



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Committee Hansard

JOINT COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION

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

WEDNESDAY, 3 MARCH 1999

SYDNEY

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## JOINT COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION

Wednesday, 3 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:** Senators Bartlett and McKiernan and 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 9.01 a.m.**

**ALBIN, Mr Stephen Charles, National Policy Manager, Tourism Council Australia**

**STROUD, Mr Laurence Graham, Government Relations Adviser, Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia**

**CHAIR**—I welcome the witnesses from the Tourism Council of Australia. While we do not require you to take an oath, I would remind you that this is a proceeding of the parliament of Australia and any misleading information is regarded as a contempt of the parliament. Would you like to either amend the submission that you have given to us or to make an opening statement before we commence with questioning?

**Mr Albin**—Our submission is fine. I will start with an opening statement. On behalf of the tourism industry, thanks for the opportunity to present today. As part of our submission to this inquiry, the Australian tourism industry has proposed a visa-free trial for tourists, beginning in early 2000, in time to be operating effectively for the Sydney Olympics. Visa-free travel for visitors identified at low risk of overstay during the Olympics would bring Australia into line with world trends and allow much faster entry processing. There is no better time than the year 2000 to begin this visa-free travel for low risk tourists, given the huge influx of international visitors expected. The 2000 Games are expected to attract an additional 342,000 international visitors in the year 2000, with over 60 per cent of these visitors coming from low risk countries such as the USA, Canada, Japan, the UK, and many other countries in Europe. This is a great opportunity to show that Australia is welcoming to tourists, rather than as parochial and out of touch with worldwide trends.

The industry believes Australia should introduce a similar system to that of New Zealand, which initiated visa-free entry for visitors from 32 countries in 1988. New Zealand has since expanded the number of countries to which it offers visa-free status, following the success of the initiative. Visa-free travel in New Zealand has resulted in fewer administrative costs, a reduction in arrival processing times, and one less impediment for international visitors. It is important to highlight that removing visas for low risk visitors will not deter Australia's border control measures. Under TCA's submission, information obtained from travellers and checks undertaken at embarkation, in-flight and on arrival will be just as rigorous as the current visa system in identifying passengers who constitute any security or immigration risk. Obviously, security is paramount during the Olympics and Paralympics and the tourism industry would not support any initiative which jeopardised this in any way.

The obvious question is why there is the need to remove visas when we have an electronic travel authority, otherwise known as the paperless visa. There is no doubt the ETA system is a significant advancement on paper visas, but the ETA is nonetheless still a visa with restrictions and limitations. That means administrative requirements still exist, processing requirements still exist, and often a charge is imposed by travel agents processing the ETA. Additionally, the ETA system is limited to 29 countries and within those countries it is limited to those with the necessary technology to process the ETAs. The government claims this is about 80 per cent of all visitors to Australia. There is also a high degree of confusion about the ETA system amongst international travellers. Many think an ETA means no visa is required at all.

The committee should be aware that travel agents around the world, in both ETA and non-ETA countries, charge for issuing visas to Australia. TCA has recent evidence from one particular agent in America who charged a \$30 service fee, plus a \$15 courier charge, for an ETA, although the Australian visa application form clearly indicated that there was no charge for a three-month short-term visa. Travel agents will continue to charge for issuing visas, both through the ETA and non-ETA systems, while visas in any form still exist.

Airline fines have increased significantly as a result of the ETA system under current procedures. Australian airport inspectors may serve an infringement notice on any airline which carries an unauthorised passenger to Australia, irrespective of whether or not the passenger claimed to hold an ETA at the time of boarding the flight. In Japan, Australia's largest tourism market, where many airlines are not able to conduct what are known as 'high-tech checks' on passengers at the time of boarding, additional problems are being experienced. Data entry problems or people simply turning up at the airport not thinking they need a visa are also issues of concern.

The tourism industry believes the existing entry arrangements for international tourists can be improved to better facilitate the additional visitors during the Olympics and Paralympics. The existing system has problems: it largely provides a higher cost and confusion to travellers. We also believe there will be price rises in processing, with travel agents charging extra facilitation and service fees. A visa-free entry arrangement would eliminate these problems and assist with entry requirements at this very important time.

TCA also supports the abolition of the \$50 visa fee on overseas applications not made through the ETA system in time for the 2000 Olympics. The \$50 visa charge is a further deterrent for visitors and is also discriminatory, given ETAs are offered to travellers from only 29 countries worldwide. To continue with this charge, particularly during the Olympics, sends the wrong message to international visitors. The visa charge for non-ETA travellers also adds red tape and reduces competitiveness in the markets Australia has targeted for future growth—for example, South America, China and India. My colleague, Laurie Stroud, representing the Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, will provide more detail on this issue.

Other initiatives that we have outlined in our submission include encouraging staff training programs at Customs and the airport to provide friendly and helpful advice to international visitors, introducing uniform, internationally accepted and recognised signage at Australia's major gateways, and supporting the simplification of entry documentation for international visitors, like the current passenger card introduced on 1 July last year.

In conclusion, abolishing visas for international tourists identified at low risk of overstay is a commonsense approach to improving the efficiency of Australia's visitor entry requirements in the lead-up to and during the 2000 Olympics and Paralympics. At a time when the eyes of the world will be focused on Australia and when thousands of international visitors will be visiting our shores, it is important we have the best possible entry arrangements for international visitors. A visa-free trial will help us achieve this aim.

**CHAIR**—Thank you.

**Mr Stroud**—Could I add a few comments?

**CHAIR**—Please do, Mr Stroud.

**Mr Stroud**—The inbound tourism industry has a longstanding policy of supporting the introduction of visa-free arrangements with low risk countries, in harmony with the approach adopted by New Zealand. To date, successive governments have chosen not to accept our arguments. However, the introduction of the electronic travel authority system has gone a long way to meeting our objective. In fact, up to a couple of years ago the industry and the immigration department were starting to work reasonably well together. Regrettably, I have to report a deterioration in the relationship. The government's approach to visitor visas and the administration of the system has taken a turn for the worse. We are hearing more complaints about genuine visa applications being rejected and the \$50 visitor visa charge has been introduced. This is a straight-out tax on intending travellers to Australia. The visitor visa system is no longer an impediment to travel to Australia; it is a positive disincentive. We have yesterday's announcement by the minister, which is rather disturbing. One interpretation of it could be that a \$50,000 bond will be required of visitors intending to come to Australia.

In relation to this inquiry, one of our particular concerns is the discriminatory nature of the visitor visa system, and here I refer to the differing treatment accorded to New Zealanders, citizens of 29 ETA countries, China, and the rest of the world.

**Mr BAIRD**—Could you expand a bit on the announcement by the minister yesterday, because I think quite a few of the committee members have not heard what was announced.

**Mr Stroud**—Certainly. It is headed, 'Review to target illegal workers'. It says that a review is to be set up—

**Senator McKIERNAN**—That was on Monday, was it not?

**Mr Stroud**—The date of this is Wednesday, 3 March, and that was faxed to me yesterday afternoon, 2 March. Anyhow, this review has been set up. I have not yet been able to obtain any details. I assume it is an internal review as there is no comment made about who might be the chairman or anything like that. It is apparently a response to the illegal workers in Victoria, and that is understandable, but it goes on to talk about reviews of visitor visa procedures, including possible use of bonds, and that under such an arrangement the decision maker could ask an intending traveller to provide a bond. It states:

The bond would be held in a trust account and returned to them when they departed the country, having shown that they abided by the terms and conditions of their visa.

The amount of the bond would be set in the context of the cost of locating, detaining and removing illegal workers and overstayers.

The minister indicated some time ago that that cost was of the order of \$50,000. That is rather disturbing and I hope that it will not come to that. Nevertheless, that is the statement by the minister. Does the committee have a copy of this?

**CHAIR**—Yes, we do; we are having it photocopied right now, Mr Stroud. Just on that, please note that he did not say that this was going to be on all tourists. These are high risk tourists, people who are high risk and when there was a feeling that they would be likely to violate the conditions of the visa. It was not an all-out attempt to stop us bringing tourists to the country but only those that are high risk.

**Mr BAIRD**—Madam Chair, do you think they are talking about China and India once more?

**CHAIR**—It was in response to the illegals who were found working in Victoria. It was a definite look at people about whom there is clear suspicion that they are here, against their visa restrictions, not as tourists but as potential workers.

**Mr Stroud**—I can only speculate what might happen. One possibility is that this would be a means of reducing the refusal rate of visa applications—instead of refusing people's applications, they can be asked to pay a substantial bond and then they would withdraw their application, so the statistics will be rather interesting.

**CHAIR**—I can assure you that Mr Ruddock is not going to put in danger our tourist trade.

**Mr Stroud**—We will be talking to his department tomorrow, I can assure you. To finish my comments, I was talking about the particular concerns that we have with the visa system and I mentioned its discriminatory nature. There is also the intrusiveness of the visitor visa application forms; the number of referrals at the customs barrier, which results in stressful situations for the people involved and creates a bad impression of our country and slows down passenger processing; and there is the increasing number of immigration infringement notices being issued to airlines, and fines have virtually doubled in that area.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Do you have statistics on that, Laurie?

**Mr Stroud**—I can provide them. They are about \$7 million a year now, whereas they were between \$3 million and \$4 million a while ago. In conclusion, I hope that on this occasion the government will respond to the committee's recommendation. I am mindful of the fact that the committee submitted a comprehensive report on Australia's visa system for visitors in January 1996. In a paper tabled in the parliament earlier this month it was noted that there was still no response from the government. In December 1998, the government stated that it was now finalising its response for tabling, but there is still nothing from the government. A similar situation applies to the joint committee's report on working holiday-makers. I wish the committee good luck this time around and hope we are not wasting our time here today.

**CHAIR**—I am sure you are not, Mr Stroud. To go to the main thrust of your argument, which is the visa-free issue, this question is to both of you: what would be the impact on passenger processing times at Sydney airport if entry screening took place there instead of at the time of visa issue, whether it be ETA or paper visas? What would be the effect on the processing time?



**Mr Stroud**—It depends on how the government would implement a visa-free arrangement. There are a number of tests or checks in the system and, to my way of thinking, a visa-free arrangement is similar to what happens when, say, you go to Singapore. When you go to Singapore, you produce your passport, they see that you are an Australian citizen, you hand in your statistics card and you move straight through. I would imagine that if a similar visa-free arrangement procedure is adopted in Australia, it would certainly speed up processing.

**CHAIR**—The ETA and visas—

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Just before you go to that, on page 4 of your submission, Mr Albin, you say:

Under TCA's proposal, information obtained from travellers and checks undertaken at embarkation, in flight, and on arrival . . .

What checks on embarkation do you mean?

**Mr Albin**—Just the normal checks. As Laurie was saying before, if you are an Australian going to Singapore, when you go to book into your airline, you show your ticket and your passport—that sort of check. At the counter where you go to check in for your flight, they just check to ensure that you do not have to have a visa to come to Australia, based on your passport. It is that sort of check—the normal one that is done at the moment.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—So, in other words, no check?

**CHAIR**—They check that you have a passport and a ticket.

**Mr Albin**—Yes, and they check whether or not you have to have a visa. If you do have to have a visa, they will check it on your passport.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—And in-flight?

**Mr Albin**—That is basically filling out the passenger card, perhaps handing in airline manifests at the time to the Department of Immigration, and ensuring that the airline manifest is consistent with the Department of Immigration's database.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—When you talk about visa-free, you are only talking about visa-free for tourists, are you not?

**Mr Albin**—Yes, from low risk countries.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You haven't defined which are the low risk countries yet.

**Mr Albin**—They are in our submission. Basically, it is those with 0.2 per cent or less of an overstay rate.

**CHAIR**—We are all interested in this particular topic so we will stay on this. I would like to ask a couple of questions and then will pass to the rest of the committee on this whole visa-free issue so that we clear it up for the whole committee. I will go back to my original question. Is it the original request for an ETA where we pick up if they are on the MAL list or if there are any undesirables coming in? I think you are talking now about an ETA, rather than a visa, because you are saying ‘for low risk countries’. If this is what you are doing at Sydney airport, for instance during the Olympics, surely that is going to slow down your processing of inbound tourists? This is the big clog that you have at the Olympics: everybody is arriving, and your one question is how you are going to get them through as quickly and as smoothly as possible. Surely, having to screen at that level is one of the reasons you are going to slow them down?

**Mr Stroud**—It depends on what you mean by visa-free arrangements. I certainly concede that probably time is a bit short at the moment to move to a true visa-free arrangement with the Olympics a relatively short time away. However, the system which applies in many other countries is simply a check of identity to ensure that the person producing the passport is the person covered on the passport, full stop.

**CHAIR**—Deputy Chair, you have another question on this?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Thank you. I am duly admonished for my earlier interventions. I asked a question about your proposal for visa-free entry for tourists. The scenario we have at the moment for Sydney 2000 is that there will be certain lanes designated for Olympic Family members and there will be other lanes for normal visitors coming to Australia. You now want to set up a further lane for those who are either visa-free tourists or for those that are coming in on visas, perhaps like doctors, to work in Australia. Can you see where I am coming from?

**Mr Stroud**—Yes. There is streaming already introduced at Sydney airport. I understand from Customs that they have considerable flexibility to switch streams and ensure steady flows. I am a bit hazy on this, but I think there is a lane for crew; a lane for Australian passport holders; there can be a lane for the Olympic Family, or however you like to describe them; there can be a lane for visa-free entrants, and there can be a lane for ‘other’. I think at Sydney there are 24 or something actual booths that can be manned by Customs officers.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I understand the number that can be staffed, but I am saying your proposal would add another stream to those designated lanes, would it not?

**Mr Stroud**—It would essentially be the same stream as ETA. As I said earlier, the ETA system is the closest the government has been prepared to move to having a visa-free arrangement.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Would it add another stream then?

**Mr Stroud**—I do not believe so.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You do not believe so. You have confidence then in Customs and their proposals for the games?

**Mr Stroud**—I have confidence in Customs.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Are you aware of the submission from Qantas yesterday? The submission from Qantas, Australia's largest airline bringing people into this country, shows they have some concerns.

**Mr Stroud**—When you ask whether I have confidence in Customs, I have confidence that Customs will do a thorough job. What I cannot say, and I would certainly bow to the greater experience of Qantas, is whether Customs will be able to cope with the visitor flows. I think at Sydney they do about 3,000 an hour, or something like that. I do not have the figures to be able to say that there will not be bottlenecks—in fact, I would be very pleasantly surprised if there were no bottlenecks from time to time—but how crucial they are, I do not know.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Mr Albin, you gave us some figures for the visitor arrivals for next year. Do those figures you gave us include the Olympic Family members?

**Mr Albin**—Yes, they do. They are the Tourism Forecasting Council's figures, from the Office of National Tourism.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—How accurate are those forecasting figures?

**Mr Albin**—I can tell you that in November 1997 they forecast a fall of four per cent in international arrivals in 1998. They were bang on the money.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Was that a revised forecast or was that an original forecast?

**Mr Albin**—No, that was the original forecast.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—In submissions we had yesterday they have given a forecast to 2001.

**Mr Albin**—For the Olympics or—

**Senator McKIERNAN**—No, the Olympics are next year, in 2000.

**Mr Albin**—Yes, but in terms of the Olympic effect from the year 2000 to 2001 and beyond. They give long-term forecasts.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—That is what I understand. You have told us of forecasting from one year to another, but how accurate is that long-term forecasting?

**Mr Albin**—I believe that they are accurate.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—So they were able to predict the Asian economic downturn?

**Mr Albin**—No, they were not able to predict that.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—So they are not accurate?

**Mr Albin**—They are relatively accurate, in terms of the existing situation.

**Mr BAIRD**—Hardly anybody else predicted the Asian economic downturn.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—There were some pundits. Those that did not predict it actually said they did not predict it—they did not come to committees like this and say that, yes, they did and they are accurate predictions.

**Mr Stroud**—My organisation was fairly accurate on the Asian downturn, but where we missed out is that we were pleasantly surprised at the increase in numbers from the UK, Europe and the United States.

**CHAIR**—Mr Stroud, if I could take you to what you answered to the deputy chair. You said that you saw people without visas being streamed the same as the ETA. At the moment when you are going for an ETA it is a very quick check. Admittedly, you are sitting in the travel agent's office, there is a phone call back to Sydney and the person's name and details are checked on the MAL list. It takes a couple of minutes. Surely you are not suggesting that we are going to do that for every passenger who arrives at Sydney airport?

**Mr Stroud**—Not at all, no.

**CHAIR**—So you are suggesting that we do not have any security check whatsoever?

**Mr Stroud**—That is right. The question becomes one of identity and that Customs, Immigration and other authorities become more skilled. I do not see—

**CHAIR**—How can you be more skilled if what you are doing at the moment is picking up people on your alert list? If you do not have any check at all you are not going to pick them up at all. One of the concerns that the Federal Police and other organisations have expressed to us is the likelihood of terrorism being used during the Olympic Games. One of the checks that we do have on that is using the MAL list for potential visitors. We had the Federal Police yesterday describe how this was a very good early warning sign for them. What you are actually suggesting is that we take away this basic security arrangement for the Olympic Games?

**Mr Stroud**—Other countries seem to be able to develop alternative methods. I find it interesting going down this track because what it does say to me is that the visa system in place is to suit the needs of a number of agencies. Hence, I then ask the question: why should the traveller have to pay? It seems to me that these agencies are the beneficiaries of such a system—

**CHAIR**—I think that is a different question altogether if you are talking about visa-free entry and its impact on Australia; for example, whether the processing lines at Sydney airport impede the security of Australia. The advanced passenger processing, APP and APC,

are a by-product of the visa process, whether it be visa or ETA. What would happen to that? Surely then you would lose the advantages of both APC and APP.

**Mr Stroud**—That is right.

**CHAIR**—Isn't this one of the positives that we have for the tourist industry that allows very quick express lanes at the airport?

**Mr Stroud**—There are no quicker express lanes than those at Singapore. There is a need for the agencies who are the prime beneficiaries and users of the visa system to develop alternative measures: measures which are not so intrusive and detrimental to visitor flows.

**CHAIR**—What is your alternative method to identify potential problem visitors, other than what we have at the moment? We have dogs that sniff out drugs but I do not think we have got to the stage of dogs sniffing out potential terrorists.

**Mr Stroud**—There is the good old dob in system—acting on information received et cetera.

**CHAIR**—This is exactly what the Federal Police said to us yesterday, and part of that dob in system was using the ETA or visa process: when those names came up it alerted the police if they knew those people were part of an organisation or a group that had particular interests. That was one of their best dob in systems. You are in fact removing one of the weapons they have.

**Mr Stroud**—I am not a security expert but New Zealand, for example, seems to have managed quite okay without any major incidents.

**CHAIR**—Firstly, is it not true that most of New Zealand's visitors come through Australia?

**Mr Stroud**—I could not say whether it is most, but a high proportion do.

**CHAIR**—It is certainly a high proportion. So, coming through Australia, they are protected by Australia's own arrangements. Secondly, do you have figures to show that since New Zealand has removed the need for a visa its tourist numbers have increased?

**Mr Stroud**—No, but visitor numbers are dependent on a whole range of factors.

**CHAIR**—So you cannot actually show to us that that has been an improvement for New Zealand?

**Mr Stroud**—We cannot demonstrate conclusively, no.

**CHAIR**—But you have the gut instinct that it might be; is that right?

**Mr Stroud**—If you look at all the impediments put in the way as a result of the visa system, I believe you must concede that it deters people. How many people it deters, I do not know. We have varying estimates of that.

**Mr Albin**—There is anecdotal evidence though, given the fact that they have expanded the number of visa-free countries, that it has been a success. We do not have the figures, but from the experience there it looks like it has been a success.

**CHAIR**—‘We do not have the figures, but it looks like it has been a success.’ Has anybody on the committee any more questions on the visa-free issue?

**Mr RIPOLL**—If we only talk about the 29 countries with the ETA system—are we talking about primarily the low risk countries when we refer to visa-free?

**Mr Albin**—Yes.

**Mr RIPOLL**—I have not quite got a definition from anybody yet what a visa-free system is. Maybe that is my first question: what do you see as a visa-free system?

**Mr Stroud**—It is a bit circular, but it is a system whereby citizens of low risk countries do not have to obtain a visa prior to their entry into Australia.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—For tourism purposes?

**Mr Stroud**—For tourism purposes. I guess you would have to add for intended stays of three months or less, or 12 months or less, as decided.

**Mr RIPOLL**—What process would they actually go through before they left their country to come here as visitors? If you are talking about giving them the best experience possible, through the current ETA system we can deal with the information before they leave so that when they get here there are no slow-downs of processes. They have already been checked, they have already been cleared, they are from low risk countries, they can get on the plane, they get here and they go straight through. I do not see how that becomes a problem. Can you explain that?

**Mr Albin**—If the ETA system worked like that, we would be supporting it to the hilt, but it does not. The thing is, and you probably would have heard this from the airlines, there is technological failure in terms of links to Canberra in the processing, there is confusion at the travel agents’ end, and there are people arriving at airports without ETAs that do not simply just go through—

**Mr RIPOLL**—Yes, but people arriving at airports without ETAs is not a problem with ETAs; it is a problem with—

**Mr Albin**—No, they have a slip saying they have an ETA but it has not been processed. What you have is confusion at the airport barrier, or the embarkation point, and you have also the system which is failing from time to time—

**Mr RIPOLL**—We heard from the airlines yesterday, both Ansett and Qantas, and they do not believe it is a problem at all. They said there are so few that they do not even keep records of it—it is that small if you are talking about the number of inbound tourists to Australia. So, unless you have figures contrary to that—

**Mr Stroud**—At a meeting last November we were told that 1.7 per cent of arriving passengers with an ETA were subject to referral at the customs barrier, which would translate into 54,400 people a year. I was assured that this was very low because the referrals were much higher from paper visa holders at 4.8 per cent, which translates into 38,400, and that is on four million visitors a year. The total of that comes to 92,800 people who are subject to referral at the customs barrier. So the current system has problems. I am surprised that Qantas did not complain yesterday about—

**Mr RIPOLL**—But what are the referrals about? Are they about mistakes in people filling out the form? The system is as good as the people filling out the forms. From what we heard yesterday about the whole ETA process—and I have your publication here which I am going to refer to in a minute—basically if somebody can pick up the phone or visit an Internet site they can fill out the form over the phone—all you need is a credit card, a pen and a passport, and you have your ETA. You are cleared within three minutes and you are there. That is within your own publications.

**Mr BAIRD**—That is not their publication. They are from the Inbound Tourism Organisation and the Tourism Council Australia.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Okay. Well, referring to this publication anyway about the ETA process, using this as a guide, the process seems to be fairly simple, fairly straightforward. If out of that we are only getting a very small percentage of referrals when they arrive in Australia, that has to be a reasonably good result.

**Mr Albin**—That is not actually an ad for a migration consultant, is it?

**Mr BAIRD**—Yes, it is.

**Mr Albin**—That is your answer.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Referring back to this, the problem is that this is an official publication—

**Mr Albin**—From the ATC.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Yes. I am not quite satisfied with that yet, but the next issue is about waiving the \$50 fee. A lot of people say, 'Let's waive the \$50 fee,' yet in the official publications that we produce and send overseas, the first reference that is made in here on how to get a visa—and it says that it is free—is that you have to pay a fee. That is the very first reference. If I were to pick this up and then apply, I would assuming I am going to have to pay a fee, I cannot get out of it. It says, 'Refer to here: there is no fee. Pay a fee.' There are some problems all around between what people in your own industry are doing, what the airlines are saying, and what we are being told, 'Look, we need to go a visa-free system.' We heard yesterday that a visa-free system would actually slow things down

because the checks, say for the Olympics, would be done at Sydney airport and the queues would have to stop. You would have to actually physically start doing checks and do checks at the airport, rather than having them done prior to travel. So if you do get a referral—and they are one point something per cent—then you are only going to get a small amount of people getting referred, and those referrals then might be sorted out very quickly—it might just be a matter of a check or something else.

**Mr Stroud**—That assumes that the other agencies have not developed an alternative system.

**Mr RIPOLL**—I am just saying that I am not convinced yet. If you have other arguments to say, ‘This system does not work and we have a better system and the system will work because people will not only find it easier in applying to come here, to get a visa and to travel to Australia as a tourist, but also when they get here,’ then that would be fine, but we still have not heard that from any of our submissions.

**Mr Stroud**—You raised the question of the \$50 visitor visa application charge. That charge applies to all who seek a so-called paper visa. The justification for that charge is rather thin, shall we say, and certainly we believe it should be removed. I say that because it has been repeated many, many times that the cost of visa processing is recovered in the passenger movement charge. A couple of years ago the Audit Office examined the passenger movement charge accounting and found that there was something like \$8 million or \$9 million over cost recovery in that. In the last budget the passenger movement charge was increased from \$27 to \$30, so there should be more than adequate coverage of the cost of visa issuance. Then, in addition to that, we have the \$50 charge which, from memory, will raise about \$39.9 million in the first year, and \$19.4 million is what Immigration expect their costs to be on visa processing and border monitoring. There just does not seem to be any sound basis for this \$50 charge and, as I mentioned earlier in my opening statement, it adds to that feeling of discrimination.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—I have considerable sympathy for what you are trying to achieve and I think that many of your arguments have validity. The question about the ETAs versus a visa-free system does have pros and cons, but I was surprised that in your submission you did not make more of the fact that there are some countries which are important tourist markets, for example China, that do not have ETAs where, in fact, a person may be subjected to a long interrogation for the issuance of a tourist visa. Many people apply and are rejected and this dissuades travel agents and other people from applying, especially if they have been rejected on two or three occasions. What is your experience about non-ETA countries? I know that you mentioned the \$50 as one issue, but what about other issues of the tough provisions involved in the non-ETA countries?

**Mr Stroud**—It is pretty appalling. I do not know whether you have looked at the form 48R that people are required to fill out if they are seeking a paper visa—

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Yes, I have, I have seen quite a few.

**Mr Stroud**—The questions are pretty intrusive and if they are not used to actually reject applications, the immigration officers can ask for a whole heap of additional information



which has the effect of turning people away. We are hearing more and more stories about the tougher attitude being adopted at overseas posts in countries where a paper visa is required.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Have you put any submission to the government specifically about that group of people, especially for new-opportunity countries like China?

**Mr Stroud**—We have had a couple of meetings with the department of immigration on China, for example. We have indicated on a number of occasions that we want to talk more with the department. We recognise that there is a significant problem with China with risks of overstays and so forth. The industry has indicated it wants to work with Immigration to try and meet some compromise situation which will go further towards meeting the tourism industry's objectives without undermining the objectives of the immigration department.

As you would be aware, it was in December 1997 that in-principle agreement was reached with the Chinese authorities for Australia to move to approved destination status. This has not yet been implemented.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Why is that, do you think?

**Mr Stroud**—Because of requirements of the immigration authorities.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—You are saying that it is the requirements of the immigration authorities that is preventing the implementation of this agreement with the Chinese government?

**Mr Stroud**—That is the way I understand it. I have been told that Immigration has drawn the proverbial line in the sand on this. I do not know what this means. I have asked on a number of occasions for the tourism industry to be provided with at least the heads of agreement or some summary of the proposed memorandum of understanding with the Chinese government.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—This is a very serious issue. You say that this was done at a meeting with senior officers of the department of immigration. Did they explain this to you?

**Mr Stroud**—We have asked for this sort of information and it has not yet been provided.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—But you have been told by someone in Foreign Affairs, or some other department, that the reason this is not proceeding with China is the requirements of the department of immigration. Is that correct?

**Mr Stroud**—The department of immigration has indicated that to me.

**Mrs IRWIN**—Was that verbally?

**Mr Stroud**—That is right, yes.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—That was verbally. Are you talking about some relatively senior officer of the department?

**Mr Stroud**—Most decidedly.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—That is of some concern. Perhaps I could just go from China for a minute and talk about the Middle East. This came up yesterday—

**CHAIR**—We are keeping this relevant to the Olympic Games, are we not?

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Yes, of course, Madam Chair. We do not want to be embarrassed at the Olympic Games with a whole range of people from all over the world not being able to come here, and I have made this point on previous occasions. We heard yesterday about a number of countries in the Middle East where there are potential tourism visas which have again been rejected because of the paper visa requirements. What is the information from your travel agents and the like about this?

**Mr Stroud**—We receive complaints. I can think of one fairly recently where the general manager of a hotel in, I think, Kuwait, was refused a visa application and there was no indication as to why this should have happened. In my opening remarks I referred to the fact that a couple of years ago there appeared to be some progress being made, rapprochement if you like, with the immigration people, probably due to the joint committee's former inquiry into the visitor visa system. As a result of that, one of the advances—Immigration would see them as advances—was the cessation of intuitives, so that if you turned up at an overseas post and you had long hair, a beard and were carrying a rucksack, automatically you would be considered to be unsuitable to get a visa, even though your old man might be a multimillionaire. So that removal of intuitives I regarded as progress.

However, the reports that I am starting to receive these days indicate that there has been a regression. I heard the other day from a member of parliament who said to me that a friend of his has a law firm in Thailand and one of the junior partners there, a female aged about 28, had sought a visitor visa to come to Australia and that application was rejected. It would appear it was rejected simply because she fell in the profile of 'Asian female between the ages of 18 and 30' so obviously she was coming to Australia for but one purpose. I cannot quantify how many genuine visitors are being rejected because of this sort of approach.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Finally, on the \$50 fee, we heard yesterday that the so-called ETA system is actually not free for many people, especially from England, because they have to pay a fee to somebody or other to get the ETA.

**Mr Stroud**—That is right.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—So, effectively, the ETA system involves some payment as well. Has that been a disincentive?

**Mr Stroud**—I believe so.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—You believe it has been a disincentive?

**Mr Stroud**—Yes. Tourism is a price sensitive area of the economy.

**Senator BARTLETT**—I have a couple of questions. How important a component of the tourism industry are repeat visitors? Is it a problem for us at the moment that we are getting a lot of people coming but not enough coming back again?

**Mr Stroud**—That certainly is a problem. Our major market, Japan, has a very low repeat visitor rate. One of the suggestions for this is simply the visitor visa system.

**Senator BARTLETT**—That it is too much hassle or something?

**Mr Stroud**—Too much hassle and cost. In fairness to Immigration, I think that while the ETA system has resulted in a charge on visitors being introduced for some countries that was not there before, with Japan I think the cost of a visa or ETA has been reduced from about 5,000 yen to about 1,500 yen.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—How much is that in Australian dollars?

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Twenty dollars.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—That is not bad; that is a good reduction.

**Mrs IRWIN**—This is an in joke.

**CHAIR**—The committee was told yesterday by one of the people appearing before us that £20 was equivalent to \$20, not on the exchange rate but what it was worth to buy things. That is why we are suggesting that that is the equivalent.

**Senator BARTLETT**—You have mentioned a couple of times about your perception of a deterioration, if you like, in the department's attitude or the government's attitude. Why do you think that has happened?

**Mr Stroud**—I think you had better ask the Immigration people that. I think there seems to be an increasing preoccupation with the overstay problem and the tourism industry is paying the price for that.

**Senator BARTLETT**—I imagine it is fairly difficult to quantify, but in terms of the factors that influence whether people come to Australia, versus New Zealand or the UK or the US or whatever, obviously price and some of those things are the major factors. But how much influence do some of these things have, whether it is the hassle, the administrative bureaucracy and red tape, or even perceptions of how welcoming the place is?

**Mr Stroud**—I do not have any information to quantify it. We just hear anecdotal comments. If I try and put myself in the place of somebody wishing to visit Australia, if in filling out a form I had to say how much money I have for buying of tickets and maintaining myself in Australia, then had to produce bank statements, travellers cheques and

undertakings from any other person or organisation to provide funds, get a letter from my employer stating my income, the amount of leave that I have and that I will still have a job when I return, I think I would be saying, 'All this sort of stuff—you can shove it, I'm not going to visit such a country.'

**Mr Albin**—We did a survey in 1994, and I understand that a lot has changed since then, but 18 per cent of visitors on departure said that they were unhappy with the system and it would be a consideration in them revisiting Australia. That was in 1994—five years ago and there was no ETA. That is the latest information we have.

**Mr Stroud**—So you can imagine, say, the canteen at the Olympic Village with a few athletes sitting around the table and a New Zealander saying, 'I just had to produce my passport when I came into the country, no trouble at all,' while somebody from an ETA country is saying, 'It cost me—'

**CHAIR**—Olympic athletes will all have their accreditation and they will come in very quickly.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Given by SOCOG.

**CHAIR**—Can I just go back to what Mr Albin said. You referred to a tourism survey of 1994. We have an international visitors survey, 'Visitor satisfaction with tourism facilities in Australia 1996', and pretty well all the countries—90 per cent—were satisfied with visa requirements for Australia, and that is after ETA. China was the lowest with 89 per cent.

**Mr Albin**—You have to look at the survey question that they give—

**CHAIR**—I have heard—

**Mr Albin**—Where they give it and, I suppose, other—

**CHAIR**—And I could say the same about yours.

**Mr Albin**—Yes, fair enough.

**CHAIR**—We must finish, I am sorry. As nobody has a last crucial question which will resolve all issues, I will thank you very much, Mr Stroud and Mr Albin, for your time today. If we have any more questions we will get back to you.

**Mr Stroud**—Could I suggest that on the last question you speak to the Tourist Commission which has produced a research paper rubbishing that particular effort.

**CHAIR**—I have heard that. Thank you.

[9.56 a.m.]

**BROOME, Mr John Harold, Chairperson, National Crime Authority**

**CHAIR**—Welcome, Mr Broome. We have a submission from you. Do you wish to amend that in any way or would you like to provide an opening statement to the committee?

**Mr Broome**—I have just a very brief observation to make. We have set out the essential concerns we have about issues which are before the committee in that letter. There is nothing that I would wish to change in it. Perhaps the one point I would make is that as far as the authority is concerned, we are not suggesting that the fact of the Olympics is of major significance in the work that we do. What we would say, of course, is that any event which sees a very substantial increase in entries to Australia and adds to the number of people who are in any particular place at one time would expectedly give rise to certain increases in criminal activity of a whole variety, ranging from community police type issues through to, perhaps, more complex and sophisticated crimes.

We will be continuing to do the sort of work that we do all the time. The point we have made is that this is an issue where some additional vigilance is required. I would not, for our part, want to put it higher than that, other than to also reinforce the point that we have made that at least for our part we see a retention of the present entry system as an important part of Australia's capacity to respond to potential problems, both in relation to terrorism—about which we have no real involvement—and certainly in relation to crime. That is a position we put.

I will make one observation in light of some of the earlier evidence given this morning. The kinds of constraints that are there are not for the benefit of the agencies; they are for the benefit of the Australian community, which is the group for which we provide our services and work. I do not think it is correct to describe these issues as ones which benefit particular organisations, be they government or otherwise. They are for the Australian community's benefit.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much, Mr Broome. Would you like to tell the committee how you see the present visa situation, where people are required to have either a paper visa or an ETA, as assisting you in your work?

**Mr Broome**—There is no doubt that the present system, which provides advance warning capacity, which enables persons of possible interest to be flagged, and which certainly—even in its more streamlined forms—does have the advantage of some prior warning, is of assistance to law enforcement. Primarily, the agencies that benefit from that are obviously the Australian Federal Police, Customs, Immigration—because of its responsibilities—and indeed the state police services, which also have the capacity to identify persons of interest under that system.

For our part, it is not a huge area of activity or interest. Clearly, we can and we do use that if we have particular people of interest we would like to identify but we, like the majority of Australian law enforcement, obviously benefit from a system where we are able to be given advance warning of possible entrants who are of some interest or concern and to

be able to have a system maintained which enables identification of persons of interest. I accept that they are not necessarily systems which have to run concurrently—you can have an alert system without necessarily having a visa system—but in fact they do complement each other, at least in my view.

**CHAIR**—Are you happy with the arrangements for the Olympics? Are there any areas of the arrangements that you have any concerns about at all?

**Mr Broome**—I guess any concerns I would have go more generally to the extent to which it is possible to have, even under the present visa system, the kind of checking done in source countries before visas are issued, which in a perfect world we might like to see. But I am a realist, and I know that what we are doing here is balancing a whole lot of competing interests. You have just heard from witnesses who represent industries that have a very real interest in ensuring that the flow of tourists to Australia is as unimpeded as it is possible to make it. I understand that concern. I think that in some circumstances it would be better if there were resources available to conduct more rigorous assessment of people—not intuitively but based on available evidence. But the simple realities are that you cannot process the number of people who come to Australia through the kinds of posts, and the staffing we provide at those posts, at a level which is higher than is presently being provided.

**CHAIR**—Mr Broome, yesterday we heard that the questions asked on the ETA form were basically name, address, passport number—that was pretty well it. Would you like to see more questions on that ETA form and, if so, what would the questions be?

**Mr Broome**—At the end of the day, at least from the position of the National Crime Authority, I think the basic issues of the entry control system are not ones that fall within our responsibility—

**CHAIR**—I understand that. I just wondered about it for your own benefit, for the organisation in its work to assist the Australian population—

**Mr Broome**—Clearly, the greater the extent to which one can identify persons of genuine concern from a law enforcement perspective before they arrive in Australia is an advantage.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Mr Broome, can I say at the beginning how pleased I am that your organisation has not sought to put in a confidential submission to the committee and that you are prepared to give your evidence in public. I certainly appreciate that. I have raised the matter with the Attorney-General's Department when they appeared before the committee in camera, and their submission is confidential. I think it detracts from this whole debate around the visa system, and indeed around the matters associated with the Olympics that are the purpose of our inquiry. So it is enlightening that you are here today without seeking the cloak of secrecy around you. Hopefully, the other organisations might reflect on that.

**Mr Broome**—Can I just say thank you for the compliment, Senator. Despite suggestions to the contrary, the authority is not a secretive organisation. It is an organisation that has

great concern about the privacy of people who may be the subject of its investigations. But when it comes to issues of this kind, I think we should be prepared to express our point of view, to be publicly accountable for it, and to answer the questions in public.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Thank you for that. I might also say, because I have been critical, how I commend the representative of the AFP who did give part of the evidence in public yesterday. Has your organisation been given any additional resources by the government, through the budgetary processes, specifically for activities associated with the Olympics?

**Mr Broome**—No, and we have not sought any either.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Other law enforcement organisations have.

**Mr Broome**—Yes, because their functions much more directly are affected by the kinds of circumstances that surround the Olympics. We do not have an anti-terrorism capacity or function; it is not part of our statutory charter. We are not concerned with border movement per se. We are not concerned about the sorts of areas that ASIO are concerned with in terms of their statutory responsibilities. It does not seem to me to be either necessary or appropriate, based on the fact of the Olympics, to seek funding from the government in relation to our functions. We have received additional funding from the government in the last two budgets in relation to specific areas of work which we carry out. Those areas clearly may be affected in the sense that there will be greater numbers of people coming to Australia and there may be, therefore, an increased market for some illicit drugs because there will be visitors who may seek to buy those drugs while they are here, and so on. But we have not thought it appropriate to try and separate out our normal work in relation to organised crime and link it in some way specifically to the Olympics.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—There has been some publicity about the fact that the Customs Service will be relaxing their inspections at the airports, particularly for Olympic Family members. Are you aware of that speculation and, if so, do you have any views?

**Mr Broome**—I think there will be an inevitable consequence that if you are processing—and let me just say that I accept at face value the figures I have heard this morning—320,000 more people coming into Australia next year than perhaps this year, that X will only go into Y so many times. I think there is going to be an inevitable consequence that resources will be such that there may well be a reduction in inspection capacity.

What I would point out, of course, is that in relation to Customs inspection capacity, it has never been suggested that Customs could or should search containers, passenger baggage, or anything of that kind, other than on a whole series of considerations which they will put in place to make informed decisions about where resources are deployed. It is all about risk management, it is about using intelligence, and so on. I would see that kind of process obviously continuing. I think that those kinds of concerns—which obviously should be taken up with Customs rather than us—I would not be that concerned, because it seems to me that we have always had the situation where we have had to use the available resources in the most intelligent and informed way, and that situation certainly will not change.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—The tourist industry as such has made a very strong push that there be a visa-free trial introduced that coincides with the Olympics. I have a view that this would be completely the wrong time to introduce such a trial, even if I were of a mind to have a trial at all. I would have thought that this was perhaps the most inappropriate time to have such a trial, and we have not actually been given final details of what a trial would consist of. What are your views on that?

**Mr Broome**—If you start from the proposition that because of the influx of visitors next year there is an increased risk, of whatever magnitude, from potential terrorism and from law enforcement perspectives more generally, it seems to me that in a normal risk management approach that would not be the environment in which you would undertake a trial of something which, by definition, reduces your capacity to identify potential problems. With respect, Senator, instinctively and logically the point that you make strikes me as making a lot of sense. It is not the time of choice that I would do it. I think it is also fairly obvious that if you conducted a trial at such a time of peak movements, I would question whether that was really a proposal for a trial at all.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—As the chair has pointed out, the ETA system does not ask for very much information and the only check that it allows you to do is against the MAL system. Are you satisfied that the MAL system is adequate to provide you with information about potential problem people?

**Mr Broome**—I am satisfied that it works in the sense that if we identify someone for the alert list, then we will be alerted about that person. The question of how well MAL performs its function is in a sense different from the broader question about visas. Certainly, in relation to those visitors who can come with the electronic processing, there is quite clearly less opportunity for checks to be undertaken and less time for those checks to be undertaken—which is the same point, in a sense—and obviously less information on which—

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—You would not even come across them, would you, unless they are already on the MAL system?

**Mr Broome**—That is what I am saying. You have asked me whether MAL works. MAL works if we put something on it, but the real question is to know who you are looking for. Quite often it is only if you are in the position to make some kind of check through other systems that you might identify people of potential concern. Obviously, you do not put people, and we certainly do not identify people, on those systems unless we have a very good reason for doing so. You do not want to clog them up for a start and you do not want to be in a situation where you are crying wolf. You want people to believe that if the system is being used by an agency such as ours we need to respond when they get a hit.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Whereas with the non-ETA system you have the situation where there are effectively lots and lots of questions asked—including questions about any kind of police offences, local or international in character—which is something you do not have with the other system.

**Mr Broome**—Sure.



**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Does that assist you?

**Mr Broome**—If I had my druthers, I guess I would want to see a little bit more available, at least in terms of the ETA. From the authority's point of view, we are a user of that system—given the nature of our work, clearly some of the people in whom we have a direct interest are those who I think are of substantial concern to the Australian community—but we are not the major users of the system and we are not the major drivers of the system. I guess there are things where I would like to see a little more warning and a little more information available, but, as I said at the outset, successive governments have made decisions to balance some quite difficult competing considerations and those balances are never easily struck.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Is it not true that because of the ETA/non-ETA system you can have a lot of information about whether, for example, a kid in China has been arrested for shoplifting, whereas you have no information about whether somebody might have robbed a bank or killed somebody in Britain or one of the other European countries?

**Mr Broome**—It is certainly true that with the electronic system and the way it is processed, you will not, by definition, have provided by the applicant the same amount of information.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—It does not strike you as somewhat odd that on the one hand from the non-ETA system you have very detailed information about even the slightest offence, and yet in the ETA system you have no knowledge even of the most serious offences?

**Mr Broome**—There is obviously an inconsistency which is, as I understand it, in large part one based on assessments that have been made about low risk countries, as they have been described. I understand that, although I am not sure that you can categorise a whole community as high or low risk. Certainly, in our experience—

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—But these high and low risk categories have nothing to do with terrorism or offences—they have only to do with overstaying and immigration. Therefore they really do not help you very much at all.

**Mr Broome**—That is certainly true.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Have you ever tried to talk to Immigration about the possibility of a system that might help you a bit better?

**Mr Broome**—There has been for a long period of time a great deal of debate around government—certainly, that I am personally aware of, it has gone on for the last 15 years—where these issues have been thrown backwards and forwards. I think it is fair to say no-one has come up with the answer that satisfies all the competing interests. What we have at the moment is a compromise.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Mr Broome, for appearing before us today. You will get a copy of the transcript. If you have any queries, get back to us. In the meantime, if we have any more inquiries in your area, we will get back to you. Thank you very much for your time.

**Mr Broome**—Thanks very much indeed.

[10.17 a.m.]

**BROWN, Mr Christopher Paul Andrew, Chief Executive, Tourism Task Force**

**FLOWERS, Mr Karl Stephenson, General Manager Policy and Research, Tourism Task Force**

**CHAIR**—I welcome representatives of the Tourism Task Force. You have given us a submission and then another letter following that. Do you wish to amend that in any way?

**Mr Brown**—No, it is appropriate.

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

**Mr Brown**—Just a brief one. We are delighted to be able to speak to the committee today about the issue of immigration visa control and its impact on the country's largest industry, the tourism sector.

**CHAIR**—And specifically the Olympic Games, in the Olympic context.

**Mr Brown**—And most specifically its impact on the upcoming Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It is appropriate that this committee is addressing the impact of the visa regime with regard to the Olympics, but from our perspective it is impossible—and, hopefully, from the committee's and the government's perspective—to distinguish just the period of the games in Australia's overall immigration policy. We are obviously very keen to try and free up some elements of the visa system because of the games, not only to facilitate the movement of such a large number of people in a spike period, but even more importantly because the focus of the world's media and attention will be on this country. We are fearful of the damage it will do on this industry and on the country's reputation as a free and open society—one of the most proudly free and open societies in the world—if some of the archaic visa systems still remain at a profile during that time.

The Tourism Task Force, I suppose, has had a slightly different focus from a lot of tourism groups over the years. We were supportive of the government's implementation of the ETA scheme, recognising at the time that it was being strongly convinced by members of both sides of the House and the Senate that neither party was prepared to move in any sort of flexible way on the principle of universality. That is, in a nutshell, that we could not dare send our diplomats off to cocktail parties around the world and try and explain why some countries are given a freer run on visas as opposed to other countries, despite the fact that almost every other country on the earth discriminates.

However, with the implementation of the \$50 visa charge for non-ETA countries, the government has itself now admitted that the principle of universality is dead and that it is prepared to discriminate against some countries compared to others. Therefore, we similarly agree that the principle of universality no longer applies as a government policy and if we can discriminate against bad countries, then we can discriminate in favour of so-called good countries that do not have high overstay rates, that do provide a high volume of visitors to this country, and in which we can have some confidence in the legal systems and the

technological abilities of those countries to be able to be mature enough in a relationship with us to manage some sort of a visa-free trial. We would therefore only support that in a very limited sense to start with, for obvious countries like Japan, the USA, Germany, Singapore—places like that would be appropriate for some type of trial.

But, as I said, we still remain supporters of the ETA in essence. As was said before, if we all had our druthers you would have the ETA in the bad countries and a visa-free system in the good countries. But I am also a political realist, if nothing else, and I know that is unlikely to happen in the near future. We will probably settle for what should have happened originally, and what should be happening continuously, and that is a roll-out of that ETA system everywhere. If it is good enough to have it, it is good enough to have it everywhere.

Qantas, for example, has now launched massive new investment to open up markets, for example in India, China and South America, and it is inappropriate that there is absolutely no intention by Immigration to in any way roll out ETAs to facilitate that investment and the movement of trade, friends and relatives and, importantly, tourists from those markets. I think it is showing a lack of fidelity with Australian investors, such as Qantas and others, which are investing in those markets, particularly off the back of that investment largely driven by friendly haranguing from the Minister for Trade who, quite rightly, recognises the need to open up those parts of the world to Australians—if you do not have flights, it is a long swim from most of those places, so we believe it appropriate that government policy be matching the private sector investment.

On the issue of the \$50 visa charge, I think our views are fairly well known on that. I think for the first time in a long time it has introduced an element, let us call it geographic discrimination, rather than racial, to be less emotive about it, but there is distinct geographic discrimination on countries. That discrimination happens particularly in Asia and I think the timing of it was very unfortunate, considering the tumultuous time this country has been through with some more awful political philosophies which have been espoused, largely to the north, in recent times. To be honest, the timing of introducing that policy, I think, was simply appalling.

Then we opened the paper yesterday—or, as we usually do with the minister, we get press releases from the press because we do not get them sent to us—announcing that there is a new system under contemplation, the bond scheme. It is not enough to charge people \$50 and ask them to submit chest x-rays, details of their mortgage, family arrangements, income support, and so on. Now we are also going to apply many thousands of dollars bond to them. It is one hell of a welcome sign, I have to announce. My only hope is that it is a bit of an ambit claim, and maybe it was even timed for our appearances today, if I can be even more cynical than I am already. I am hopeful that the government will draw a line somewhere at some stage and say that enough is enough, that we want to support the movement of people. It also goes against the principles of free trade that we all proudly beat our chests about in this region—that there should be free and open movement across borders, particularly within APEC, yet it is the APEC countries which are largely being discriminated against under the current non-ETA system.

With regard to the Olympics, as I said previously we are obviously keen to portray an open, friendly image for Australia. Having been in Atlanta—like my esteemed colleague

Bruce Baird—and having seen the sorts of trials and tribulations Atlanta went through, even prior to the bomb, my hope is that Australia does not go down that path, that we can display what is great about Australia at the games, which is our only opportunity to do so. I am heartened by the fact that we have been advised that the \$50 visa charge for non-ETA countries will not be applied against members of the Olympic Family—a somewhat dysfunctional family these days, but the Olympic Family all the same, though that might be reviewed I suppose—the way things are going they might suddenly appear on wanted lists around the world.

We also would like to see that offer of exclusion extended to non-accredited journalists entering Australia during that time. It is not so much the \$50 but the paperwork that becomes the object of ridicule for Australia. As much as I am sure the committee is loving the chance of having free movement of journalists around international borders, I would think that showcasing that system to those journalists who are least concerned with what is happening at the Olympic stadium and are most concerned with what is happening in the streets of Sydney and Melbourne, the social fabric of the nation and the political structure of the nation, would be tantamount to madness. There could be 15,000 of these working journalists from around the world, but if you take the non-ETA countries obviously the number would be much smaller. On reflection, this probably is an amendment to our submission, Madam Chair: that consideration be given to the extension of exclusion to non-accredited journalists.

On the flip side, I have to say, and I recognise it myself—and I know that some of the tourism agencies, like Tourism New South Wales and the Australian Tourist Commission, recognise it too—that the checking of visas in some way will allow them to identify journalists. I do not know how they are going to manage the countries that do not have an ETA but will not be charged the \$50 and go through the process. I am not quite sure how that is planned to be—

**Senator McKIERNAN**—SOCOG.

**Mr Brown**—SOCOG will not issue for non-accredited journalists, so that needs some sort of creative thinking which we cannot fully propose yet. We will have to come back to you about how that might be applied against that small community of unaccredited journalists not from ETA countries.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for a very lucid exposition.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I understand that at the beginning of your comments you were talking about visa-free for tourism visas, but you have actually gone far beyond that now and are including journalists in the thing. Where do you stop with the visa-free trial that you are proposing?

**Mr Brown**—With the visa-free trial we are proposing we obviously have an interest in the tourist visa side of things. I think it is probably inappropriate for us to voice too much opinion on the full movement of people across borders. But where we stop I suppose is that we, like the rest of the world, give ticks and crosses to countries. We decide that this country has a demonstrable record of technological advancement at home that we can rely

upon and it has a demonstrable record of low overstay rates of its citizens who come to Australia for a holiday. We simply suggest that we discriminate positively—the same way the government now discriminates negatively—on the basis of making a judgment call on which countries to do business with.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—In terms of tourists and business, your presentation to us talked about business people coming in as well under visa-free and you talked specifically about unaccredited journalists, who now require a specific visa, coming in. Would you include doctors in that? You would have passed the demonstration outside.

**Mr Brown**—I actually came in the back door but I know of the demonstration outside. Whether we accredit foreign doctors is a whole other issue. For the unaccredited journalists, we are talking only for the period of the games. We are not talking about a universal scheme of every journalist in and out whenever they want, although it probably stands to reason that you would do that with the journalistic community. I noticed a few of them were not real keen in relation to Timor, so it is a bit tough for us to be running the same regime. But for the period of the Olympics we are talking about the unaccredited journalists who can be identified upon presentation of press credentials. They are usually a regulated community and it is therefore easy to distinguish who they are.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—A regulated community?

**Mr Brown**—In most parts of the world they have to have some sort of press card. They are accredited, if not regulated.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—What about the fruit-pickers?

**Mr Brown**—I do not know that people apply to come as fruit-pickers, but I think a lot of people take up the fruit picking profession when they arrive.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I am just trying to get some parameters of where you have gone with the visa-free trial and to get some definition of what you mean by visa-free. You have talked about business people, you have talked about unaccredited journalists—I am not getting into specifics because I want to see where you are drawing the line. Then I want to ask you about the time periods which are going to apply. Is it going to be the 60-day Olympic period or is it going to be a bit longer or a bit shorter—what have you got in mind?

**Mr Brown**—For the visa-free trial, I am speaking about a period above and beyond the Olympics. For the non-accredited journalists from the current non-ETA countries, I am talking about the period of the Olympics and the Paralympics. There are two distinct areas. There was a more general comment about the visa-free trial that we, having originally proposed it some years ago, pulled back on the basis of recognising the principle of universality. The government has thrown the principle of universality in the bin, so we therefore no longer feel a compulsion to observe the principle ourselves if the government does not observe it. So, in a general sense, we are talking about a visa trial for, hopefully, a trial period or whatever is determined, and to hopefully make it permanent if the trial proves successful.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I am not asking what period has been determined. What period are you proposing? Are you saying now—

**Mr Brown**—For the visa-free trial, now. For the unaccredited journalists—

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Until?

**Mr Brown**—Until the trial is proved correct and then we implement it as a permanent system.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You really do not want a trial though, do you? You want to chuck out the visa system.

**Mr Brown**—Let us have a trial and if does not work, it does not work, and we do not proceed.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You are asking for a trial and I am asking you what the parameters for the trial are. I have now got to a position where you are saying that you really do not want a trial at all; you just want to remove the visa system. Then you come back and say, ‘Yes, we do want a trial,’ but you will not give me your parameters.

**Mr Brown**—I will just pick a figure: a three-month trial. To be honest, I am not fussed how long the trial goes. The only way that it can be done is under a proper monitoring system so that we have a beginning, an end, and a result of the trial and you can then make a determination of whether it becomes permanent or whether it gets thrown out.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—If it was up to me I would not have a trial at all.

**Mr Brown**—I know, and I do not want to be so presumptuous as to suggest that.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—You are putting forward a proposal and I am trying to find out where you are coming from.

**Mr Brown**—Maybe I am much more reasonable; I am actually prepared to have the trial in the first place.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—I am aware of the time. I was fascinated by the additional letter that we received on 3 August 1998 and the penultimate paragraph about the curfew. You would have to be pretty brave to put that forward, particularly as we note from the media today that one of the airlines copped a six-figure fine for taking off in the middle of the night. I suppose if you do not live in that region, it is not really of concern.

**Mr Brown**—I do live in the region of airport noise—proudly in the inner west—in Mr Albanese’s electorate. One of the great unspoken stories about the Olympics at this point obviously is the ability of the airport to cope with it under the current system. Based on media reports this morning, I think you will see Qantas probably voicing comment later today about their view. If you look retrospectively at what happened with the airport curfew, by both sides beating up on each other—one beat their chest on the curfew, one beat their

chest on the cap—what we ended up with was a spread of jets from 5.a.m. until 7.a.m. taking off and landing from the south over very few houses. You now have an intensity of jets between 6 a.m. and 7 a.m. It has actually added much more noise to people who are morning curfew affected. At the end of the day, it will be a judgment call of governments and the airport managers as to what they think they can cope with in terms of capacity for movement.

I do not presume to have a technical expertise of the exact detail of how that is going to be managed, whether it is a range of airports in and out, whether it is use of Williamtown and others to take an overflow, or whether we simply accept the word of the airport that they will be able to handle it. One of the ideas that should be considered is for less invasive type jets, on a noise profile, with use of the physical parameters that Sydney airport provides— notwithstanding the great people of Kurnell—and the ability to take off and turn left before they reach houses should probably be considered. It is probably outside the parameters of the reference of the inquiry here.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—Not if somebody submits. If members of the public who are invited to make submissions put it in their submission, I think I have freedom to ask questions in regard to it.

**Mr Brown**—I am happy to set the agenda and respond to it, Senator.

**CHAIR**—Perhaps we can move to some other questions.

**Mr BAIRD**—Congratulations, Chris, on an excellent presentation. I think there are several things that could be said about the concerns that have flowed through in terms of this inquiry. The first is the inconsistency of the tourism voice in regard to this visa-free trial. We have some of the airlines indicating they really do not care about it, the Australian Tourist Commission saying, ‘Well, the current system works.’ Why would this committee want to change their view if the conviction is not strong within the tourism industry itself, and maybe I hear what you say about the realistic view. We have had the Australian Federal Police, the National Crime Authority et cetera talking about the impact in terms of border control. We have just had a submission which basically indicated that they were not terribly interested in border control—if you showed a passport you went straight through. If there was a visa-free trial, how does the question of border control eventuate? There is a view that if you remove the visa requirement you have simply shifted in terms of the queues at the airport. Are you talking, firstly, about border control being removed and, secondly, if it is not, what happens in terms of the queues at the airport?

**Mr Brown**—On the first part of your question, I suppose by announcing this morning that we are prepared, on the basis of the universality principle, to now support the visa-free trial, one would say that the two major tourism groups, the TTF and the TCA, are as one with their voices on that issue. That hopefully leaves out some of the concern about a different number of messages. There is obviously an airline sensitivity because the government puts the price burden back on airlines to send people home. We need to recognise the fact that airlines have a distinct view on visas—they have to balance between an attraction of people wanting to come here and buy a ticket and the liability they face to ship people home. I think there is a sensitivity that deserves to be recognised, rather than



necessarily saying that their position is fluid on visas. They just want good passenger processing. They do not want all the hassle of doing it all at the airline check-in counter, obviously, and they do not want the liability of having to send people home.

The last point I would make is with regard to the Australian Tourist Commission. Despite there being some of my best friends in the world at the ATC, they are in fact a government organisation and agency, so I think there is a general acceptance that government agencies probably are not out to rock the boat too much policy-wise; not ones that have a view to longevity of their existence.

With regard to the issue of the technical abilities to process those tourists, the areas we are suggesting are countries of high technological proficiency. There is a thing called technology that is taking over so many parts of our lives and the days of paper visas should be numbered—although we have some sympathy for the ETA when rolled out properly and applied properly and not charged for by third party agents. So, through passenger manifests, I think the Americans go more to a system of processing people at point of departure rather than at the point of arrival, and also we are talking about countries with which there will be much less risk of intervention because there is a much lower risk of inappropriate visitors entering Australia. It is a system worth trialling. I do not have the answers on all the technology that is out there. I remember being dazzled by SITA and IBM with their technology on the ETA. Quite simply, there must be ways to extend that further to reduce the process even more. Again, one of the other problems we have with the ETA, as I mentioned, is third party agents hopping on the bandwagon. They are saying, ‘The government is charging \$50 for a paper visa. We might charge a bit of money on top to process the ETA.’

The great thing about the ETA, which was that it was free, is disappearing as well because agents are getting half smart. If there no physical process it reduces the ability of the agents to hop on board. With the airlines that we are talking about, most of those passenger manifests are known well in advance and there is every opportunity for pre-clearance to take place. I am mindful of not burdening the gateway airports around Australia with huge queues. That was, again, one of the issues with which we have some sympathy with the ETA, but there has to be a balance, and I think the balance is probably more in Senator McKiernan’s favour than mine—let us put it that way. We are trying to shift it back a little towards where Immigration becomes a facilitator of people in and out of Australia rather than lord protector all the time.

**Mr BAIRD**—In terms of the question of what it would do for tourism, there has long been an argument by the tourism industry that it is a real deterrent to having visitors come to the country. Do you have any evidence in relation to that?

**Mr Brown**—With surveys undertaken by both sides of this debate, with all due respect to an organisation who appeared before, there is always going to be a bit of a rubbery result, because largely a lot of the people that should be asked the question cannot be asked the question. Those who say, ‘The survey shows people are all here in spite of visas,’ but they did not ask the question of people who did not come because of the visa, and those whom we consider to be on our side run surveys which show that people came despite this, or a figure is picked out of the air that it would grow by.

Needless to say, the trend in international tourism to Australia is increasingly, and as Asia comes back on board it hopefully will be renewed, towards short-break quick holidays—people who are deciding in Singapore that they will literally go shopping in Australia for the weekend or who that are deciding they will literally go to New Zealand skiing for a long weekend. Even with ETA, the process involved in the timing of that can be much longer than is required. There is a need for us to be able to move quickly to meet the changing abilities of travellers to decide more quickly. The days are gone of people deciding two years in advance and planning out their world holiday—or those days are going if they are not completely gone. I do not know that we have a system in place in Australia to match that modern quick movement of travellers such that we can maximise the job generation, export generation, that flows from that same phenomenon.

**Mr Flowers**—Can I just add to that, Bruce. As you are all well aware, we only get about seven out of every thousand international arrivals to Australia. It is a very significant industry employment wise—about 250,000 Australians are employed as a result of inbound tourist spending, but in terms of our place in the world it is fairly small. That is reflected in the shelves of overseas travel agents. Travel agents, like many in the commercial world, are led as much by their commission on various products as are other people in the commercial world. If they get a better commission for selling the Caribbean, a requirement for a visa and a \$50 charge to see if the Australian government is going to accept your bona fides to visit this country can be portrayed as a major impediment to travel. It comes very early—

**Senator McKIERNAN**—There is the fact that it is a very long haul destination and expensive as well. Put that into the scenario too.

**Mr Flowers**—Indeed, indeed.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—It is a fact: we are not going to compete with Europe.

**Mr Flowers**—We are competing with Europe.

**Mr Brown**—We are certainly attempting to compete with Europe. We are spending a lot of taxpayers' money attempting to compete with Europe and we are actually being fairly successful at it. Our numbers for Europe, the UK and the US has saved our butts this year, on the basis that the Asian crisis set in. We are quite distinctly competing with Europe and having people arriving.

**Senator McKIERNAN**—If you are then, tell me the number of visitors going into Europe per year as opposed to the numbers going into Australia. I mean, get real.

**Mr Brown**—There are not many visas required going to Europe.

**Mr BAIRD**—I have a final question with two parts to it. The first part is: what countries in Europe are visas required for? For example, from Japan how many countries in Europe would they actually require visas for? The second part is: is the Olympics a bad time to implement what this inquiry is all about? Is this a bad time to implement it or if there is to be a trial, should it be isolated to some area where the numbers are not going to be quite as great and the permutations of problems not quite as complex?

**Mr Brown**—The actual number of countries in Europe that require a Japanese visa is absolutely minor, if at all. I cannot find the exact figure.

**Mr BAIRD**—You can take that on notice.

**Mr Brown**—I can provide that to the committee by this afternoon, but the number would be infinitesimal. What we are seeing is a great growth of Japanese travel to Europe: the two darlings of the Japanese travel market at the moment are Italy and France and we are suffering as a result.

**Mr BAIRD**—What is the actual flying time from Japan, for example, for somebody going from Tokyo to Paris versus Tokyo to Sydney?

**Mr Brown**—It is nine hours Tokyo to Sydney in the same time zone.

**Mr Flowers**—It is about 20 hours, I think. I have done that flight.

**Mr Brown**—And nine hours in the same time zone, so the attractiveness of coming to Australia should be overwhelming. Yet people from Japan are still going to Europe at a rate of knots. What was the second part of your question?

**Mr BAIRD**—It was about visa free—

**Mr Brown**—To which places and how we would implement that. Again, I would be attracted to your concept of having it for a low volume market to better manage the process. But I think if we follow principles it would be discriminating for good countries and probably the four best and most obvious are those I detailed: Japan, Singapore—maybe Singapore which is, in an Olympic sense, probably a small number because they do not have a huge Olympic Family requirement—Germany, and I think it was West Germany last time we suggested—

**Mr BAIRD**—But is it a good time to have a trial during the Olympics?

**Mr Brown**—It is the worst time to have some of those excesses of our current visa scheme on display. If it is the best time for the trial, it is the worst time to be showcasing to the world. I think it is a point worth making, and I will take the committee through an example of the \$50 charge at the moment. Imagine us, as Australians, that suddenly Zimbabwe decided to say to Australia, 'For you to come here for a holiday, we have determined, firstly, Australia is on our not wanted list because we have targeted you as being a country at risk,' so we are instantly on the back foot. We then go and find a Zimbabwean embassy or consulate—there might only be one in Australia. We trot ourselves off, schlep our way over to the embassy or have forms sent to us. We are presented with forms that say, firstly, we want you to send us your passport in the mail—in a country where we have some confidence in the postal system but in return they would not. We get a passport, we send it off, we dig out \$50 for every member of the family—this is not \$50 for an Australian but it would be \$50 Australian for a person in largely somewhat less developed parts of the world. We get the bank loan to pay the application fee, we fill in the form—which asks for issues like chest x-rays, for letters from your family at home, letters from the family you are

visiting, income statements from your boss, bank details to send off, all sorts of personal declarations.

You send that off in the hope that, please, please, let me come, please let me come over here and create jobs for your children, please let me come and rescue your balance of payments, and for the pleasure I am going to bow and scrape and do all sorts of what we would find personally degrading and racially insulting schemes so that we can come to your country and enjoy the wonders of your country as a holiday destination. We are not like coal where there are six countries on earth that probably produce the quality coal we do; there are over 200 countries on earth that showcase tourism like we can. Most of them are closer to where we live, and most of them do not require us to go through this degrading system to come here for a holiday. Yes, Australia has the right to determine its own sovereign borders; yes, we should be empowering our criminal agencies to keep people out of Australia who threaten our lifestyle, who want to jump immigration queues, who want to take the jobs of young Australians, unlike fruit-pickers, where there is actually some competition for those jobs. Yes, we should remain vigilant on that, but there has to be a balance. All we ask for is a balance. Unlike some others in this debate, we do not ask for absolutism.

**Mr BAIRD**—Thanks very much.

**CHAIR**—We can have some more questions from the committee. I do remind the committee that it is now a quarter to 11, which was the time we were supposed to start our second inquiry.

**Mr Brown**—I will answer quickly.

**CHAIR**—Perhaps if you could keep your answers, your very passionate answers, down as quickly as you can and we can keep our questions to a minimum.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—You mentioned that one of your first priorities is the extension of the ETA system to these other areas. Would this be your highest priority at the moment?

**Mr Brown**—I think it is. The ETA has had its trial and I think most people are happy with it. The concern we have is the third party commission basis that is being charged, and I think the government ought to look at what can be done to stop there being an application of a fee on that. At the moment, if the ETA is good enough to have in the world, it is good enough to have all over the world and there should be a roll out. It should match the funding the government is putting into marketing as a tourism destination, it should probably match the funding Qantas and Ansett and others are putting into servicing Australia through air routes and trade routes, and it should match the aspirations of Austrade and where it is developing new markets—

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—I understand all of that but you mentioned earlier that you were concerned about the perception in various parts of the world, between those countries that have ETA and those that do not, that this is a discriminatory system. Are you aware that the department of immigration in evidence before this committee denied on five occasions that this system is in any way discriminatory? What would you say to that?

**Mr Brown**—As I said before, one wants to temper one's views that there is a racist discrimination policy out there because I do not think it does anybody any harm. I used the term 'geography'. It is unfortunate timing that we are decreeing countries unsuitable for doing business with Australia, we are decreeing populations as less suitable candidates to come here for a holiday. No matter what way you look at it and how many rosy ways you can dress it up, no matter how much we can accept that it is really part of just a power play over the Refugee Review Tribunal legislation in the Senate and we are the little pawn in this, it is impossible to totally remove the spectre—as a proud Australian who looks forward to our relationships with this region—that without a doubt Asia is the part of the world on a racial basis most targeted, and the less developed parts of the world are the countries on economic grounds which are most targeted. I do not think that sits well with the proud tradition of an Australian open culture and society.

**Mr Flowers**—On a diplomatic issue, the issue of China and approved destination status, the Chinese tourism market is going to be heavily regulated from the Chinese side. In terms of outbound travel it will be controlled through a small network of outbound operators working closely with Australian authorities. The movement towards an ETA system would be good PR for the government with China, and it is a group which I think the government would like to impress on a whole range of trade issues. There is going to be other regulation that should reassure the immigration authorities so, by giving that pawn to the Chinese authorities, by putting them into the ETA system, we can in some senses shore up a relationship that has been quite damaged.

**Mr Brown**—To quickly add to that, within the same year that China said to us, 'You're the first Western country on earth that we will deign to allow this special relationship, an officially designated travel destination where Chinese can travel on a holiday,' our response was to, firstly, put up the highest bureaucratic wall of all time so we could never implement it, and, secondly, impose a \$50 visa charge application and hurdles for the Chinese to jump over. One would not necessarily say that in the spirit of reciprocity that it was the same benefit being provided to China as China was providing to us: the greatest potential travel market in the world in which we sit in almost the same time zone and with short to medium haul travel time.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—In fact, we heard in evidence earlier today that this has prevented the implementation of the arrangement. Is this your understanding?

**Mr Flowers**—I think there are problems within the Chinese bureaucracy in terms of budget cutbacks for various agencies as well. But, certainly, the perception within the tourism industry association's lobby groups is that the immigration authorities in Australia have not speeded the process as they might, given the Minister for Foreign Affairs announced this 15 months ago.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Because I am conscious of the time, I wonder whether you could actually send to the committee a further statement or explanation as to some of the points you have made about why we are being perceived in a discriminatory way overseas in relation to this.

**Mr Brown**—Yes, I will.

**Dr THEOPHANOUS**—Do you think that at the time of the Olympics if we retain the ETA/non-ETA system, there is a danger that visitors from those non-ETA countries, leaving aside the Olympic Family, wanting to come here may be held up on the basis of processing and we could end up in an embarrassing position, with some countries maintaining that we are preventing their people from coming to visit the Olympics?

**Mr Brown**—It is hard to comprehend exactly how important the games will be to Australia, not so much in the demonstration of athleticism or even the sheer tourist numbers coming for the games but the fact that it is the first and only time the world spotlight will be on this country and everything we do. It does not have to kowtow to the world, but it has to at least be smart enough to show some fidelity with the amount of taxpayers' money that is being thrown at the games, particularly by the state government, and by the federal government to a lesser extent, and not to have all that good work stifled by a bit of petty bureaucracy. Yes, we need at the same time to have an even more vigilant criminal system because that spotlight provides an attraction to those who would use it negatively, but it comes back to the issue of balance. Let us get the balance right, let us not do what the States did on the ground in Atlanta of probably being too hard and giving an impression to the world of the high fence mentality of the USA. Let us not be too lax, let us get balance.

There is one point I would like to add. We have the CER system with New Zealand already and we are about to go, hopefully, to a single aviation market which will provide for borderless control between Australia and New Zealand. It will present enormous problems if New Zealand continues to operate a selective visa-free system with the good countries around the world and Australia does not match that. It could present enormous logistical problems for immigration, for the airlines involved, as people are coming into New Zealand and then borderless control across to Australia. That is another driving force why we should try and at least standardise, as we should with a lot of other things with New Zealand—I would make them a state—but in the meantime let us at least move towards standardisation of the immigration scheme. I do not notice a huge outbreak of terrorism in New Zealand in the past few years. I am waiting desperately to hear the bomb reverberations across the Tasman but it was still a pretty safe, friendly joint to live in last time I checked.

**CHAIR**—Nice remarks, Mr Brown, but I think we have been concentrating on the Olympics and the propensity of the Olympics to attract terrorism, which is not happening in New Zealand. Thank you both very much for appearing before the committee today. You will receive a transcript from Hansard and if you have any questions get back to us. In the meantime, you are going to provide some more information to the committee?

**Mr Brown**—We will provide that.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for your presentation.

Resolved (on motion by **Senator Bartlett**):

That this committee authorises publication of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**Committee adjourned at 10.54 a.m.**

