA on the spot. We get a lot of thank you letters and all sorts of things for our service, because people are stranded on the weekend; there has been a death in the family and they want to get on a plane quickly. We have facilitated many people in distressed situations.

**Mrs IRWIN**—How many people do you think will be travelling from the UK to Australia for the Olympics on an ETA compared to a paper visa? What figure would you be looking at?

**Mr Muir**—I think that probably agencies other than ours would answer that more accurately for you. But the most recent figure that I have seen is that out of the UK in excess of 90 per cent of travellers are travelling on ETAs.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I think the publication we were talking about earlier is actually a free publication, isn't it?

**Mr Muir**—Yes, this is a publication that the ATC sends to anyone that approaches them planning a visit to Australia.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I want to try and bring the thing back to the Olympic Games. Do you see your company having a role to play in the accreditation process for the Olympic family members coming to Australia?

**Mr Muir**—We believe we could assist if it was the wish of agencies to make use of our extension services, if you like, to deal with members of the family, but it is really in the hands of other agencies to make use of our services.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Are you aware of the accreditation process?

**Mr Muir**—I have seen the Immigration submission, yes.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—If your organisation were to fit into it, where precisely would you fit in, first and foremost, in the United Kingdom, where you are currently represented, but perhaps also in other countries that may not have the sophisticated systems that are available in the UK? I am talking about countries in South America or in Africa in particular.

**Mr Muir**—Taking the UK first, I guess there is a circumstance where we could deal with, say, the British Olympic Association and be the conduit between them and SOCOG—or however that network is going to work—rather than perhaps them dealing directly with SOCOG. Again, it is a call for, if you like, the British Olympic Association to ask, ‘Do we want to have this task, or can we outsource it and have this other agency undertake this task for us?’ That is something we could do. Again, it is a question of how comfortable or otherwise SOCOG might be with us being a link in the chain of information to them which ultimately goes on to Immigration. That is in the electronic side of things. Going to the less technologically advanced countries, again we could play a role in helping the transmission of information from the home country to the authorities in Australia.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Essentially there will be two groups of people coming to Australia for the Olympics: the Olympic family members, who will be accredited and will have special purpose visas in whatever form that they appear; and the general visitors, including the unaccredited media. Can you envisage a situation where your company, because of your experience in this area, would be of assistance to the border control personnel in Australia in managing the influx of visas?

**Mr Muir**—As I said earlier, I believe we can do quite a deal in getting information out and in being a point of contact. I think there is still a concern in many parts of the world, because it is so damned difficult to get information on how to get a visa to Australia. I think we can help to fill that role.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—But isn’t that role already fulfilled because of the government’s awareness campaign?



**Mr Muir**—Perhaps that is yet to be seen, but there is scope to fit in with that. Someone has to respond to requests from individuals for application forms, information, et cetera. We believe we are well placed and have a track record that would enable us to pick up that role on behalf of Immigration rather than them building up their resources to respond to that sort of short-term peak.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—How much would we be looking for; what would a rough cost of such an activity be?

**Mr Muir**—I think it is a little bit like a piece of string; it would depend on the distribution networks we would have to establish.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—If you were to do it on the cheap, how much could you do it for effectively?

**Mr McMillan**—Senator, this is to set up a system in a country?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—To alert the country of what our requirements are for visitors coming into Australia—customs, quarantine, migration and visa requirements.

**Mr McMillan**—For all these things today there is an enormous growth in call centres, not only in Australia, but throughout the world. There was an article in the paper this morning about the growth of call centres even here in Australia. The call centre is there to facilitate the person quickly, because it is a commercial body, and get the information to that person quickly and then get it back, not as a courier—it has been referred to as an up-market courier system; it is really not that. It is a matter of personally fielding the inquirer's requirement, sending them the information and then getting it back and making it happen for them.

When you ring a lot of these international places, they have got the new push-button telephone systems. By the time you wend your way through the telephone system, you just want to hang up. When you ring the call centre, you get a friendly person on the phone, 'Yes, sir. No, sir. Here is your form. Send it back in and we will process it for you.' You are not going to go anywhere near this unfriendly one when you can use the friendly one. I think one of the big problems—and I am not being disrespectful to the government department; it happens in large organisations as well—is that there has to be a need to want to do it. The person is on the phone to get that form to them or that information to them. A lot of government departments and even large organisations do not have the want to do that, so that is why these things are outsourced to commercial organisations.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—So you think call centres are the way to go for this?

**Mr McMillan**—I think it is. I was making a call to Stadium Australia over some things there to do with the stadium. The girl said, 'Ring me back on a special number.' I rang it back and, of course, she answered, 'TNT Logistics'. The information flow that I got from her, because she was a TNT Logistics person, was leaving what I was getting over here from the corporation for dead because she was getting a fee for servicing my call.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Was it the same person you spoke to?

**Mr McMillan**—No.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You gave me the impression you rang her and then you rang her back.

**Mr McMillan**—No, but when you ring Stadium Australia's number or X body's number—only that she gave me her direct number to ring her back on and she answered the phone and I identified that it was an outsourced operation of TNT. I had my form and everything and I finished my inquiry the next day and faxed it back to her. I had been trying to ring Stadium Australia and I rang for two days and I could not get anybody to answer the telephone.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—When you did you were referred to TNT?

**Mr McMillan**—Correct.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—In terms of Britain and what you do over there now, does ATC still run an inquiry service as they used to where you had the push-button information thing and you were on the phone for—

**Mr McMillan**—They do.

**Mr Muir**—Yes. I did mention earlier one of the things that we have done with the ATC. Where their visa information menu comes up they are given options as to where they can obtain their ETA or visa. One option is Australian visas. We provided a toll-free service to switch them through. They push a button and that will take them through to our service.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—That is toll free through to you?

**Mr Muir**—Yes.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—And they are talking to a human being there rather than an electronic voice?

**Mr Muir**—No, it is coming down to a recipe.

**Mr McMillan**—I think, Senator, you said when the toll-free is answered—

**Mr Muir**—Yes, it is a person. The ATC is still a recipe—

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Yes, I understand.

**Mr Muir**—but a personal operator takes the toll-free call to us.

**Mr BAIRD**—Does it make the differential that there is a charge on that service?

**Mr Muir**—Yes, it does.

**Mr BAIRD**—It says what?

**Mr Muir**—It says much as is in here.

**Mr BAIRD**—It does not say it here so that is why—

**Mr Muir**—If you read the text in here it does say that some agents will provide services free. It says the Australian government has no charge. Agents may charge a fee—check. You will find that on page 126. The ATC went to some pains on their message to make callers aware that there were costs associated with some options and they should check that.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Do you get inquiries in Britain for Australian transit visas for visitors going to New Zealand, which, of course, would be visa free to New Zealand?

**Mr Muir**—No, we really only deal with the ETA and visit visas. We do not have authority to deal in transit visas.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—If someone calls you—let us say you were putting in this process for non-ETA—you send them the forms. They get the forms and they do not know how to fill in the forms. Is it part of your brief to supply them with names of people or agents to help them with the forms? You say you do not do that yourself.

**Mr Muir**—No, I think this is something that you could work through with Immigration as to what extent assistance, information and guidance might be provided. I know there is a very fine line there in not acting as an agent in terms of the act and we would not want to get into that, but maybe there is some material which can be provided—developed—to help people fill in forms—I know forms are not always that user-friendly—perhaps by putting information in particular languages. But I think those are operational problems that we would be very happy to work through with Immigration to try to make sure that when they get a form it is completed how they want it completed, so there is no toing and froing. Certainly we could provide the service; to look at the form to see that at least all the areas have been completed, without making judgments as to the accuracy or otherwise of the facts put down. That is not something we would want to get involved in.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much, Mr Muir, for appearing before the committee today. You will get a copy of *Hansard*. If you have any questions, please get back to us. We will get back to you if we have any further questions. Thank you very much for the time that you spent with us today.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Baird**):

That, pursuant to the power conferred by section 2(2) of the Parliamentary Papers Act 1908, this committee authorises publication of the evidence, except for the evidence in camera, given before it at public hearing this day.

**CHAIR**—I now declare this meeting closed. Thank you very much to the committee for staying for the whole time. It has been a long day.

**Committee adjourned at 4.57 p.m.**

