



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Committee Hansard

JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT

**Reference: Further inquiry into aviation security in Australia**

MONDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2005

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**JOINT STATUTORY COMMITTEE OF  
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT**

**Monday, 5 December 2005**

**Members:** Mr Baldwin (*Chair*), Ms Grierson (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Hogg, Humphries, Moore, Murray, Nash and Watson and Mrs Bronwyn Bishop, Mr Broadbent, Dr Emerson, Miss Jackie Kelly, Ms King, Mr Laming, Mr Tanner and Mr Ticehurst

**Members in attendance:** Senators Hogg, Moore and Watson and Mr Baldwin, Ms Grierson, Mr Laming and Mr Ticehurst

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit will inquire into and report on developments in aviation security since its June 2004 *Report 400: Review of Aviation Security in Australia*, with particular reference to:

- a) regulation of aviation security by the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services, and the Department's response to aviation security incidents since June 2004;
- b) compliance with Commonwealth security requirements by airport operators at major and regional airports;
- c) compliance with Commonwealth security requirements by airlines;
- d) the impact of overseas security requirements on Australian aviation security;
- e) cost imposts of security upgrades, particularly for regional airports;
- f) privacy implications of greater security measures;
- g) opportunities to enhance security measures presented by current and emerging technologies, including measures to combat identity fraud; and
- h) procedures for, and security of, baggage handling operations at international, domestic and regional airports, by both airlines and airports.

**WITNESSES**

**KILNER, Mr John, Acting Executive Director, Department of Transport and Regional Services ..... 1**

**LALOR, Mr Andrew James, Acting General Manager, Regional Aviation and Air Cargo  
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**Committee met at 9.35 am**

**KILNER, Mr John, Acting Executive Director, Department of Transport and Regional Services**

**LALOR, Mr Andrew James, Acting General Manager, Regional Aviation and Air Cargo Security, Department of Transport and Regional Services**

**TONGUE, Mr Andrew Keith, Deputy Secretary, Department of Transport and Regional Services**

**CHAIR (Mr Baldwin)**—The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit will now commence taking evidence, as provided for by the Public Accounts and Audit Committee Act 1951, for its inquiry into aviation security in Australia. I welcome everybody to this public hearing for the committee's review of developments in aviation security since the tabling of its Report 400: *Review of aviation security in Australia*. Today we will hear from representatives of the Department of Transport and Regional Services.

Before we begin, I advise the witnesses that the hearings today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the parliament itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The evidence given today will be recorded by Hansard and will attract parliamentary privilege. Finally, I refer any members of the press who are present to a committee statement about the broadcasting of proceedings. In particular, I draw the media's attention to the need to report fairly and accurately the proceedings of the committee. Copies of the committee statement are available from secretariat staff. Do you wish to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes, I would like to make a brief statement. There is a handful of points I want to highlight. Firstly, in the last 12 months 60 million people have moved into, out of and around Australia—more than one million people a week. They have done so in a safe and secure way that benchmarked against the rest of the world rates very highly. The second area I want to highlight before we begin is that the aviation security challenge that we face in this country has three elements: who and what is flying to Australia, who and what is flying from Australia and who and what is flying around Australia. Whilst the public debate tends to focus on what is happening domestically, from a national security perspective we also have to be concerned about what is coming towards us, and for our international obligations what we are sending to the rest of the world.

The third area I want to highlight is that this is one of many inquiries, reviews and assessments that has been undertaken of aviation security since September 11. I want to highlight for the committee the fact that aviation security in Australia is constantly under review. International airlines that fly to Australia assess us; overseas countries, most particularly the Transport Security Administration for the US, constantly assess us; the International Civil Aviation Organisation assesses us; and we assess ourselves against international good practice. In all those assessments Australia stands as being a nation comparable with any developed economy. By international benchmarks we are doing pretty well.

The final point I want to make is that we run or try to manage an outcome focused regulatory model that is risk based. We mitigate risk; we do not make it go away. It would be easy to make all the risks go away by simply not flying. As soon as you introduce people into an aircraft—people wearing clothes, people carrying things—we introduce risk. One of the challenges for us in the Department of Transport and Regional Services, an industry department, is to try to balance the security aspects of aviation with the safety, environmental and employment aspects of aviation and the economic development consequences of aviation.

It would be easy for us in seeking to mitigate risk to impose so many measures on the aviation industry that it would not be economic to fly. A point I would particularly like to raise with the committee is that, with the advent of low-cost airlines, \$5 on the price of a ticket can make or break a low-cost airline route. So when we impose measures we have to consider that if somebody is going to pay it is going to be either the taxpayer or the person flying, and that \$5 is a very price-sensitive point. I do not know whether the airlines have led evidence to you about that, but it is certainly a factor I think we need to take into account. That is all I wanted to say.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. I will start with the Wheeler inquiry and what measures DOTARS has implemented or has under way for implementation at the direction of government. As you would be aware, the committee has put out a statement with unanimous support for the Wheeler recommendations.

**Mr Tongue**—A number of the Wheeler recommendations went to our role. I might start at the top. One was to do with the information provision to industry, with Sir John recommending that we work with intelligence agencies and others to be very active in the sharing of information with industry. We are actually out this week and next week picking up the first of the recommendations by doing joint briefings of industry with the Crime Commission, ASIO, the Australian Federal Police and state police about both counter-terrorism and criminality aspects at airports. Another area that Sir John raised was to do with cargo. We are now implementing a significantly tightened cargo regime. The implication of Sir John's recommendation is that we will have one of the tightest cargo regimes in the world. We are moving quickly now to implement that.

With regard to policing, we are working closely with the Australian Federal Police as they roll out the unified policing model. We are working with the Australian Customs Service on the issue of CCTV. The government is in the process of considering policy recommendations to do with aviation security identity cards, whether or not to go down the track of a centralised vetting agency.

One of the issues in Sir John's report that was only partly embodied in the recommendations but was implied throughout the report is the notion of airports as critical infrastructure—that is, airports in their shopping centre function as opposed to their aviation function. We are certainly in our work with all the players in the industry starting to raise that issue, the question about, if you like, what is in front of the screening point. So now that the report is out and the government is basically committed to it, we are off and going.

**CHAIR**—One of the questions put in the Wheeler report was about the standard of training of security officers at airports. Has DOTARS implemented a national training standard requirement



for security staff? Does that training include identification and measures pertaining to terrorist activities?

**Mr Tongue**—There are already existing training requirements in the national aviation security program and in all of the security programs of airports and airlines. We have been very active in training, particularly at the smaller end, where there was very little out there by way of training. The government has recently allocated us \$4 million and we have commenced work with the industry on a competency based approach to how we roll out Sir John's recommendation. The challenge for us is that we are moving from a system that in the past has been what I would call input driven—the number of hours of training—to one with a more outcome based approach, which is: what competency does the person have? We have also got the huge scale of the industry to deal with: to get out across the core part of the regular passenger transport industry we are talking in the order of 100,000 people. But we have certainly commenced work, yes.

**CHAIR**—You provided annexure H to the committee report with a full list of security controlled airports and in that list—the deputy chair and I have a very parochial interest in this—you have Newcastle-Williamtown airport as a transitioning airports. What do you mean by transitioning?

**Mr Tongue**—With the implementation of the new act there were airports that were under the old act and the old set of requirements which now have to comply with the new act and the new set of requirements. We call the ones which are moving between the two acts 'transitioning airports'. Newcastle is one of those. The implication of that is that we are allowing them time to do the planning work around the changes they need to make to all aspects of their operation to be fully compliant with the requirements of the new regulations.

**CHAIR**—With the funding that is distributed to airports, it would seem that Newcastle regularly misses out on your funding for security upgrades. Can you explain why?

**Mr Tongue**—Certainly.

**CHAIR**—I would say to committee members that I am sorry to be so parochial, but this is an item that the deputy chair and I discuss regularly.

**Senator HOGG**—You just cannot notice that.

**Senator MOORE**—Do you discuss it at the airport?

**Ms GRIERSON**—It is a surprise to you, isn't it!

**Senator HOGG**—It is a surprise!

**CHAIR**—Australia does revolve around the hub of our electric—

**Senator HOGG**—I am sure that no-one would believe that!

**Mr Tongue**—As one of the world's largest coal ports that we also security regulate, we are very aware of it.

**CHAIR**—Or the largest coal port!

**Mr Tongue**—When the government allocated funding for security upgrades at regional airports, it allocated that funding on the basis of those airports not now having or not previously having had jet RPT services. That meant that, of the 180 airports in Australia, those that were already security regulated were not eligible for funding under the program. That subsequently raised a number of issues for airports such as Newcastle and what I would call the smaller regional airports that also have jet passenger transport.

**Senator MOORE**—Mount Isa?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—That is enough of that parochialism!

**Mr Tongue**—They are certainly raising with us access to that funding. That is a policy question that the government is going to have to adjudicate on.

**Senator MOORE**—We had evidence from a number of quite small airports which were quite frightened of the impact of the extra responsibilities they are going to have. One that stays in my mind—I do not know about the rest of the committee—was the one in South Australia. It was an island off South Australia—

**Senator HOGG**—Kangaroo Island.

**Senator MOORE**—We did not get there and we have promised to go and have a look at it. But it seemed that they were almost a country spot as opposed to an airport as we would see it. I know that you have different groups in your structure that are doing consultation. Is that fear something that you have heard about from the department?

**Mr Tongue**—Certainly when we started I think a lot of small airports and small airlines were pretty daunted. I would characterise it this way: they just thought that the Commonwealth regulatory juggernaut had found another way to make their lives impossible.

**Senator MOORE**—Absolutely. That was the kind of language that they were using too.

**Mr Tongue**—The issue for us, though, is that, in trying to build the aviation security system, there is an issue of breadth as well as depth. Because of the nature of our aviation industry and the geography of the country, the government took a decision to drive aviation security down to all passenger transport. That took us to a number of very small airports. We were very conscious of the capability of those airports and mostly local councils—I think two-thirds or three-quarters are run by local councils—

**Senator MOORE**—Yes, this was one.

**Mr Tongue**—to participate in the security debate, and we got training money. We have rolled out literally hundreds of workshops and seminars and so on. Because of the capability issues around those communities, we have effectively been training council officers in security and

bringing those communities into a national security framework. There are two reactions when you bring those small organisations in. One reaction is to be a bit overwhelmed. They are told: 'Here we are—here is the Federal Police, ASIO and the national counter-terrorism arrangements. Here is your airport and here are your obligations.' It is a bit overwhelming. The second reaction is to be underwhelmed.

We continue to spend a lot of the taxpayers' money on supporting those airports, and I think that airport is going to get \$135,000 for security upgrades. So we are conscious of it and we work on it, but the government has made a decision and they have to comply. But we as a regulator are certainly not being silly. We do not apply the same standard to a little airport like that as we do to, say, Sydney airport.

**Senator MOORE**—There was another issue they raised, and it was not just from them but from across the industry. They understand that the government has made a decision. They understand that funding has been put in now. No-one thinks it is enough, as you well know.

**Mr Tongue**—Sure.

**Senator MOORE**—One of their fears is about the maintenance funding into the future. People are worried that, once you introduce a new system of the scale of the one that has begun to be introduced, they will discover more costs as they keep it going. In the discussions around that, has the fact that this will need an ongoing funding commitment been on the table?

**Mr Tongue**—It has, and our experience in aviation security is that once you have introduced a measure it is very hard to unwind it and get out of it because the public ratchets up its expectations. The issue of ongoing maintenance funding has been raised with us. At this stage we are still in the process of rolling out all the measures. A lot of the capital that we are putting in place is not what I would call high-end capital with very high maintenance costs. Fencing, lighting and those sorts of things, like sporting ovals, are things that councils maintain across the community. From that perspective, whilst there will be maintenance costs, I do not think they are going to be for maintenance of a type that a small local council would not be used to providing.

**Senator MOORE**—It is also personnel costs, as you would know.

**Mr Tongue**—Personnel costs is an interesting one. One of the most important layers in the aviation security system is the people. We do not believe at this stage, at the threat level we currently have and with the sort of training and other support we provide, that we have imposed massive additional long-term costs. If the threat level goes up or if security requirements go up then that would have to be a factor that any government would take into account in making those judgments, because there would be an impact.

**Senator HOGG**—I understand that as a result of the Lockerbie disaster a number of years ago there was a UN convention brought into place to make plastic explosives traceable. I also understand—and I stand to be corrected on this—that we are about to sign on to the treaty that brings that into being in Australia. Is that correct?

**Mr Tongue**—I recall some recent advice to that effect, but I would just like to check.

**Senator HOGG**—Are you the right people to ask the question of? I am wondering, if that is the case, whether the plastic explosives that have been manufactured in Australia to date have not been able to be properly traced. Also, are we now taking steps to make sure that all plastic explosives are traceable? What initiatives are taking place as a result of our signing on to that treaty?

**Mr Tongue**—I think I would need to refer that one to the Department of Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, but I am happy to chase that up.

**Senator HOGG**—Would you refer it? I would be interested, because I understand that there is also some major expenditure being made on detection devices. We are not talking about the small wands and so on; we are talking about major explosive detection devices which I think cost in the order of \$1 million. If that is the case, could you find out what detection devices are being put in place and where they will be? If that is sensitive information in terms of security, you could provide that on a confidential basis. I do not want to breach any security, but I am trying, for the committee, to get a feel for the ongoing costs that will need to be borne as a result of going down that path.

The second question is fairly broad. As I read your submission, I got on to the various counter-terrorism committees. I kept reading on and on. Are we running a risk? I do not doubt the worth of each of these committees, but there is the International Counter-Terrorism Coordination Group, the National Counter-Terrorism Committee, the National Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Committee, the Secretaries Committee on National Security, the Australian Government Counter-Terrorism Policy Committee, the Australian Government Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Australian Government Transport Security Policy Committee. I do not know whether I have left any out; that is just reading the titles from your submission. Is it likely that, whilst there are groups that will be on each and every one of those committees, somehow important information will be missed out somewhere along the line? Is there an overarching group that draws all that together? If so, can you give me some idea? Is there something that I have missed?

**Mr Tongue**—Under the National Counter-Terrorism Plan, the group that really draws it all together is the National Counter-Terrorism Committee, which is chaired by Duncan Lewis, who is a deputy secretary in the Prime Minister's department. It has representatives on it from about seven Australian government agencies, including us. It has a deputy secretary from each of the premiers' departments and a deputy police commissioner. It is, if you like, the overarching national body that does the coordination.

On the Australian government side, the pre-eminent group, before we get to the National Security Committee of Cabinet, is the Secretaries Committee on National Security, with which we work through the Australian Government Counter-Terrorism Policy Committee and the Transport Security Policy Committee and so on. That is, if you like, the Australian government coordination mechanism.

The other element is the International Counter-Terrorism Group, which is chaired by the Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism, Les Luck. To ensure coordination across all of that machinery, the government has built a capability in the Prime Minister's department called the National Security Division. The National Security Division's role is to work to coordinate both

the efforts of Australian government agencies and our relationship with the states. The nature of the problem that we face, given the threat that we face, is that we have to pick up everything from preparedness through to consequence, so we have to be trying to stop a bomb going off but the department of health has to deal with the consequences of a bomb going off. We have to look at the various ways we might be attacked. The department of agriculture needs to, say, consider the food supply. By the time you look across government at the possible nature of the threat and all the potentials, you end up with a lot of people in the room.

Under the federated structure, the first responders to any situation will be state police. They are in command of an incident, so we have to have them in the room. Premiers' departments have set up their own coordination mechanisms to take things down through state public administration. In effect, we have built a whole new area of public policy in a very short space of time, and the coordination mechanisms are probably not that different from the things you would see in, say, Indigenous policy, health policy or any area you care to name. Are there a lot of them? Yes. Is it hard work doing the committee thing? Sure is.

**Senator HOGG**—I accept your explanation. I do not know whether I am totally convinced that all the information will be swapped between the various groups, but I think that is human nature to a certain extent. Given that human nature does apply, what sorts of review mechanisms and test structures, which are independent of the system, do you have in place to ensure that the flow of information is occurring? Are you leaving it up to the ANAO, for example, or some other independent audit group to ensure that the flow of information is there?

**Mr Tongue**—I think there are different categories of information. There are two sorts of intelligence information. There are what we call strategic threat assessments, produced by ASIO, and they are large pieces of work that look at an industry or at a sector of the economy. They are rolled out through state police—there is an absolute protocol about how intelligence information is shared down from the Australian government—and they are shared out to relevant Australian government agencies. Then there is what I would call tactical intelligence, and that involves things that might occur on a daily basis. Again, the core rule is that that information is shared down through the system from ASIO to state police and out and then across the system. Because it is national security information, all that information is logged wherever it is passed in the system, and the distribution channels are hard wired in. If it is to do with counter-terrorism, there is a template that goes out across the system. Then there is information that is not national security classified but that may be of interest to industry.

**Senator HOGG**—How, therefore, is that reviewed or audited? That is what I am interested in.

**Mr Tongue**—Recently, the government reviewed ASIO and made a number of decisions to significantly increase its resourcing. That included the question about how information is passed out to industry.

**Senator HOGG**—I am not looking at it so much in general; I am looking at the processes. Is there an independent review of the process? That is what I am interested in. It is very easy if you are part of the process to think the process is going all right; it is a different thing, though, if someone is watching you in a review role.

**Mr Tongue**—There are couple of mechanisms that the government has established to do with the passing of information to industry that have that review role. There is a business government task force chaired by the Attorney that looks at the issue. The ANAO has recently completed an audit of the national counter-terrorism arrangements. That looked at the system, information passing and so on. So there are external review mechanisms. Within the system, is there a quality control failsafe? No, not that I am aware of.

**Senator HOGG**—And that applies to both streams?

**Mr Tongue**—That applies to both streams of that national security information. Then there is other information that comes from web sites or that is generated by industry or the community. Again, we use the same national security template to distribute that information out. For example, if we distribute something out to industry, it goes to the Protective Security Coordination Centre for distribution to government, and we will sometimes pass it, as a bit of a failsafe, directly to our industry partners, our Australian government partners as well as our industry partners, and out to state police. For the moment, the system is probably clogged with a lot of people getting information three or four times, but that is our security blanket.

**CHAIR**—In relation to ICAO, Senator Vanstone was lampooned recently for talking about the plastic knives. However, that being said, the majority of airline and airport operators have raised the question about the differing standards within Australia compared with international standards. What moves are afoot at the moment to address that?

**Mr Tongue**—We keep all aspects of the system under review, including what is known as the list of prohibited items. Australia's standard is higher than the international standard. That was a judgment that the government made immediately after September 11. We keep it under review and provide advice to government. Ultimately, they are policy questions and the government is best placed to make the judgment, given the nature of the environment that we are in, about what it thinks should or should not be on the list.

**CHAIR**—There has been no instruction to you to review or to bring it in line with ICAO?

**Mr Tongue**—We are certainly under instruction to keep it under review, absolutely.

**CHAIR**—One of the most disappointing things I have seen on coming back from overseas was when I was coming out of Sydney airport and watching people in transit go back through a screening check. In some countries, you are allowed to carry things that look like a credit card but they are made by the Swiss army knife makers. They contain a pair of tweezers and a pair of scissors et cetera. How they fit it all in there is beyond me. But people carry those in their carry-on baggage. The amount of those that were ordered to be dropped in the bin, as there is no way of putting them into your checked-in baggage, was a problem. It leaves a bad taste in some people's mouths when they check in on an international flight complying with international standards but when they come to Australia, even though they may be transiting to another country, all of sudden they have to chuck half of what they have out, including things like knitting needles.

**Mr Tongue**—It is a challenge for us. Part of the challenge is that, in writing the regulations, you can end up trying to fit angels on the head of pin in trying to describe what should and

should not be allowed in baggage or on people. There is some discretion allowed to screeners about what is in and what is out, simply because every time we write a rule, somebody will produce a new version of a Swiss army knife or whatever. The US Transport Security Administration has again recently relaxed some aspects of the system but even the US and Canada are a little bit out of kilter, and the US and Canada are a little bit out of kilter with New Zealand. So we are not alone in the problem. Travellers should be aware by now that it is probably better not to have anything that might be construed as a sharp in their luggage. People do get tense; the screeners bear the brunt of that.

**CHAIR**—It is not the screeners' fault, though.

**Mr Tongue**—It is not the screeners' fault.

**CHAIR**—Does Australia contribute to the ICAO panel that looks at international standards?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes, we are a member. We are one of 34 countries on the panel.

**CHAIR**—So we contribute to an international panel that sets an international standard and then Australia goes way above that?

**Mr Tongue**—Way above is probably going a little too far, but we are certainly above it. Ultimately, every country has to make a judgment about its threat environment and where it perceives it needs to be with prohibited items. Sometimes it is good to say to the community, 'Hey, we're watching this,' because it does contribute to a greater sense of awareness about security.

**CHAIR**—I will give you an example. Recently, I was talking to a gentleman who had fairly serious involvement with the SAS in training. We were talking about the plastic knives and he said he could do far more damage with the fork by bending back the tines and having just one or two tines on a fork. You could inflict more punishment than with a knife, to quote Senator Vanstone, that would not have cut butter and that would break in your hand. So when you talk about the word 'knife', that is more of a generic term rather than the capability of the instrument to inflict damage.

**Mr Tongue**—The use of plastic knives was a reaction immediately post September 11 that happened internationally. It was in reaction to the nature of that event. As far as other things in the cabin of an aircraft go, it really comes down to a judgment, as everything you introduce into the cabin of an aircraft, including people, introduces an element of risk. Ultimately, we keep it under review. We provide a stream of advice to the government and they make a judgment.

**CHAIR**—I put it to you that, whilst people are not allowed to consume the alcohol they bring on board as duty-free alcohol—although some people do—it comes in a large glass bottle which, if it was broken, would become a very sharp instrument. Anyone who has the intention will find a way with all of the things that are available on an aircraft today, whether it is the wine glass in which you get your glass of wine that becomes a sharp instrument or a bottle of alcohol that is taken on board. I am sure you could go through many things on an aircraft and find implements to use if you wanted to inflict damage or disruption. What I find strange is that we seem to have

a statement which is different from the ICAO international standard that is based on the generic term, not the actual capability of the instrument.

**Mr Tongue**—There are a couple of things there. Some of the panel discussion has been about the capability instrument. Once you start pulling at that thread it does lead to saying, ‘Don’t take anything on the plane.’ The panel has made a set of judgments about what is allowable. We have, though, significantly changed the dynamic in the cabin of the aircraft. In Australia, we have installed hardened cockpit doors in planes down to 30 seats. We are one of the few countries in the world that have gone as far as that, and the federal government paid to have them in the propeller fleet. The fact of the hardened cockpit doors means that, frankly, it wouldn’t matter what you had on the plane by way of a weapon; unless it was a tank it would not get through that hardened cockpit door.

We also have armed ASOs on flights, so the dynamic in the cabin of the aircraft is significantly different. Yes, there are things that could be used as weapons. However, the bulk of things that people would first think of if they were looking for weapons—things like knives—we have taken out of the system through screening.

Ultimately, though, they are judgment calls. We work with ICAO; we look at our international partners and we keep the whole system under review. Ultimately, it is a policy decision for government as to how far they want to go.

**CHAIR**—So up to this moment you have received no instruction from government to consider complying with the ICAO requirements?

**Mr Tongue**—We have received an instruction to keep the whole issue under review and to continue to review the list.

**CHAIR**—So what is the process in your review at the moment?

**Mr Tongue**—We look at what the New Zealanders are doing, because there is such a large share of international travel in that market. We monitor what the US TSA is doing, because it regulates the world’s largest aviation market. We also look at our partners in Canada and the UK as major markets where there is active consideration and regulation of prohibited items.

**CHAIR**—What standards do those people that you look at comply with? Do they comply purely with the ICAO standards, or do they have higher standards than ICAO?

**Mr Tongue**—They depart from time to time. So, for example, the US introduced a measure that was about matches and cigarette lighters. In the end, it has turned out to be a voluntary measure because—particularly with matches—other than doing a pat-down search of every passenger, you cannot finally rid yourself of matches out of the cabin of an aircraft. That is not in ICAO. So, in different countries things blow up, politically; things come in politically—

**Senator HOGG**—You like that expression ‘blow up’!

**Mr Tongue**—I do; it is the world I live in! Things emerge politically and get up a head of steam, and governments sometimes respond to that—such as the issue of matches on planes.



**CHAIR**—When is your next report to government on this review?

**Mr Tongue**—We are keeping it under review at the moment, and I would imagine that the government will be looking at the issue again some time next year.

**CHAIR**—Do you have a reporting time?

**Mr Tongue**—I have been away and so I am having difficulty thinking of the answer to that. Could I take that question on notice?

**CHAIR**—Yes. Could you also report back to us on the way that the standards of the people you regularly look at and observe—the standards of New Zealand, America and England, to name but three of them—differ from ICAO standards, and on what standards they have that are above the ICAO standards.

**Mr Tongue**—Certainly; I can report to you on departures from the standards.

**CHAIR**—Or you can report on departures from standards. Delays in operators getting ASIC approvals through is another thing that has been raised quite regularly. Whilst I understand that approvals are done through the Attorney-General's various bodies, what are you, as the ultimate regulator of aviation, doing to improve turnaround times?

**Mr Tongue**—We work very closely with the three principal agencies—the department of immigration, the Australian Federal Police and ASIO—to try and ensure that the flow of ASICs to industry happens quickly. We are certainly working at policy level around the possibility of a centralised vetting agency, which we believe would significantly improve responsiveness in the system. There are a couple of challenges in the background-checking environment. Firstly, if you have led an interesting life and ASIO needs to look at you, that can simply take time. It is a question of how much national resource we are prepared to devote to that. If you have led a boring life, it can flow through ASIO very quickly. Australian Federal Police have to work closely with state police. Because we do not have, at a state level, live databases that are constantly updated so that you get a real-time picture of a person's criminal history, that can be a little steam driven. We are certainly advocates for working around the system to say that there have got to be better ways of doing this. So, yes, there is a big background-checking load at the moment associated with ASICs, MSICs—maritime security identity cards—and the Commonwealth Games. All up that is hundreds of thousands of people. We are certainly working with the various agencies to try and find ways to streamline the system.

**CHAIR**—One of the things that was also put to us by the pilots association was the complexity and doubling up when they apply for their pilot's licence, then having to procure through the ASIC system. Why wouldn't that all be streamlined at the one time, so that when they apply for a pilot's licence there is an automatic ASIC check and an issuing of an ASIC as a part of that pilot's licence?

**Mr Tongue**—We are working with CASA to try and achieve that outcome.

**Mr Lalor**—All pilots received a mail-out, including a message from the minister, in October indicating that now pilots can apply for both their flight crew licence and ASIC at the same time—one form, one application fee.

**CHAIR**—When do you expect that to be fully implemented?

**Mr Lalor**—It is being implemented right now. Pilots have all received a copy of the form. Information is also on the CASA web site. All that is required is to fill out the form and send it off.

**CHAIR**—Moving a little bit further in the direction of Wheeler, Wheeler suggested that the government undertake regular reviews of new and emerging technologies. I notice that in your submission you talk about backscatter and passive millimetre wave scanners, RFIDs, explosive detection trace portals, biometrics, machine-readable passports and neutron scanners. Could you perhaps give us an overview of what direction and drive there is to look at these emerging technologies and how you see those fitting in within our airport security structures here in Australia?

**Senator MOORE**—I just want to add one more question which is on the same line. What is your department's role in that?

**Mr Tongue**—The de facto international benchmark setter for aviation security technology is the United States, where the transport security administration has a major laboratory that assesses aviation security technologies. The area has, naturally enough, since September 11 taken off, with a whole range of technologies starting to be exploited. They are mostly things that were in the military realm which are coming across to the civilian realm. There are a lot of claims made by manufacturers—and I think my colleagues in the Department of Defence will struggle with this—about what various technologies will do. There is a big gap, though, between the claim made when something is new and having a robust, deployable piece of technology that can go out into the field. We have found, certainly in the last 12 or so months, that there are a lot of exciting things that people talk about that are a long way from being rolled out.

The other issue for us is that you can either be at the bleeding edge, spending big dollars on new technology that may or may not be proven, or you can be a fast follower. Our position is to try and be a fast follower, to let the bigger aviation markets—typically North America and Europe—wear the up-front cost of deploying some of this technology and then trying to roll it out.

Our industry partners, such as Qantas and SACL, similarly have an extensive dialogue with equipment manufacturers, and are looking for truly deployable new technology. The issues for us there include the capability of the technology. Does it have a capability that we do not currently have? Does it add something to the system? Is it better in terms of facilitation? The key challenge for us in all aspects of aviation security is: how long can we keep somebody in the queue before we have created a security event at the front of the terminal, so keeping people moving. So does it contribute to facilitation? Is it economically sustainable? And what sort of technical requirements are there? That dialogue is happening all of the time.

One of the recent things that people would not have noticed is a new generation of walk-through metal detectors that simply have more sensors in them that divide the body up. So as you walk through, for example, the ministerial entrance of Parliament House, instead of the machine going ping, it gives an indication about where on the body the metal might be, allowing the screener to just scan that part—belt buckle, pass, whatever—rather than having to do a whole body scan. The seconds saved allows airlines and airports to keep people moving. There is a lot of technology and a lot of claims being made, but getting it deployed is a big challenge. Getting it safe both for passengers and for operators, given the nature of some of this technology, is also an issue.

In the Australian government, we work very closely with what is known as SETU—the Science, Engineering and Technology Unit—in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. We also work with organisations, such as CSIRO and the Defence Science and Technology Organisation. Customs, who are a big technology purchaser, are also involved. Our role to date has not been to follow the track of our international counterparts. In not just the transport security administration in the US, but certainly in Canada and the UK, our equivalents have technology assessment units. We have not gone down that track because we believe there is enough infrastructure in government to assist us on the technology side. The reason those administrations have gone down that track in their transport departments is that they have very big, home grown technology industries. In a sense, they are out there batting for their own bits of kit. We do not have so much of that. We have a few small players, but we have not gone down that track. We certainly do monitor what is happening overseas.

One of the things I have been saying to technology companies is it is lovely that they are getting so many great bits of kit that we can deploy at big airports—big, in line, check bag screening systems, new walk-through metal detectors and so on. An important part of our security problem, both domestically and in what is flying towards us, is small communities or developing economies where they cannot afford multi millions of dollars for high-volume machines. In Australia, we certainly have an interest in technology companies that might produce lower cost, more easily deployable technology that might not quite produce the same outcome but would give us a deal more comfort. For example, if we could get the cost of screening equipment down at regional airports, we could move more aggressively in that direction.

**CHAIR**—You talked about having it out there in the marketplace for a period of time being proven, particularly the biometrics. I understand that has been running at Schiphol since 2001. Have you had any reports back on Schiphol's experience of biometrics?

**Mr Tongue**—Schiphol introduced biometrics because of drugs. It was the major import centre into Europe for drugs, and it is a bit of a benchmark. We have observed that we are seeing some impressive new technologies being rolled out at places like Schiphol and Hong Kong, where the airport is built virtually new from the ground up. One of the challenges we face is that most of our major airports are old, they have been added on to. In looking at the success of some of those overseas models, we are conscious of it. The question is how do we do it in Australia? How do we retrofit some of these old airports with some of this new technology? We are not alone in that; the Americans are struggling with a lot of their airport infrastructure as well. But certainly yes, we are aware of the value of biometrics.

**CHAIR**—I noticed that in your report you talk about ICAO preferring face recognition software. When I read that there was, by coincidence, a *Mission Impossible* movie where a guy had a stick-on face and removed it. I understand that there are agencies around the world that actually use that technology for operations that they perform. Given the fact that you can put a prosthesis on your face and change your face shape, which would be done by those that have a specific direction to carry out an action, why would face recognition be preferred over the top of the recognition of fingerprints or an iris, which are a lot harder to copy?

**Mr Tongue**—Iris recognition was used by the Americans in enrolling Iraqis in Iraq. Iris technology has got to the point now where you have a small gun, you take a shot of the eye and the person is enlisted. It is a good technology. It is in use in Singapore with Malaysian guest workers coming down the peninsular—a lot of people on motorbikes. It is certainly becoming a more robust technology but it does have some facilitation problems. One of the things about face recognition is that you cannot change the distance between your eyes even if you puff your face up and so on. Some of the new kit that is coming onto the market that can be added to CCTV systems, which is one of the big things we learnt from the London bombing, means that if you are prepared to spend enough money you do not need to enrol people in the classic sense of ‘we’re going to take your photo, so who are you?’ You can basically do face recognition and build up a library on anybody that moves through an airport. The cost of that at this stage is really high. It is very high.

I would probably describe it this way: you need to choose the technology that best suits the environment that you are working in. For example, in the maritime sector there would be no point in going for fingerprints because manual workers rub their fingerprints off. In a maritime environment and if we were going for a biometric, given the volumes of people and the nature of the environment and so on you would probably find it hard to make iris scanning work simply because the scanners would be exposed so you would probably tend towards more of a facial recognition approach. If you want to look at the problem here at Parliament House—and I will make a big claim here—where maybe there is less time pressure as people move in and out of the building, you might choose iris scanning, because you can enrol the population. I think that where ICAO ended up with facial recognition was that it was a deployable, soundly based technology with a history that could be rolled out in a range of countries and in a range of environments. Certainly we look at all the technologies and work with our partners across government. There is a lot that you can do if you throw enough money at it.

**CHAIR**—I have to go although I shall join you again shortly. I do apologise for having to go. I will hand over to the Deputy Chair, the member for Newcastle.

**ACTING CHAIR (Ms Grierson)**—Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Ticehurst, do you have some questions?

**Mr TICEHURST**—Yes, thank you. I wish to follow on from what the chair was saying about items that can be taken on board an aircraft, and I saw at the weekend a report in the paper about how the Americans have now changed things. To me there is no point in our leading the world if we are going to be causing embarrassment to and harassment of people. Unfortunately, sometimes personal screening does border on harassment particularly with older people. I have had a lot of complaints from people, some of whom have travelled to New Zealand. They said that coming from New Zealand it is far easier and they get much less harassed than they do

going out of Sydney or coming back into Sydney. When elderly people are required to take their shoes off because a metal detector goes off, in many cases there are no seats for them. They have to take their shoes off—this is particularly so for elderly ladies with high heels—and put the things down on the rollers. In some cases I have seen them actually take shoes out of the plastic case and then the shoes are bouncing along the rollers. Some of these shoes can be expensive and they do get damaged. It seems to me that there does not seem to be any responsibility for personal property that goes through the scanner.

Another incident I know of involved a mate of mine the last time he came in from the US. He is coming in again this week, but the last time he came here he had bought a new phone to use in Australia and he put it through the scanner, he was pulled back to be checked when the metal detector went off—it might have been because of his watch or belt—and when he went to get his phone it was gone. He had paid \$US700 or \$US800 for that phone and it was gone. So there is no real security on personal property. There have been a lot of other instances of people losing jewellery in the same sort of way. Why are we having higher standards that are actually causing harassment of passengers?

**Mr Tongue**—On the difference between here and New Zealand, I make a key point that there is a difference in the threat level, between how we perceive the threat facing us and the way the New Zealanders perceive the threat facing them, and that feeds into domestic security requirements. That is part of that problem that we have about what is flying towards us. We certainly perceive, given the threat level that we have, that we have a case as to why we might be a little out of kilter with some of our immediate partners.

The screening process itself, given our facilitation of the need to move people through, is a challenge. We are constantly talking to airlines and airports about improving the process. Screeners are paid between \$15 and \$20 an hour. It is not glamorous work and it is not pleasant work. They run up against many people who are very nice and some who are not. One of the earliest areas where the industry increased CCTV coverage was at screening points. You will hear a lot of claims that ‘the screener stole this’ or ‘the screener stole that’ and invariably when the CCTV is looked at it might be another passenger—

**Mr TICEHURST**—It is more likely, yes.

**Mr Tongue**—Yes—or somebody had simply put it in a pocket and forgotten about it and walked off and thought that. We are certainly talking to the industry about how we might change or enhance the screening process. It does involve significant expenditure in redesigning the nature of the airport and it does have to fit into all of those other facilitation issues. It is easier at some airports than at other airports simply because of the nature of the infrastructure. We are certainly talking to the industry about more of a competency based approach to training screeners. That has some risks, frankly, in the current labour market—getting a screening work force, getting people who are good at those skills. Certainly we have looked at the advances the UK has made to try and improve the screening process. We are looking at the application of better technology, like that new walk-through metal detector I described, to try and improve the nature of the process. Unfortunately, ultimately we are talking about more than a million people a week and we do get issues from time to time. We have a set of industry protocols about what is to occur. We have set up complaint arrangements, private screening arrangements and so on. We just have to do it a million times a week and we have to try and do better at it.

**Mr TICEHURST**—The issues with risk, I guess, are associated with experience too. I would think the screeners would have some modicum of commonsense, particularly in relation to elderly people. Women's shoes often have a metal insert which is part of the shoe design, so in many cases that should not necessitate people taking their shoes off and whacking them through. We are looking now at the changes in the requirements for sharp objects. As Bob pointed out, if you smash a glass you have a much more dangerous object. Even Sir John Wheeler talked about the plastic knife—he said if you busted that you could have a much more lethal device than a metal knife. I think we need to tidy up those sorts of things.

The other thing that causes personal aggravation in some cases is the requirement of pulling PCs out of bags. You do not have to pull out a PDA, but essentially it is the same sort of thing. If we go back to where it all started with PCs, it was because people were concerned about the batteries being a plastic explosive. We have moved on from those, but we have still got this requirement of having to pull out a laptop, although you do not have to pull out a PDA. You can put your phone in your bag and let it go through. Of course, now when there are magnesium cases on some laptops you are not going to see anything anyway. It just seems a bit pointless. To me, it is an unnecessary point of aggravation for passengers.

**Mr Tongue**—I would defend us a little in relation to PCs, given the nature of information available to us in the last few years. Let me put it this way: in a PC you have all the components that you would be looking for for a bomb, and you have them in scale, whereas with a PDA you have the same components but on a much smaller scale. So with a PC, given what we know, I would probably defend us on that one. From time to time you will be asked to take the battery out. We just do that occasionally to jiggle the system.

There is an issue at the core of this about the personal responsibility of the screener and the liability of the screening company. The incentive in the system is to tend to make them more rule driven and less judgment driven, because if something occurs—not something dreadful but just a minor incident—then the companies and the individuals worry about their liability. So we tend to see them applying the rules very rigidly.

One of the issues for us is a barrage of important people who do not believe they should be screened. One of the global things that security regulators in the aviation industry do is band together and say, 'no exemptions'. In this country we have a few exemptions, and clearly we meet our international obligation for the heads of state and other things. Asking the screeners to make the judgment is, I think, asking too much of them. I do not think that is fair.

We have started talking to the industry at a very high level about the Israeli approach. The Israelis describe it this way: at the moment we are fishermen. We go out and try and catch the whole school of fish. They are starting to build their system around what they describe as being hunters. They use university students and train them up as screeners. They train some of the students as, if you like, profilers—active profilers. That is a very different way of working. If we are going to really improve the screening process, we need technology, we need a competency based framework and we probably need some of that. But that would mean some more higher-paid people. We would increase costs for the industry so that there could be somebody there who was capable and responsible enough to make the judgment: 'Yes, that is Mrs McGillicuddy. She is a different kettle of fish.' Given the size of the industry, that means retraining 10,000 people. Certainly it is an issue we are aware of, and we want to improve the experience.

**Mr TICEHURST**—The other issue is in relation to drop-off zones. I saw in the paper on the weekend where some airports were looking at having drop-off zones on the far side of parking areas. So you have people having to walk 50 metres. I was pleased to see that Sydney have decided they are not going to do that. The inconvenience to passengers with that sort of approach seems, to me, to be overkill. What do you do when it is pouring rain, or if it is stinking hot in summer in some of the northern areas, and you have got people lugging baggage through a car park and getting into the airport?

**Senator MOORE**—Is that one of the things that comes under security or is it just a cop-out by the airports to claim it is a security measure?

**Mr Tongue**—No, in their defence, it is not a cop-out. It is certainly something we are discussing with them in the post London environment. The issue here is a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device—in the lingo.

**Senator MOORE**—Is that a car with a bomb in it?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Equally, a person with a backpack walking through on a suicide mission would be just as—

**Senator MOORE**—That would have another name, Sharon.

**Mr Tongue**—It is partly a scale issue. The best advice we have been able to get internationally is that, short of redesigning the front of all airports—and we do not think that, in the current threat environment, that is warranted—one of the measures is that every metre of setback you can get from one of these car-based devices improves the survivability of people significantly. If you were looking at something the scale of a Bali bomb, you would need 300 metres. Clearly, at a lot of airports, that is pushing back a long way. But that is at the core of this.

Our model still is that private industry has to make judgments, as well as our imposing judgments on them. We are all looking at this question about how far is too far. Sydney is on a small, tight site, and it has a limited range of options for how it can handle this problem. Typically, we have tried to manage by policing the drop-off zones more aggressively, keeping people moving through and fining people. We are doing all those sorts of things. It is hard to maintain a rage, frankly, at the front of airports—but that is certainly another tactic. If you were starting from scratch and building a brand new airport, you would have drop-off zones, you would not have glass out the front and you would have a big separation—but we do not live in a perfect world.

**Mr TICEHURST**—To me, it gets down to the risk profile again. As I think one gentleman here pointed out, someone with a backpack can just walk in—from that point of view I can understand the Yanks dropping the kerb-side checking; it certainly was risky—and that is what happened in London with the suicide bombers. From what we have heard, particularly about the Middle East, these kids are being trained from preschool. So you have this culture built up around people rather than vehicles being bomb carriers. In a way, it is another form of harassment of passengers. You cannot do that with trains, and they are probably carrying more passengers

than planes. There has been so much emphasis on trying to make the security of air transport tight, but many other forms of transport do not have the opportunity to be tightened up.

**Mr Tongue**—I would agree absolutely. One view might be that, in Australia, aviation security has become the sort of cipher for everybody's concerns about counter-terrorism. Looking across our responsibilities, I think people, including some of the commentators, might rightly devote a little bit more of their effort to areas other than aviation.

**Mr TICEHURST**—That seems to be the case. The other thing with security around airports that we looked at was fencing. The media gets all hyped up when someone goes through a fence, say, in Sydney. When we went to Sydney airport we saw that very little of it is actually fenced. Nobody said anything about the fact that you can come into the airport by boat. Some parts of the runways are out in the water. I do not see that as a security threat, because people crossing those areas have a fair way to go.

**Mr Tongue**—A long way to go.

**Mr TICEHURST**—They can interfere with the runway or whatever, but surely the cameras are going to screen that. The fences at some other airports are purely to keep cattle out. That is the case at Pearce Air Force base where crown land backs onto the airfield. The fences were built to keep out the cattle agisted there. People from Avalon made a similar claim to us that the fence was going to be about four kilometres from the runway. So there needs to be a judgment as to where you fence, when you fence and how much you spend on it. Who makes that decision for individual airports?

**Mr Tongue**—Under the government's additional announcements, if you have jets there will be significantly tightened requirements at airports, including Avalon. To date, we have tried to do the risk based system you are talking about. There are airports in the Northern Territory and North Queensland where you do not really need a fence because you are more worried about the crocodiles. However, we are now ratcheting up the requirements around fencing where there is high-volume passenger transport.

I would make two points about the fence: it is a legal boundary and it is a layer. The fence keeps honest people out. If you have a dishonest intent, you can cut your way through the fence; but, in cutting your way through the fence, you draw attention to yourself, and we have an armed response to come and get you. It is disappointing to see in the newspapers that, when that system works—somebody gets through the fence and they have gone five metres when the armed response comes—it is presented as a breach. They were got. That is not a breach; that is the system working.

Another thing I would say about fences is that people got through the Berlin Wall. It was 20 feet high, it was four feet thick, it could stop a tank and it had an entire army corps on it—and people got through it. So, for me, there is a bit of frustration about how far people would like us to take the fencing thing. We are upgrading it. The government is putting its hand in its pocket for smaller airports. It is only one layer. Again, we have looked at overseas models and over time we will drive the industry, particularly, at the major sites, to invest more in fencing—but you can easily overdo the fencing thing.



**Mr TICEHURST**—I agree entirely:

**Mr LAMING**—One of the concerns that came out of the discussion on ASIC passes was that visitor passes are quite unpoliced at a lot of airports and in fact one can get an alternate day visitor pass for an extended period of time. Has there been any thought about the idea of having a provisional ASIC that allows a person to be escorted—as they already are on the visitor pass—to reduce that often three- to six-week wait for an ASIC? This causes great pain when we need skills on-site and in the end you can do it with a visitor pass anyway. This is the first of three questions which pertain to what we are doing at the margins. We seem to have extraordinarily tough rules in some areas without any evidence base and we do other things that are quite strange and do not appear to be responsive and able to change. So the first question pertains to ASICs.

**Mr Lalor**—You are discussing the length of time it takes to get an ASIC?

**Mr LAMING**—A visitor's pass is quick. An ASIC is four to six weeks and previously was two to three weeks. My point was: why don't we have a provisional arrangement that allows people to work in a timely fashion, escorted, as they are with a visitor's pass already? Otherwise, you simply have potentially airports giving out large numbers of unchecked visitor's passes.

**Mr Lalor**—We have made some comments already. One of the challenges around this is the length of time it takes to have the background checks associated with an ASIC. There are some peculiarities around where we are at the moment in terms of the volume of checks being done that are pushing that beyond the two- to three-week period you mentioned. As for the rechecking of ASIC holders, there are 130,000-odd MSIC checks and all the checks associated with the Commonwealth Games feed into that process. Once that is gone, we are starting to get to a different place where those checks can be achieved much quicker. As Andrew mentioned before, there is the concept of a centralised vetting agency, such as Wheeler mentioned in his report. Were something like that to come online, there would be much greater efficiencies that would allow perhaps an ASIC to be achieved much quicker than it currently is.

**Mr LAMING**—My second of three questions goes to the amount of evidence we are collecting on how effective the X-ray screening is. I understand we have an arrangement whereby occasionally we superimpose an image of a handgun on some carry-on luggage to see if our people are awake. The question is: what can you pick up on these X-ray machines? What is the sensitivity, specificity or positive predictive rate of doing all of that when smaller and smaller illegitimate elements can be responsible for trouble on a flight?

**Mr Tongue**—We specify equipment that the TSA has assessed. That is the principal assessment point. Both the industry and DOTARS then test the system with test pieces—things called step wedges and other things. That happens on a regular basis. For example, at Sydney airport down in the baggage hall there are test pieces inserted into the system on the basis that technically they push the system. The variety of technology also has to be calibrated. One of the challenges for us in Australia is our climatic conditions between the relatively dry air here in Canberra and relatively moist air up in Broome where the equipment operates slightly differently. So when the equipment is installed a lot of effort goes into getting the calibration right and in staff training around the calibration. We work pretty hard making sure the equipment is operating within its specifications and there are several layers, if you like, of quality assurance

about how that occurs. It is a challenge though given the wide range of operational circumstances.

**Mr LAMING**—The question I am asking is not about whether our inspectors are awake. But if 50 grams of semtex and a small det can blow the wall off an aircraft, do we know whether that can be picked up 99 times out of 100 going through the carry-on luggage checks?

**Mr Tongue**—We know with the technology we have got that we have got comparable technology with every other country in the world and the technology is being constantly improved as the nature of the threat evolves.

**Mr LAMING**—Which is a different answer from the question I am asking. The question goes to the point of whether it is worth doing the checks if, under current technology more than 50 per cent of dangerous explosive devices cannot be picked up.

**Mr Tongue**—I think that is a big claim. Certainly, with the equipment we have at the moment, we could pick up the vast bulk of devices that have ever been used to damage an aircraft. But it is a challenge. The people we are trying to defeat are out there all the time trying to find a better way to blow things up and we are trying to invest in the technology to defeat them.

**Mr LAMING**—Just to get right to the point of the question, that sort of evaluation is being done—

**Mr Tongue**—Yes, absolutely.

**Mr LAMING**—and that evidence, while possibly not available for us, has been collected?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes. That is the significance of the threat assessments that are conducted by the security agencies—what do they have the capability to build? It is in the nature of some of the devices that they are not things that an inexperienced person can knock-up on the kitchen table to blow up an aircraft. That is the public presentation. If you are going to do it, and not get caught, then you really are at the high end of technical capability. The other layer we have in the system is explosives trace detection. At the current threat level we do that randomly.

**ACTING CHAIR**—At what rate?

**Mr Tongue**—It is what we call random continuous.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Yes, I know, but what is the frequency of doing that for passengers? Every time I go through I seem to—

**Mr Tongue**—It depends on volumes for particular airports.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Does it differ at different airports?

**Mr Tongue**—It depends on the number of machines at each of the airports.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Is it on risk assessment?

**Mr Tongue**—It is certainly not profile risk assessed, if that is that is what you asking, no.

**ACTING CHAIR**—So the person who does that has to show at the end of their shift that they have done—

**Mr Tongue**—Yes, they have to keep all the records and all those sorts of things. Explosives trace detection is good technology. Certainly, we have had experience of people who have inadvertently come into contact with explosives months before and the system still gets them. It is a good layer.

**Mr LAMING**—You have assured me that this sort of evidence is being collected all the time, even though we have not seen any of that evidence. At the same time, decisions that are not based on any evidence whatsoever, like some of these annoyances to which you have alluded, persist, with no response on plastic knives and nail clippers. So if you have this role and ongoing reaction to evidence and best practice, why do we see things that we cannot defend being rolled along for another 12 months before another review is done?

**Mr Tongue**—It is a very good question. We have done a lot of thinking about why security is different to safety. There are many more safety events in aviation in Australia every year than there are genuine security events. There is a body of evidence in safety that leads you to a public policy process. In security—touch wood—there are just are not that many serious events—not even globally. We deal with two things. We deal with the threat, intent and capability of terrorists or others who might want to attack aircraft, and then we deal with the public perception of aviation security. I think we have done well. Our international counterparts think we have done well at the former. I do not think the public thinks we have done so well at the latter.

We are trying to get a balance and build an evidence based system in an area of public policy that five years ago was really just a handful of people globally who were members of an elite little club but it is at the point now where we are enlisting tens of thousands of people. Clearly, the evidence based route is the way to go with much more technology or scientifically based assessment of the various ways that you might damage an aircraft.

How much of that we can afford to do in Australia and how much we rely on overseas evidence or scientific work is probably up for question. We have found it very hard to unpick any decision that was made in the heat of the immediate post September 11 reaction. In the defence of everybody involved in the decision-making process around that time, that was a pretty intense time and big calls were being made by hardworking people under pressure. You are dead right: we need to move to a more evidence based policy in this area. We possibly need a bit of a public perceptions base in order to do that.

**ACTING CHAIR**—In your opening statement, you said that some things of importance are: who and what are flying within Australia and who and what are flying in and out of Australia. What has changed in the last two years, when this committee has been interchanging with you on that? Have there been any changes in who and what are flying into and out of Australia?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes, there have. There has been significant investment by the government. I would describe it this way: before people get on the plane to come to Australia, they are being assessed by the immigration department through the visa system. One of our great strengths in

national security, being an island at the bottom of the world, is that we have a 100 per cent visa regime. So they are being assessed before they get on the plane. Immigration has staff at a number of major airports overseas who are at the airport, watching the loading of the plane, making judgments about the likely immigration outcomes. As people are flying towards Australia, the Customs Service is reassessing, given the nature of its responsibilities—and that has been significantly enhanced. The various watch lists globally for the sorts of people that we are looking for are constantly being invested in, and we—Australia—are making a significant contribution to that process. So, as far as people coming towards us go, things have improved enormously.

**ACTING CHAIR**—In terms of screening, vetting and knowing?

**Mr Tongue**—In terms of who it is that we have coming towards us.

**Senator MOORE**—Before they actually come?

**Mr Tongue**—Before they actually come. We are also active in the South-East Asian Pacific region. We have been funded both directly and through AusAID to work with Pacific island nations and South-East Asian nations to improve the basic standards of aviation security, so we can have a little bit more confidence. We actually have a person on the ground at Jackson Field in Port Moresby who is working very closely with the Papua New Guinea government to run security at the airport. We have a deal now of engagement with those countries to help build capability.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Does that extend to the Philippines and Indonesia, the highest risk ones?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes, it does. We have officers based in Indonesia, and we are working very closely with our Indonesian counterparts. We also have officers based in the Philippines, and we are working there in both aviation and maritime security.

**Senator MOORE**—So they are DOTARS people?

**Mr Tongue**—They are DOTARS people, with aid money to do training and so on. So we are working to try and improve standards. The Australian government has a position that it is not really in the business of buying equipment and, frankly, I am not sure that that is the way to go. I think our most important capability contribution is the people thing—improving the way people operate. So a lot has been done across government to address that problem. Certainly within our sphere of responsibility in aviation we still have a fair bit of work to do.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Have threat information and profile information improved in the last couple of years?

**Mr Tongue**—Certainly in the aviation sector—absolutely they have.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You mentioned that you think it is still justified, in screening, to take PCs out.

**Mr Tongue**—Yes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Is that based on real incidents or just possible occurrences?

**Mr Tongue**—That is based on an intelligence assessment of capability.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You talked about the aim of DOTARS in building up a proactive culture, and I think that is something that we are all looking for in all the evidence we are given. I guess some areas stand out where we are not feeling complete confidence. One of them is the background checks and security clearances of people. Although that emerges in criminal activity, many on the committee would agree with the Wheeler assessment that if criminal activity is possible then security breaches are also possible. We were given evidence that you can shop around for ASICs so that, if you get rejected by one provider, you go and get one from another. Have you any evidence or concerns on that or any solutions to that?

**Mr Tongue**—It has been said. I do not know the extent to which it is just an industry myth or whether it is true. Clearly, one of the attractions of a centralised background checking agency is that you end up with a more robust system. We have certainly taken an ASIC regime that was, if you like, a pre-September 11 regime and grown it very rapidly to try and get up the curve. That has highlighted the desirability of a centralised agency. At their core, the checks are the checks. They have a police check, they have an ASIO check and they need to have an immigration check. You cannot shop around for those; they are what they are. Andrew is just saying that a centralised agency would allow us to have one database.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We are probably of the opinion that that recommendation was a very good one. My concern is that when we originally did some audit reports on security checks on people working in Commonwealth agencies we were so many years behind and still trying to catch up. Has the process improved? Have we got more registered information about people where you do not have to start from the beginning all the time when someone is shifting from job to job or airport or airport?

**Mr Tongue**—We have looked at our Canadian counterparts. The Canadian transport department are the background checking agency. Typically, they can issue a background check in around 48 hours.

**ACTING CHAIR**—That is amazing.

**Mr Tongue**—At its core, the reason they can do that is they have the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Even under the Canadian constitution, although they have a constitution with policing that is a bit like ours, most provinces have defaulted to the RCMP being the police force. You are dealing with one police force and a live criminal-checking system that gives you a screen that is updated electronically all the time. We do not have that.

**ACTING CHAIR**—No, we do not. We have several police forces, don't we?

**Mr Tongue**—That is right.

**Mr LAMING**—What about CrimTrac?

**Mr Tongue**—CrimTrac is really good and it is an effort in the Australian system to move to that. Ultimately there would need to be some investment by state governments to move to something a bit more like the Canadian system. As far as ASIO goes, ASIO has had a significant injection of resources and has significantly upgraded the background-checking function against the range of information available to it. Its capability has increased enormously.

**ACTING CHAIR**—So you would hope that, exponentially, it will keep improving because of a lot of these measures?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes, absolutely. It is still essentially a backward-looking process. However you do background checking, unless you are doing a psychological assessment when somebody turns at work, it is still a background process. I think that is the best we can do.

**ACTING CHAIR**—When we did the last inquiry—the last report—we recommended, in terms of ASIC, that there be penalty demerits et cetera. Did that happen? It was about returning—if you did not return your ASIC you would incur demerit points. I do not know if anyone has ever been issued with any demerit points or whatever. Did that happen?

**Mr Lalor**—There are probably two separate issues there. One is whether there is a demerit system at all used throughout the aviation security scheme and the second is about ASIC management. Different issuing bodies have different approaches for dealing with ASICs and their return. There are a handful which use a bond arrangement.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Yes, that is what we are finding. Excuse me for interrupting. Some have bonds and some have other internal schemes. Within DOTARS there were regulations and the provision for demerits. Under the act there was a demerits system. We know from just one provider—I think it was Qantas—that there were 386 ASICs missing. I would like to know if any demerit points have ever been issued.

**Mr Tongue**—There is an easy answer. We are still negotiating with the aviation industry over the question of a demerit point system. The industry's concern is that, because there is such public concern, if I sat at estimates and said that Qantas has 5,000 points, Skywest has 200 points and Virgin Blue has four million points, what does that actually say? So we are still working through that with the industry. I would like to pick up the question of the Qantas ASICs because it did get a bit of press attention. From my perspective that is a pass system issue. For an organisation of that size running some of Australia's biggest industrial infrastructure that is an entirely unexceptionable result. Without wishing to annoy my colleagues here at Parliament House or over at the Department of Defence or in my own department or in any one of 100 large Australian companies, we all face the same problem about passes. What can you do? You can do what Qantas does, which is to immediately notify the police, cancel the access rights, sweep the system regularly, and manage the system actively—

**ACTING CHAIR**—Or introduce bonds or whatever. But I still would like an answer if you could provide it to the committee on any demerit points that have been—

**Mr Tongue**—Sure. Would you like a written one? We can give you an answer around all of the regime.

**Ms GRIERSON**—Thank you. We think it is important that there be recommendations about trying to place a real value on the ASIC and therefore a responsibility. We know from Qantas' evidence that many of those ASICs were lost with property rather than stolen or misplaced personally. But that was from only one presenter to us. We have no idea what the true picture is. That would be a minute percentage, we understand, of the ASIC issue. The other thing is in terms of culture. As an observer inquiring into this area, it would have to be said that Sydney airport figures too much in incidents—in breaches. That does not mean that its security is worse or its threat is higher. It means that there are too many incidents at Sydney airport in terms of criminal activity to give people confidence. Have you increased audits? How have you responded to that? If I were in your position I would be saying, 'Okay, let's have a look at that.' Have you increased audits? Have you done random audits? We had evidence from Sir John Wheeler that the picture he got at Sydney was different when he went unannounced from when he went announced.

**Mr Tongue**—The short answer to all of the above is yes. I would just preface my comment though. Sydney handles 50 per cent of all international traffic into and out of—

**Ms GRIERSON**—In your submission it says it is the size of the city of Albury.

**Mr Tongue**—It is a global airport on a different scale to all of our other airports. Because it handles so much international traffic and it is the border, you would expect to see at Sydney airport issues associated with drugs and organised crime because it is such a big focus of border work. As to the extent to which that is part of aviation security or not, I think it is debatable. Sir John highlights the point that, where crime is active, it may highlight vulnerabilities. We have certainly picked up on that. I am happy to go away and look at our incident rates and just see if we could do some rates per passenger or something like that to see if we can make sense of it. We have certainly always put a huge effort into Sydney airport and we continue to do so. I do think, though, that the activity there is a function of its scale—just the sheer volume of people moving through it and the number of people who work there. It is also home to more than 37 lessees, handling everything from air cargo to meals for international airlines. There is a whole range of things. It is on a very small site and it is in the middle of a city. So it has all of the ingredients to be relatively high profile. It also has a more active media contingent.

**Ms GRIERSON**—Absolutely. If it is not too much effort, could you or someone else have a look at the audits for Sydney airport over the last two years to see what the trend data is and whether you have changed your incidence of doing it or targeted different areas or have just done the same procedure over and again?

**Mr Tongue**—We have certainly changed our tack. In terms of expenditure on security at Sydney airport, there is \$90 million on a new check bag screening system and a massive upgrade of CCTV. To put in the airside inspection regime that we are looking at, which is this movement of people and screening actually out in the centre of the airfield, would be possibly \$100 million with \$30 million ongoing. The scale of anything you do at Sydney is so much greater than the scale of anything you do anywhere else. So we do impose on Sydney a set of requirements all the time that are more significant than for the rest of the industry. If your question is whether they do a comparable job or whether are they behind the eight ball, it is Sydney.

**CHAIR**—You will take that on notice?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes, certainly, we will provide that information.

**Ms GRIERSON**—The other recommendation I think everyone has been particularly interested in from the Wheeler report is CCTV. Does DOTARS have an opinion on centralising those with one agency responsible?

**Mr Tongue**—Customs is going to be the lead agency.

**Ms GRIERSON**—And that is going to happen?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes, that is going to happen. They are going to step up to the plate on that. There are a lot of people that have cameras at airports.

**Ms GRIERSON**—We know.

**Mr Tongue**—The airport has cameras, major airlines like Qantas have cameras, Customs has cameras, AQIS has cameras. We have resisted the temptation to have cameras at the big airports. Part of the challenge is that, if you are in Customs and you are doing covert surveillance, you do not necessarily want anybody else to see it. A lot of the equipment is old. It is analog. If you need to search for something quickly—this is again something we learned from London—you need digital, you need to keep it for a month and you need to be able to recall it and index it very quickly. Some of the cameras are static, some are motion activated and some are infrared. It is trying to get that picture right across the airport and between the various agencies. It is to the point where one agency may install a camera and turn your camera away so it is looking at the ceiling. The management of cameras is a big issue.

**Ms GRIERSON**—Would DOTARS have to do that to get the regulations right or change the regulations?

**Mr Tongue**—We will certainly offer legislative and regulatory support to ensure that evidence that is collected can be used, to ensure that there is a good governance structure working with Customs around the issue and to ensure that there is some sort of industry code around the management of CCTV. The point I would make about CCTV is that I would certainly like to see the push for it move well beyond the aviation industry.

**Ms GRIERSON**—You are thinking of transport generally?

**Mr Tongue**—It is a great measure in public transport systems. Certainly Customs has received money to upgrade its CCTV coverage of ports.

**Ms GRIERSON**—Have DOTARS and the Office of Transport Security achieved that for the Melbourne Commonwealth Games or recommended integrated transport systems?

**Mr Tongue**—We are certainly a member of the security task force for the Commonwealth Games. We have presented our findings of what went on in London to the group. We are working very closely with all the security agencies and the transport department down there around an appropriate response, given the threat level.



**Ms GRIERSON**—Would it be appropriate to have CCTVs in people movers—in all sorts of transport—coming through the port at that time and going to and from games et cetera?

**Mr Tongue**—As long as you have the capability to analyse it. Certainly in the police operations centre down in Victoria, the Victorian government is leading the CCTV working group that has been established. I suppose it is like anything: it is possible to overdo it. You need it in the right spot. The challenge is making sure that you understand where the right spot is.

**Ms GRIERSON**—Have you been given any information that would justify doing that in terms of threat assessment for the Commonwealth Games?

**Mr Tongue**—Certainly there has been a lot of threat material available to the planning committee, yes.

**Ms GRIERSON**—We might ask those questions of ASIO. I think it is in everyone's mind. There are so many examples out there—the London bombings, the Bali bombings. It is a concern.

**Senator MOORE**—Mr Tongue, is there any standard about the monitoring of CCTVs? We had a look at a lot of screens and there were very few people—and people who had 10- and 12-hour shifts. It seemed to me that if you were one person surrounded by a lot of screens that that was a really tough job. Is there any kind of standard as to how many people should be looking at how any screens over a period of time?

**Mr Tongue**—There is an informal standard, which is basically derived from how screening occurs, which is about 20 minutes on a machine. One of Wheeler's recommendations that we vigorously support is the development of an industry code. There is no code about this issue in Australia. It does not matter whether you are near a bank or wherever, there has not been that arrangement. It does turn a bit on the nature of the different cameras. The sorts of wide-pan cameras that are just watching traffic flow have all got a facilitation problem, versus the motion-activated cameras, where all of a sudden a screen will light up because a door has been activated. There are some cues in the system that allow operators to work out what is and what is not important. The other thing about CCTV is that it has deterrent value in that it is saying to people with ill-will, 'We're watching you and we're going to get evidence.' At their core they are about the collection of evidence. So the deterrent value is: 'If you do something bad, we have your photo.' They provide that evidentiary trail.

**Senator MOORE**—It is just that the Customs stuff is very specialised; they are looking at people coming in. You can see them and they are looking at the transactions. The situation that stands out in my mind is what we saw in Sydney. We went into a little room where there were heaps of cameras. There was one guy, who was also doing another task and answering phones at the same time. It just seemed to me that, sure, everyone can say that there are lots of cameras, but you have no idea of how effectively that is done. I thought the back-up was a worry but, in terms of the deterrent factor, yes, it is there because you can see the cameras.

**Mr Tongue**—Certainly one of those factors will be this industry code and the collection of good international practice about it—for instance, if you have 1,800 cameras at Sydney airport, what is a good staffing ratio?

**Ms GRIERSON**—When we were doing our first inquiry the act and regulations were being developed, and part of that was aviation security committees at every airport. Have those committees operated long enough for you to draw conclusions?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes, I think they have, certainly at the major airports. At the smaller airports we are bringing them on stream. It is a much smaller operation at smaller airports. They have worked well, generally speaking. They have had a lot of challenges because the system has been evolving around them. From time to time, and I think Sir John points to this, we have had to stamp our feet about getting the right level of representation to ensure that all the players around the table are represented at a decision-making level. That tends to ebb and flow, depending on whether there have been any security incidents and whether it is back in the news again. That is one of the cultural things for the industry: elevating security to the same status as safety. That is one of our challenges. We have changed our national governance arrangements to ensure that we have appropriate frameworks that drive it down. But I think we are certainly in better shape than we were, say, pre September 11.

**Ms GRIERSON**—Sir John Wheeler has said that it would be good for the airports to have a more strategic focus. They were going to have an aviation security controller in the key airports but that did not happen. It will now be a process of having a police commander in the 11 counter-terrorist first response airports. From evidence it seems to me that there is a bit of an A team/B team culture. They may need an A-team/B team structure for committees. The unions have said: ‘We don’t get asked or represented, yet often a cleaner will come and tell us something that they are too afraid to go and tell to an employer. So we often pick up a lot of information that we have no way of putting forward.’ Therefore, why are people surprised when they take issues to the media? It is because they are not included in those processes. Has that changed? Are airports including all stakeholders?

**Mr Tongue**—You are right to the extent that there are two different sorts of roles. There is a security planning role, which is where all the infrastructure investment will be made: the relative responsibility of Customs, the Federal Police or the infrastructure owner—that sort of policy level.

**Senator MOORE**—And who pays for what.

**Mr Tongue**—And who pays for what, which is, at its core, a big issue. Then there is the more operational, day-to-day discussion about the ebb and flow of security around the airport. We have certainly made an effort to ensure that we are as inclusive as possible in our activities. Certainly we have been encouraging airports to do the same, and many have—many are doing better. How broad you go, though, in having some of these committee structures is a challenge because you can end up with literally 50 people in a room, and needing a referee.

**Ms GRIERSON**—Information collection is really important to shaping operations, but obviously a central group has to respond to that and, as you say, do the planning and policy that will make the changes. I do not think it is right yet. I do not think there is a standardised approach across those 11 airports. I am not sure that anyone knows what is right, but it is not right yet. Some are running their A team which is more strategic, and John Wheeler is saying they should be more strategic in their focus—that is fine. And as you say, it should be inclusive so you have to keep that information flowing.

In one airport, Brisbane, we saw that the person in charge of security was a very active, out-on-the-ground person. We did not see that at a lot of airports—it was very much an office job—so you are getting very different cultures at different airports. Perhaps this is an area that we need to look at and the committee may need to make some more recommendations—unless you can provide us with some detail that says the operation of them is evolving.

**Mr Tongue**—We have built a system that does recognise that each airport is slightly different. Brisbane airport, by its location and size, is a very different airport from Sydney airport; it has different owners and a whole different environment. I put it to you that you are likely to see variations across the system simply because of the nature of the airports, and certainly in some of those governance arrangements, because governing Sydney airport and governing Hobart airport are vastly different things. At Sydney airport you do need a sporting stadium to have a meeting, whereas at Hobart airport you do not.

You do get variations. In security, like in any other walk of life, you do get the imposition of personality on things. At the end of the day, though, the question has to be asked: what is the outcome? Is it a facility where there is security of an appropriate level? Is the outcome okay? What I worry about is that our response as a regulator or a government agency is that we can do three things: we can fund, we can regulate or we can lead. For those big airports funding is out.

**Ms GRIERSON**—Or you can check and monitor.

**Mr Tongue**—In our regulatory role we do a lot of that. I do not know how it would assist to have more regulation governing inputs to the system. I suspect we need to be at the other end.

**Ms GRIERSON**—Is it part of the audit process to look at how the committees are structured?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes—how they meet, minutes and all of those sorts of things.

**Ms GRIERSON**—I would be interested in any observations there because I would like some feedback from you on the way the forums have worked so far. You have had a few now in Canberra.

**Mr Tongue**—Yes.

**Ms GRIERSON**—And we got the same sort of evidence: ‘Yes, but we need our own meetings; yes, we love to go the big forum but we, the airlines, would like this,’ or ‘We, the airport operators, would like ours separate.’ What is the outcome of the forums so far, and how do you think they will evolve?

**Mr Tongue**—We have had a couple of meetings. We are meeting again shortly. It is working very well, I think—and yet you could say I would say that, wouldn’t I?

**Ms GRIERSON**—Yes, but you haven’t even been there. Goodness me!

**Mr Tongue**—All reports say they are working very well. There is still a difference in scale between say, a Qantas sitting around the table and a small regional airline. So we do have a

regional forum. They are both interested in security and they both contribute to the security outcome, but one is 900 pound gorilla and the other one is a small furry animal.

**Ms GRIERSON**—Qantas would have their own regional person who would be interested in coming to a regional forum, wouldn't they?

**Mr Tongue**—And amongst the airports too really, if you were to be totally brutal about the aviation picture in Australia, by the time you have totalled it up, the east coast airports have got 85 or 90 per cent of all the international traffic. Those three airports are almost in a different class to the others. If you toss Perth in, you have got 98 per cent or something of all traffic. How we relate to them as a regulator and how many people you have in a room is a challenge. Getting international airlines around the table is a challenge.

**Ms GRIERSON**—The feedback was that they liked the forums. We got very positive responses from the forums. They seemed to like them very much, and saw the need for them. In previous answers to questions here you talked about the different standards of screeners, and Mr Ticehurst particularly raised that. Because we all travel, we know the different responses we get at different airports. But you also talked about overseas developments using people who are actually looking for profiles. That interests me, because Customs told us at an airport that people's behaviour incriminates them in the most subtle ways, but they get very used to those behavioural traits. We have also, at airports, seen APS people wandering around with nothing to do—I am sorry—they are waiting for something to happen. There are people designated to do certain things, but there were also APS who were there with very little to do. Are they the sorts of people who could be looking at profiles or could be doing random checks at screening points? Or does someone do random checks at screening points?

**Mr Tongue**—Certainly one of the things the AFP is looking at is a different approach to how it does that counter-terrorism first response function to make it more of an intelligence-led process. Certainly we have spoken to Customs and looked at the Customs model. There are things Customs can do simply because it is a uniformed service. Given the calibre of people it is able to recruit and the way it is able to support them, we might aspire to get across the industry, but it would be an aspiration. The use of the term profiling is sensitive; it is a very sensitive issue. It is an area where you would want to proceed slowly, cautiously, to try and move it out. But yes, people do incriminate themselves. Mind you, coming in through the border is a different process and a different milieu for people than just moving around in the system, which is why we are certainly looking at some of the thinking that has been done and where it might go.

**Senator WATSON**—One of the biggest advances has been the electronic reading of passports. What I am interested in is if there is a standard around the world. For example, in terms of the information that is automatically sent to Australian authorities about each passenger, is that recorded or is that kept within a system in Hong Kong, Singapore or Thailand? I am also interested in the profile of the people we are allowing into Australia before they even contemplate the bombing of a plane, the sorts of risks associated with the background of the people.

**Mr Tongue**—The whole machine-readable passport and passport management issue is, in part, governed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. It sets global standards.

**Senator WATSON**—What does that involve? Does it involve automatic transfer, instantaneous transfer?

**Mr Tongue**—If you are coming to Australia, for example, that information is uploaded into the immigration system. The information is collected through the visa system before you actually turn up at the airport with your passport. We are collecting information even as you are booking your ticket through our links to airlines. In terms of machine-readable passports in other countries there is a global push to improve the standard, but you do find with developing economies that they do not have the equipment yet versus the US, where they have got—

**Senator WATSON**—If they have the reader, they are almost there, aren't they?

**Mr Tongue**—They are. It is getting the reader and then getting the governance system in place to ensure that you are managing your stock of passports well. We are certainly a global leader in the management. The role of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Customs in making judgments about people as they arrive in Australia with a particular style of passport from a particular country is one of the risk factors they take into account. If it is an older-style passport from a country with a weak governance system, that is more likely to lead you to a certain set of outcomes for that person than if they are coming out of the UK with a machine readable passport that looks a bit like ours.

**Senator WATSON**—What you really need is an automatic transmission of information from that reader to the Australian authorities.

**Mr Tongue**—We certainly have agreements with New Zealand that govern the transfer of that information. There was a set of requirements that the US put in about the transfer of that information that ran foul of the European Union's privacy requirements. So it has been an area that has been looked that has been a bit fraught.

**Senator MOORE**—It is about diplomacy, too, isn't it.

**Mr Tongue**—Yes, it is.

**Senator MOORE**—You have your security but at the same time you have the different diplomatic relationships that are skewing it.

**Mr Tongue**—Perhaps we could go away and talk to Foreign Affairs and Immigration and maybe come back to you with a statement of how they manage the system. Would that be helpful?

**Senator WATSON**—I think so. To me, that seems to be a little bit of a weakness—allowing certain people to get in through the transportation system because of a delay impact. I was just thinking with automatic readers that if there was an automatic downloading it would make your job so much easier.

**Mr Tongue**—We are the envy of the world because we have a 100 per cent visa requirement. The fact that we are right out there before they even get on the plane does put us in a much

stronger position. We do not have a land border either, which means we are in a much stronger position than a lot of other countries are.

**Senator MOORE**—And then you have civil liberties stuff going in as well.

**Ms GRIERSON**—I assume DOTARS would be very supportive of the Wheeler review recommendation regarding policing?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes, absolutely.

**Ms GRIERSON**—It was a huge step, really. I notice you were given \$200 million to tighten airport security and \$23.4 million was allocated to improve security and crime information exchange arrangements for aviation. Has that been spent, or is there a plan to spend it?

**Mr Tongue**—That was \$200 million across government.

**Ms GRIERSON**—The \$23.4 million was allocated to you just to improve security and crime information exchange arrangements.

**Mr Tongue**—That has a couple of elements in it. It involves recruitment of personnel to our offices, and we are starting that process now. It involves a range of collaborative arrangements with the Australian Crime Commission, state police and the AFP. As I said earlier, we are building those arrangements now, and we are starting our first forays out to industry to start that process. Even though we are talking early November, we have already started and the money is spread across four financial years. So we are off and going.

**Ms GRIERSON**—So you do not quite know what it is going to be spent on?

**Mr Tongue**—We do. Really, the challenge for us now is to take that threat information that we have always passed to industry, those strategic threat assessments, and work with our partners in the police to combine that with an assessment of the vulnerabilities and risks that improved information flows around criminality highlight. So we are in the process of turning that into a policy statement for us to regulate industry. The Crime Commission has a reference on transport security. It is doing a strategic assessment of criminality at airports and at ports, and we are working with them on that. The AFP has various new police structures coming on stream. The theme we are weaving through that already—and it is an issue you have raised previously—is the fact that there is terrorism and there is crime; crime is crime, but there might be aspects of crime that highlight vulnerabilities, and therefore what are we learning from that? We are at the point now of working with the various crime agencies at a strategic level, not at a day-to-day level, to find out what we are learning, what information we have.

**Ms GRIERSON**—Wheeler expressed concerns that I think the committee also held about coordination across agencies. Are you seeing more focus and more willingness to stop the silo approach basically?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes, we are. We are certainly seeing high-level engagement by agencies, which is great. I think that Wheeler has already had an impact. The only thing I would say about the

silo approach in defence of the various agencies is that they can only act within the remit of the law they administer. That is a very hard thing for bureaucratic organisations to get around.

**Ms GRIERSON**—The Wheeler report also recommended that criteria be established to determine under what conditions an airport would become or cease to be a counter-terrorist first response airport. It is suggested that you continuously review that and build up a formal process so that that classification is appropriate. Have you done something to start that process? Are you confident that the process you already have for classifying is appropriate?

**Mr Tongue**—We are working with the Australian Federal Police on the issue. We have always taken an approach that has been around risk assessment, but we are upgrading that, if you like, to a level more of policy. It is a challenging one. You might say that all international airports should have CTFR, but some of our international airports get one flight a week. You could say that it should be by passenger volume, but passenger volume is only part of a guide to risk facing an airport. It could be about proximity to critical infrastructure. It will need to be a range of factors. Certainly we are going to have to work closely with industry to ensure that we have them on board. You go through a gate to CTFR and, all of a sudden, you come up a level in cost, focus—a whole range of things.

**Ms GRIERSON**—In one of your statements you talked about airports as being critical infrastructure, on which I think we agree. One of the other roles of DOTARS is to make sure—not on a security basis—that they deliver their development and capital commitments. There is concern that the financial obligation to meet security measures could be used to delay capital improvements. Do you know whether that is all on target?

**Mr Tongue**—We are going through a phase of significant capital injection at airports.

**Ms GRIERSON**—I mean their ordinary obligations, such as making sure the runways are safe and that they do the expansions that are in their lease contracts, basically.

**Mr Tongue**—Nobody has raised it with me that they have not been investing. If the runways were not safe, CASA and Airservices Australia would defenestrate them. If it is to do with what I would call less important things—one less coat of paint or those sorts of things—nobody has raised it with me.

**Senator MOORE**—They have all raised the cost.

**Mr Tongue**—They have all raised the cost. One of the things the aviation industry says to us is that, firstly, it is a vast amount of money and, secondly, you do not treat other industries the way you treat aviation—or, frankly, other bits of national critical infrastructure—and they would be right.

**Ms GRIERSON**—I am going to be parochial in my last questions. I have a major concern in that at airports like Newcastle—and there are many others; we had evidence from the Avalon and Essendon people too—passengers are well screened going onto the planes, and they were very proactive at Newcastle airport to make sure that that happened. But there are direct jet flights into Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, yet there is no baggage screening at all. That concerns me. Is that appropriate? Are there measures to review that? With regard to flying in to key

airports, into counter-terrorist first response airports, without any baggage checking at all—and I know there is only random domestic checking, anyway—without putting an imposition on a regional airport, when is that going to change? What would be the triggers for that to change?

**Mr Tongue**—It would take a change in the threat environment or a massive injection of capital. Passengers getting off planes at small regional airports are what we call ‘reverse screened’ before they join the passenger stream. At a policy level, we still make a significant distinction between jet and non-jet regular passenger transport. It is an issue that is raised from time to time. To some extent, I would put it in the category of the work we are doing with developing economies. If you cannot afford the big bit of kit, what do you do? You move to hand-searching luggage. So, if the threat environment changed, that is what we would have to do. That would have a huge impact on facilitation, unless there were some significant advances in technology.

**Ms GRIERSON**—That airport and others are co-located with RAAF bases. Has DOTARS put a mechanism in place—or is DOTARS aware of a mechanism—that makes sure that those combined risks are well and truly assessed and responded to?

**Mr Tongue**—For those joint-user airports we work with a range of governance mechanisms. Security programs have to deal with the Department of Defence and so on. You do end up having some interesting conversations. For instance, at Newcastle you might talk about whether, since the running track that the military personnel use comes close to the sterile area, those personnel should therefore have ASIC cards. We do get into some esoteric conversations where the aviation system butts up against other security requirements. You might hear people ask, ‘How do I know they are military personnel?’ We do try and work through all of those issues. You have to make sensible judgments. For instance, if you really wanted to attack aviation, would you do it at a place where there are 4,000 trained military personnel and major weapons, or would you go somewhere else? There are some judgment calls. But it is another governance issue that we have to work through to try and get the right outcome.

**CHAIR**—I turn now to the question of baggage handling and weighing baggage. Recently there were discussions with Sydney airport, Qantas and a range of other operators. Whilst they may weigh your baggage, nothing is recorded, other than the loading manifest for the aeroplane for load factors. What, in your opinion, inhibits your being able to identify which check-in counter was used, so you know which scale was used, and what the individual weights were, given that they now print off individual tags for a bag, to record the weight against that bag?

One of the excuses put forward was that the scales are not accurate—that they give an indicative weight. To that, committee member Andrew Laming replied, ‘That’s fine; when the baggage gets to another area, if there is an incident it can be weighed on an accurate set of scales, and then that accurate weight can be taken to the check-in counter, to that scale, and put on there to see if there is a difference between the weights.’ I accept that that would not pick up 100 ecstasy tablets, but if you had one, two, three or four kilos of contraband stuff it would have quite an impact. Secondly, if there were a major theft from a piece of baggage then it could be identified in that way.

At airports now they tend to record the image of the person plus the bag when a person walks through with screened baggage. When a bag is tagged, it then goes through the conveyor system



and is screened against that tag number. Given that, why can't that image be kept for a period of 30 days—or whatever deemed period—so that, if there are any questions raised overseas of baggage tampering, that image can be immediately inspected? Take the example of Schapelle Corby and whether or not somebody did plant the drugs in her luggage. Firstly, under this proposed system, there would be a weight that could be used as a check measure. Secondly, there would be a recorded, screened image that could be analysed to see whether those drugs had been put in at any time. Sorry; we will go back one stage. From the time you check in until the time the baggage goes through the screening, it is very difficult—as we have seen—to have access to that bag to tamper with it while it is on a carousel. So you would be able to determine, at that point, whether a person checked in a bag with that substance in there.

**Mr Tongue**—There is a short answer to your question, which is that, if you throw enough money at it, it is possible to do anything around baggage. There is a more complicated answer, from an aviation security point of view—our area of responsibility—which is to ask what the bag weight tells us. We are not responsible for border control or drugs in bags, however they got there; we are responsible for the bit of the process about—say, with checked bag screening—whether there is a bomb in the bag. That is our interest, so bag weight is a pretty problematic issue. If there is going to be a bomb, there will not be an aeroplane to get the bag from in order to weigh it.

If it is something else to do with security, policing or crime, then I would probably do the same process as I do with aviation—that is, ask, 'What does the evidence suggest?' My limited understanding of that evidence, and we are still working with the AFP, is that, if you are going to use the aviation system to smuggle drugs around Australia, it will probably be a pink bag with a big red bow on it moving through the system so that you do not lose it.

If it were an issue of concern to the travelling public, then I think bag seals are a way to give people a degree of confidence. But, if a judgment were made that it is a crime problem that we need to get bag weights around, then my analogy would be speed cameras. Yes, you could rebuild the airline computer systems so that they kept a record of the weight and printed it out on the ticket. You would need to retool all the scales, because the scales would not—I do not think, without having gone into all the technicalities of this—give you a bag weight that was sufficiently sensitive—

**CHAIR**—You do not need that. As I said to you, if there is a conflict between the weight on the counter and when it gets to wherever the destination is, you could take the bag and get it weighed at a registered set of scales, assemble that weight and weigh it back at the original destination. It does not matter whether the true weight is 20 kilos and the counter says 15. As long as you take the exact same weight as that bag and put it onto that scale, it will tell you whether it is still 15, even though it may weigh 20.

**Mr Tongue**—As long as you could get around the facilitation problem of weighing probably 100 million bags across—

**CHAIR**—You weigh them now.

**Mr Tongue**—We would need to go to a finer scale of weighing in the system we are building if it is going to start getting into a question of the law and criminal penalties or anything like that. The airlines would want it for their own purposes of keeping the information.

**Ms GRIERSON**—You would suggest the evidence could be challenged pretty readily, unless you had a system that was absolutely failsafe?

**Mr Tongue**—At the moment it could. Those scales are really just there to get a gross weight to manage aircraft. The other issue, particularly with international check-in, is that you get four bags all plonked down together. Again, they are looking at the gross weight to keep the aircraft balanced. You would have to weigh each bag separately. At somewhere like Sydney airport, 10 seconds per person is a big imposition, so there are some practical facilitation and economic issues in this. At the end, from an aviation security perspective, I am not sure what the problem is. I know what the problem is in the public's mind—

**CHAIR**—You are focusing in one direction—aviation security—and our terms of reference also look at specifically baggage handling and tampering, so that is the way that we look at it as well.

**Mr Tongue**—I wonder if seals might be—

**CHAIR**—Excuse me. Whilst your view is a single dimension, we are looking at a broader perspective and what the travelling public want to see. Given the perception around the Corby case, without saying whether or not her bag was tampered with, people are looking for more answers than just whether there are bombs on planes.

**Mr Tongue**—Certainly. There are a range of technologies that have emerged, from baggage wrapping to seals, that I think give people a degree of comfort.

**Ms GRIERSON**—They are using them, that is for sure.

**CHAIR**—That takes more than 10 seconds—

**Mr Tongue**—Although a lot of it is left with the passenger rather than the aviation system.

**CHAIR**—What is the problem then, when it goes through screening, with recording that image and keeping it with the tag number of that bag?

**Mr Tongue**—If you are talking about a checked bag screening system, it would only be the cost of the data of the 100 million bags or however many bags across the system.

**CHAIR**—You already store more data than that because you are storing the screened bag plus the image of the person going through the gate.

**Mr Tongue**—We are storing for a period of time the image of the person through the CCTV system and we are storing images through the baggage system of bags that might be of interest or ones that filter down through the layers of the five-layered system.

**Senator MOORE**—You don't keep every bag image?

**Mr Tongue**—We do not keep every bag image forever simply because of the cost of storing that information. So the bag image issue is a straight-up cost of the system, a data storage device. We are talking big volumes of data. Is it possible to do it? Absolutely.

**Senator WATSON**—Wouldn't there be the problem of time in terms of transit if you had to weigh it again and it got onto another aircraft and you transited between—

**Mr Tongue**—There is a range of practical facilitation issues about weighing. From the perspective of my colleagues at Customs and the AFP, I go back to what is coming towards us. We could do a great job protecting people, say, flying out of Australia but when they get to South America or places in South-East Asia what is getting put back on the plane and what may or may not be in the bag when they get to the other end is—

**CHAIR**—If there were a recorded X-ray of the bag that would afford a level of protection for the individual. Let me put this way. Somebody decides that in some country where you are in transit the bag gets shifted from an Australian flight to another flight somewhere in Asia. Someone decides to slip in there a thousand ecstasy tablets or a kilo of heroin. Presumably, if they were picked up in Australia the person would be detained and charged with drug offences here. Surely then there is a record to enable them to come back and say, 'My bag did not show those tablets or that heroin in there, when it was checked in; the last time I physically touched my bag those things were not in there.'

**Mr Tongue**—Certainly it gives you a degree of comfort coming out of Australia. If you are a passenger leaving Australia that sort of thing gives you a degree of comfort.

**CHAIR**—We do not control all the other airports all over the world but protection has start somewhere. We can always find people who will use a thousand excuses why things cannot happen. What we need to do is look at what we can do within affordable means to provide a level of mental comfort for people as well as the explosives protection that we currently recognise.

**Mr Tongue**—I think that that is a fair point. From our perspective we could write a regulation and drive the industry to do it. Or the market could do it. It is a very competitive aviation market and if the travelling public are concerned about—

**CHAIR**—It is not competitive given that the baggage handling facilities and X-ray facilities are by the airport owner. In Sydney, where do you fly from if you are not flying from Sydney? In Melbourne you might have the option of going out to Avalon but in Brisbane you do not have an option.

**Mr Tongue**—If I were Qantas and there were a huge groundswell of people saying that they wanted images of the bags, that would be something I could offer commercially for an extra whatever it is. I could give you the image of the bag or you could put a bag seal on or you could take a risk as you were departing Australia. I suppose that is what I am challenging the committee about: is it something that DOTARS as an aviation security regulator should write regulations about; is it something that we should work with the AFP to drive a policy on, given

their concern for the border and criminality at airports; or is it something that we could, if there is a public perception that we had to deal with it, let the market make its way through?

**CHAIR**—Schapelle Corby was one of the first cases of a person travelling from Australia into an Asian country that has actually been caught with drugs. Normally it is Australians transiting through overseas countries, not originating in Australia with the drugs. The drug export industry from Australia is fairly small by comparison. Would our argument be positioned any differently if, indeed, it had been Schapelle Corby executed last Friday?

**Mr Tongue**—That is a difficult question to ask of a public servant

**Senator MOORE**—From the transport portfolio.

**CHAIR**—A senior public servant who helps to set policy.

**Mr Tongue**—I know, a senior public servant who is a smart Alec!

**CHAIR**—Not a smart Alec but one who helps set policy and develop policy for government—

**Mr Tongue**—I would be guided by the agencies that are in the criminality business at the border, and the two key ones are the Federal Police and the Customs Service. The Customs Service posture, given its resourcing, is massively weighted in favour of what is coming into Australia rather than what is going out. AQIS is slightly different because its quarantine responsibility is for things going out. But, if you look at the way the resources are allocated, you will see that they are massively allocated towards what is coming in.

For me, thinking about policy is about what problem we are trying to fix. Are we trying to address a public perception concern? If that is the case, my immediate response, having driven hundreds of millions in costs on the aviation industry, would be to ask: 'Is this something we can let the market solve? If the travelling public are genuinely concerned, can a market for various solutions be made?' Or is there some other problem where the agencies with the responsibility around crime at airports are saying, 'No, we really think we need a regulatory response and we will just impose that cost.' For a big airport like Sydney, with high-passenger volumes, you just add another few cents on them. I am sure that Max Moore-Wilton would not see it that way. But you just add on a dollar and generate \$30 million a year like that. For some of the other airports that are aspiring to be international airports or that are small international airports—

**Senator MOORE**—Darwin raised this point a lot.

**Mr Tongue**—it really starts to drive cost. The minute you get a regulatory response, you get the full weight on all the airports and you change the cost structure of the industry. That would be a factor in any policy advice that I gave on the issue.

**CHAIR**—Perhaps you could take on notice to provide back to the committee what the anticipated costs would be for putting a mass storage device on the back of these images. Images are downloaded off those as needed, but they are not retained. Everything is there except the additional storage device. The recording of the image against the baggage tag number is there when the person's name comes up on the screen and when the baggage goes to an area for

inspection and they call the passenger down before the plane takes off is all there. The only thing that is required is a mass storage device. I do not know how big those images are, whether they are one megabyte, 50 megabytes or 100 megabyte, but I cannot envisage storage on tape or otherwise for a period of 30 days or whatever being prohibitively expensive.

**Mr Tongue**—Certainly we will go away and talk to the industry and do the numbers. I suspect that, of all the possible options, it is probably the least expensive, as opposed to retooling bag weights and those sorts of things.

**CHAIR**—I have to say that it would probably be a better option than bag weighing because you could see what is in there. As I said, 10, 100 or even 1,000 ecstasy tablets may not change the weight of a bag that much. Damp weather or the bag getting wet may affect it—

**Mr Tongue**—Exactly.

**CHAIR**—but a visual image of tablets will stand out. Other drugs will stand out. Indeed, that is how they are getting a lot of people now.

**Mr Tongue**—Depending on how we capture the image—remembering that we are looking for a different set—

**CHAIR**—I accept that, but when we looked at the images from Customs and AQIS, which were all compiled into the one, with some images going off here, there and everywhere, they were fairly readable. You could see people's pill bottles and what was in them. You could see all manner of things contained in a bag.

**Mr Tongue**—Certainly we will come back to you on that.

**Ms GRIERSON**—In terms of the explosives used in the Bali bombings and the London bombings, is much new knowledge needed to be gained or further response required by our airports and their screening methods?

**Mr Tongue**—The assessed information that comes out of those bombings is fed into the intelligence assessment that we get from the security agencies, and that involves assessments by the Bomb Data Centre and so on. So we are always looking. One of the factors in the whole business of intelligence collection is trying to assess what is coming next, and that is what the agencies are spending all that money on.

**Ms GRIERSON**—In annex C, the last example is of a politically motivated attack on an aviation target—two Russian domestic commercial aircraft—in August 2004. I do not know what Russian screening methods are like, what RDX is or whether it is commonly used. You said that it was a high-explosive hexogen. Has that incident affected people's knowledge or impacted at all on practice?

**Mr Tongue**—It has certainly raised some challenges for us. It goes back to that question of capability and where you might get an explosive of that sort. It has certainly raised some issues for us.

**Ms GRIERSON**—So any response in Australia would have to be about the handling of explosives and that sort of stuff?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes.

**Ms GRIERSON**—Can you comment on why the US has decreased its standards on what can be taken on board? Is that in response to pressure from airlines or is it in response to changes in threat assessment? Did they go over the top?

**Mr Tongue**—Our impression of our colleagues in the US is that they are driven very significantly by the mood of Congress. Indeed, Congress has got down to the level of specifying in law how various screening activities will actually be conducted.

**Ms GRIERSON**—They are now experts! Isn't that good!

**Mr Tongue**—So I suspect the wind-back is the TSA working with the airlines in trying to balance the facilitation problem. The other problem the TSA has is that it is the employer of the screeners. They did the largest peacetime mobilisation of people in history, but then Congress wound back the amount of money they had to pay the screeners. Now they have too much work and not enough screeners. One of the ways of managing that problem is to speed up facilitation and manage what screeners are looking for. I suspect they are being assaulted from all sides.

**CHAIR**—There are differences in airports, too. If you just look at the difference between Baltimore and Ronald Reagan airport: at Ronald Reagan you are queued up and almost strip-searched as you go in because it happens to fly over the Pentagon and the White House whereas at Baltimore you are far enough away from all that.

**Mr Tongue**—When the microphones are off I will tell you about Ronald Reagan. It is a very special airport.

**Senator MOORE**—Mr Tongue, I am interested in the community awareness campaigns. We have not had many members of the public coming before this committee on this issue, but we consistently talk about our own experiences. It seems to me that we need to look at the involvement of the public and their potential travelling. I would like on record some information about the public awareness campaigns and how they can happen. There would be various forums arranged with discussions involving industry, but has the department had any kind of public information sessions on people's interest in that? There is a level of fear which has made people more aware, but there is overwhelming frustration in the extra time it takes when you are caught up in one of the larger airports. Mr Ticehurst mentioned a couple of cases and they have been replicated in our discussions all the time. Just for the record—we are getting close to the end of this inquiry and we have not had much public stuff—can we get something on that?

**Mr Tongue**—It is an issue that we have been trying to explore while we pedal really fast to build this massively increased system. We have done a couple of things. For example, we worked with industry to develop a screening video that could be played—

**Senator MOORE**—As you are queuing up?

**Mr Tongue**—As you are queuing up you can watch it. What we found there was that it became part of the wallpaper fairly quickly, so it was taken off, but we will put it back on. We have worked with airlines about point-of-sale material—what you might see as you approach a check-in counter or whatever. We have also worked through the AFP to generate stories in the mainstream media that highlight the downside of doing the wrong thing. We have tried to get information out that way. We have not gone much beyond that. We have certainly done a lot with regional communities. As we have rolled out new security requirements, there has been a significant effort out in regional communities. We have also placed articles in airline magazines and things like that. So we have done a moderate amount to engage with the public about their responsibilities.

What we have found from talking to airlines and the airports and looking at the issue ourselves is that there are two very distinct groups of travellers. One is the frequent traveller, who gets very frustrated because they are a frequent traveller; that is just how they get around—they are people like you. They get frustrated but, because they fly so frequently, they will basically tolerate intrusive security measures as long as they do not hold them up. Then there is the rest of the market. Let us say they are people who travel less than a couple of times a year. They have a very different experience of security at airports, particularly with the low-cost airlines. People who fly infrequently do not think about what they put in their bag and they do get held up as the bag goes through several times. They have a very different experience. That group of people are more likely to be compliant with the requirements than the other group of people. So in pitching messages we need to be conscious of who it is that flies. The two groups are very different in their reaction to security measures.

We get a lot of free publicity, on the basis that any publicity is good publicity. But we certainly get a lot of free publicity—

**Senator MOORE**—I am not sure about some of the stuff that has come out about airports. In every state we have visited the airport owners have been less than charitable about media coverage.

**Mr Tongue**—It is the role of the media in a democracy. We have ridden on the back of that. Is there a need to do more? I certainly think if we want to start to change the system—

**Ms GRIERSON**—Would DOTARS get complaints from passengers who find it intrusive or invasive?

**Mr Tongue**—Very infrequently. It is the role of the airlines and the airports who manage the system to handle the complaints.

**Senator MOORE**—One of the big things we found, apart from the specific incidents that everyone has mentioned, is that people are frustrated with doing multiple-stop travel in one day and having different security at each airport. I think if you were going to highlight one issue it would be that you can catch three planes in a day and at one airport you are fine and, with nothing changed, at the next airport you have to start disrobing. I know that is not within your control but, in terms of people's frustration levels and their faith in the system, that is what makes them sceptical. They think: 'This system is protecting me. Why is it safe for me to wear these shoes and have my computer in Darwin'—these are not real examples, although I will now

get parochial—‘and I have to be almost strip-searched at Townsville but when I get to Brisbane and Sydney on the same day I go straight through, with nothing sounding?’ That is a real fault in building people’s faith that this system is there to look after them.

**Mr Tongue**—We certainly work really hard to try and get a consistent outcome. Every country struggles, even where the government employs the screeners, with consistency. One thing I would say about that, in terms of a layered security system, is that the more predictable you make the system the easier it is to attack it. So perhaps perversely, and I understand your comment about public confidence, a bit of variability—‘What am I going to face today?’—is not such a bad thing.

**Senator MOORE**—Sure.

**Mr Tongue**—As long as minimum standards are met, it is not such a bad thing.

**CHAIR**—As there are no further questions, thank you very much for coming today and providing evidence before the committee. You have taken note of the questions on notice?

**Mr Tongue**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—The secretariat will follow them up and issue them to you in writing.

Resolved (on motion by **Ms Grierson**):

That this committee authorises publication, including publication on the parliamentary database, of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**Committee adjourned at 12.08 pm**