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Official Committee Hansard

JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT

Reference: Further inquiry into aviation security in Australia

THURSDAY, 9 MARCH 2006

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JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT

Thursday, 9 March 2006

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

Senators and members in attendance: Senator Murray and Ms Grierson, Mr Tony Smith and Mr Ticehurst

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

- (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

EVANS, Mr Rodney Keith, Airport Manager, Town of Port Hedland 1

MacLEOD, Mr Reith Graeme, Airport Manager, Broome International Airport..... 1

**THOMPSON, Mr Guy Stephen, Director, Technical and Development Services, Shire of
Roebourne..... 1**

WATERS, Mr Craig Bevan, Security Manager, Broome International Airport..... 1

Committee met at 8.05 am**EVANS, Mr Rodney Keith, Airport Manager, Town of Port Hedland****MacLEOD, Mr Reith Graeme, Airport Manager, Broome International Airport****THOMPSON, Mr Guy Stephen, Director, Technical and Development Services, Shire of Roebourne****WATERS, Mr Craig Bevan, Security Manager, Broome International Airport**

CHAIR—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 ongoing inquiry into aviation security in Australia. I welcome everyone here to today's 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*.

I advise witnesses that the hearings today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House or the Senate. 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 and be published as part of the parliamentary record.

Thank you very much for making us welcome here and I thank those of you who have travelled some distance. The committee appreciates that you had a five- or six-hour drive yesterday and will be returning home later today. This is the only way we will get first-hand knowledge about how some of the programs are working on the ground. We generally ask witnesses to make a brief opening statement and then have discussions around the central topics that are raised. Reith, would you like to start?

Mr MacLeod—Yes. I have a letter here, which I suppose you would call a statement, from the CEO, who is unable to be present. Will I read it now?

CHAIR—Please read it and we will take it as a submission so that it forms part of the committee's documents.

Mr MacLeod—This is addressed to the committee, and it reads:

Re: Inquiry into Developments in Aviation Security—Broome Visit

Please accept my apologies for not being able to appear here today in person to express my concerns regarding aviation security at the larger regional airports in Western Australia. I am sure that our airport manager, Mr Reith MacLeod and our security manager, Mr Craig Waters will be able to provide this committee with details of some of the issues that Broome International Airport has with the Office of Transport Security.

I would however like to take this opportunity to register our concerns over the lack of funding that has been made available to Australia's larger regional airports such as Broome International Airport by the Federal Government. Under the Australian Government \$48m "Securing our Regional Skies" programme, only the 146 smaller regional airports that

were not previously categorized were provided with funding support. This funding was in addition to the \$35m grant programme announced by the Australian Government to assist the same new entrant airports for security infrastructure upgrades such as fencing, CCTV and access controls.

None of this funding has provided for the real needs of the 27 larger categorized regional airports which already had a Transport Security Programme in place. These airports handled 5.9m passenger movements in 2003/04 representing 8.4% of Australia's domestic total. During the same period the new entrants catered for only 2.7% of the total movements with the bulk of the movements through the CTFR airports.

I first raised these concerns directly with the Prime Minister in a letter dated 30 September, 2005 and then again on 22 December, 2005. The latter concern was raised following my attendance at a Terrorism Risk Assessment Workshop held in Perth. The Government's response has been to largely ignore our calls and suggest that our needs have been addressed through the provision of funded education and awareness programmes, the Rapid Response Deployment Team (RRDT) exercise and some basic training programmes. It is our opinion that spending in these areas has little benefit for aviation security at the larger regional airports.

The inequity in funding has now resulted in an inequity in security levels between the regional airports. The Government justifies its position in that the larger regional airports can afford to pay for enhancements and that these costs will be passed on to its passengers. However, the current levels of passenger numbers cannot support the relatively high level of fixed cost associated with security infrastructure.

We have repeatedly suggested that unspent funds allocated under the \$35m RAFFP programme should be allocated to these forgotten airports however, no announcement has yet been made despite the importance of these funds to help secure our larger regional airports.

In conclusion, we ask that the committee urgently request that the Federal Government allocate adequate funding to these 27 regional airports and redress the inequity of the funding programmes to date.

Yourself faithfully

KIM MAISEY

CEO—BIA GROUP.

CHAIR—We will take that as a submission. Is it the wish of the committee that the submission from Broome International Airport dated 8 March 2006 be accepted as evidence to the committee inquiring into aviation security in Australia and authorised for publication? There being no objection, it is so resolved.

Mr Thompson—Following on from the previous submission that I sent through with the original letter from our organisation—some of this will parallel issues that Broome have raised—our first concern relates to the funding of aviation security. We also have concerns related to the method in which the new regulations are being applied. We then have some further concerns about ASICs.

I will focus first on the funding. In the case of Karratha Airport, as part of our previous security regime we spent significant amounts of money—in the region of \$5 million—upgrading our terminal when the screening of jets first came in and we just made it in time for the larger

aircraft that started to operate to Karratha. As Broome have identified, funding has been made available under RAFP for new entrants. Subsequently, funding was made available after the Wheeler report, which I suppose caters for predominantly the 11 CTFR airports in terms of their policing; a significant gap of 27-odd airports sits in the middle of that. To date, we have not been able to access any funding, which is a fundamental issue when faced with a whole raft of new legislation and the application of regulations.

I will translate that to our concern, which relates to the standard creep in terms of DOTARS and the security standards that have been set. I will use the example of Derby, as the committee will be familiar with it having just been there, where the Fitzroy Crossing Airport has nine-seat RPT aircraft. Their new security regime includes full-height fencing on their boundary road, CCTV cameras on their apron and they have nine-seat aircraft operating into that airport. The largest aircraft into Karratha is the 737-800 series. They fly twice daily from Perth. We have a four-foot high stock fence and no CCTV.

The concern I have with the current regime is that DOTARS staff have grown exponentially since the advent of the new regulations—and that is fine; they need to have more staff to cater for their role in this. The problem is that the vast majority of these staff are not highly experienced in airports or in aviation and they obviously need to learn. The concern I have is that one of their new inspectors will be looking at Fitzroy Crossing on a Tuesday and turn up at Karratha on a Wednesday and say to me, ‘What are you playing at? You have 160-seat aircraft here and you do not have any of the provisions that I have just seen at a relatively quiet, small country airport in Fitzroy Crossing’—and I only identify them because I know that the committee has been there recently.

I do not have any criticism of the fact that Fitzroy Crossing have put that stuff in; it just concerns me that inevitably that will affect the standards set for security at some point. We are seeing evidence of it already in terms of the inspectors coming around to our airport. They are saying, ‘Why haven’t you got these facilities here?’ The answer in the current regime is that our security risk assessment says that we do not need to have them. As a result, we have not done any of that and we do not intend to. For instance, we do not intend to increase the height of our fencing, because we do not think it will have a major impact on the security at our airport. That deals with the first two issues.

The next issue I want to raise relates to ASICs and the need for them to have a central issuing body. The scenario that I have occurring at Karratha Airport is that, while we had a security program, we are just implementing the ASIC system now and we have to have those completed by the end of this month. However, I already have ASIC cards issued at my airport. Another issuing body—in this case, Qantas—has issued cards into Karratha Airport and they are under no obligation to tell me who they have issued a card to. In fact, further than that, their security program would say that they should keep that information confidential. So it makes it extremely difficult to manage an ASIC program at an airport when other agencies can issue an ASIC card into that airport. One of their staff can come and ask me for an ASIC card and, short of them telling me up-front that they have one, they could be issued with two.

I am aware that there is a new group within the Attorney-General’s Department that will be looking at central checking. In our opinion, that would be a halfway step to a central issuing body. We strongly recommend that the government look at transitioning straight to a central

issuing body, as they have done with pilots with CASA issuing all of their ASICs. I am not sure where it fits—whether it is a DOTARS issue or an Attorney-General's issue—but it seems to me that, if ASICs are the standard for security checking and background checking and there is no control on where they are issued and who issues them, a pretty big hole is left in the system.

The last thing I will touch on—and I guess I am happy to deal with this later and let Rod put stuff on the record first—relates to examples of costing and signage, which is another of the issues I want to talk about. But I am happy to do that later.

CHAIR—We might flesh that out in the discussion.

Mr Thompson—Yes, I am happy to do that.

Mr Evans—Once again, thank you very much for the opportunity to attend today's hearing. I will not go over the ground addressed by my colleagues. They have raised most of the pertinent points. It is probably a test, with your travelling around Western Australia, to note that some of us here and at other locations have travelled a long way to have the opportunity to put their submissions forward. So taking two days out of everybody's busy schedules to come to a hearing would indicate that we do take this quite seriously and we appreciate the opportunity.

Obviously funding is one of the key processes that we have and the inequities that are there have been highlighted and can be fleshed out. I concur completely with Guy's assessment of the ASICs with regard to a central situation. We have those problems also. Port Hedland has been an issuing authority for many years, as for a long time it was a previously categorised ASIC card regime. An ongoing problem with those cards is how you issue them, who has them and when they are used.

There are a few others things that I would like to put on the table also. We had a situation in WA that involved Port Hedland and Karratha and, to a lesser extent, Kalgoorlie and Kununurra last year where the actual screening authorities at some of the regional airports are held by third parties, like Qantas et cetera; they are the screening authority at our airports. We actually had situations where, from a commercial perspective, other airlines would be banned from using those screening authorities and would have had to provide those themselves, which then was an impost or a likely impost on existing airport operators. So there are commercial arrangements with the screening authorities. As an aviation transport participant, we are required to ensure that the act is followed. That sometimes can be difficult. In the international environment, when you are not getting notification of aircraft and you do not control the screening authority, it can be very problematic for airport owners in meeting the obligations under the act and thus you get airport operators being exposed.

The arrangements in the transitional airports phase have been problematic for airport operators, considering that a new act and regulations have come out while we are still being audited under the old act and regulations. For example, the old act and regulations were very prescriptive. So an airport operator can be audited on and held liable under those, but under the new act and regulations there will not be those requirements, because they are not prescriptive. Thus there have been situations where some airport operators have been put in the awkward position of not complying. It is only a small thing, but it can blow out if the auditor does not understand what the problems are for the operator.

There are a couple of other things from a local government perspective. We have a local government act in WA and some of the larger regional airports—like Karratha, Port Hedland, Kununurra and Kalgoorlie—operate under it. The influences of local government and the local government act can have a significant bearing on how those airports operate, how information is reported and how security information is handled. There is open and accountable government in local government and sometimes that can work against a security regime. I suppose that is another issue I want to put on the table and I am happy to flesh it out, if you like. It relates to privacy implications. More importantly, it concerns cost imposts which impact upon getting more bang for the buck that we have to spend. They are the main things that I would like to talk about, but I most definitely concur with the comments that my colleagues made to you previously.

CHAIR—I thank the three of you for your opening statements and again I thank you for making the time available to come here—and also, I should have said at the outset, for starting earlier this morning. We had originally scheduled an inspection this morning and then a one-hour hearing, but we have rearranged things so that we could have a hearing of an hour and a half in order to have a little more time to flesh things out. We thought that was necessary, because we have heard from some of the new entrants, but you are in a different category and we are keen to get as much information from you as we can.

I propose now that we have questions and discussion led by each of the members and senators. No doubt we will try to stick to some of the key areas you have raised.

Mr TICEHURST—I would like to talk further about the local government act. What is the real implication of that and what problems does it cause you?

Mr Evans—The issue around it is that, within an airport environment in a local government in Western Australia, there are obviously reporting procedures. At the end of the day, the councillors set policy and officers implement it. However, the reality is that we should be reporting everything to councillors or to council. Sometimes there are problems in ensuring that the security of ASIC programs, transport security programs, committee meetings et cetera are reported back to council. There is a very fine balance in ensuring that we meet our obligations under the local government act as opposed to federal acts, so we have some problems in meeting those.

Mr TICEHURST—The councillors generally are probably inexperienced in the sense of the requirements of airports. Would that be a fair comment?

Mr Evans—Obviously they are not exposed to them as much as those who work in the industry, so they may not understand the implications of them and their obligations under the federal act. Keep in mind that the airport is only one facet of their business, although in regional Western Australia for some councillors it is a significant part. But it is a fact that they are not exposed to those regulations and they may not be aware of where their obligations start and stop.

Mr TICEHURST—Do you have a dispute resolution procedure if there is some conflict between the local government act and the federal requirements?

Mr Evans—Not that I am aware of at this stage, but I am sure that it will present itself in the near future and a situation will arise. I have not come across one yet, but I am most sure it is coming.

Mr TICEHURST—It could happen.

Mr Evans—Most definitely. I think it is inevitable at some stage.

Mr TICEHURST—Yesterday we heard information about DOTARS and I think Guy raised it in his opening statement. There seems to be a disparity in the competence or the experience of some of the DOTARS officers. How has that impacted on you?

Mr Thompson—I am sure that DOTARS would be the first to admit that they have significant resource issues in terms of being able to manage the task they have. As a result, I think in the Perth office they have gone from a staff of four to 40 in about 18 months. It is that sort of exponential growth; it is not just three or four extra faces.

DOTARS are now dealing also with port security. With the last three audits that I have had at Karratha, I have had a different place for each audit. You get differing information—not necessarily conflicting, but differing—because the staff, particularly if they are new, are endeavouring to interpret where they fit into the scheme of things, and this is new legislation that they are not across. So, when you ask a question—‘How does this work?’ or ‘How does this get applied?’ or ‘What will this mean in our airport?’—nine times out of 10, and it is probably 9½ times out of 10, you get told, ‘I will have to check with Canberra and I will get back to you.’ Then you wait and wait and wait. Then the next call you get is from someone in Canberra who is in a different section who says, ‘You are aware that this information you need to provide to us is due in two weeks time.’

CHAIR—I will cut in there. Ken has just raised an important question. Would it assist if there were a central go-to person on these sorts of things?

Mr Thompson—I think so. My opinion is that it would, provided that they have the information at their fingertips. It seems that, even at the Canberra level, at the most recent meeting we had with DOTARS, they have shifted again where our airports now fit. We are shifting across from what was in cargo and the cargo directorate are now moving back to the international airports directorate and yet again a different person now will be, in theory, the ‘contact’.

Often the response you get is, ‘Oh yes, that’s a problem with the regulations. We will be working on that and changing it.’ So you think, ‘Okay, I am going to do all of this work to implement this and the people who are looking after it have already said that it needs to be changed.’ You sit and think, ‘Well, that will cost money and time and then we will have to change it again.’

ASICs are a classic. We waited upwards of three months for responses on ASICs and kept being told, ‘Watch this space; it will change; do not do anything.’ By the way, they are all due by the end of March, and the latest call I had was not threatening but along the lines of, ‘If you do not have it implemented by the end of March, you will be in breach of the regulation.’ I said, ‘I

understand that but, if I cannot get answers to the questions I need to implement it, how am I supposed to implement it?' We are trying to. It is not through lack of effort.

While it is infinitely easy to go on a major DOTARS' bashing campaign, that does not actually solve the problem. We just need answers to our queries and in a timely fashion. Unfortunately, they have gaps in their resources and in their knowledge base. I do not think it is that they do not want to tell us the answers; I think it is that they do not know them. It is like it is being made up on the run. That is okay, if you are not the one on the other end of it expending money while it is being made up on the way. You do a lot of work and then it disappears.

Transport security programs we had were due this week—today, I think—and drafts for transitioning airports needed to be in today. I sent an email to DOTARS last Friday asking where it should be sent. I got an email back saying that they were having a teleconference that day to work out where it should be sent.

Mr TICEHURST—There is not much coordination there, is there?

Mr Thompson—While it is easy to sling mud at them, I just think that says that they are not organised internally and therefore cannot respond to the huge number of questions they are getting on a daily basis.

Mr TICEHURST—I suppose each airport is so different—that is certainly something that we have seen this week—that, unless these people have an idea of what they are dealing with, it will be even more difficult.

Mr Thompson—Yes. Again I guess that was the comment I was trying to make in my opening address. All the focus has been on the new entrant airports. Much of the work of new DOTARS staff is based on new entrant experiences—and new entrants are all putting in new stuff because millions of dollars are floating around. Then they come to somewhere like Karratha where my risk assessment says that we are quite happy with what we have got; it has worked nicely for the last 10 years, therefore we do not intend to do anything major. Somewhere there will be a disparity. Someone will say, 'How does that work? Why did 144 airports need all of this money spent on them and your airport does not?' I think I know the answer. It is because our council has spent millions of dollars on the airport in the past five or six years, keeping pace with the previous security regime. We are now being asked to spend more money potentially yet have no help with getting any additional money.

Mr TICEHURST—Reith, your problem with funding is along the same lines?

Mr MacLeod—Yes.

Mr TICEHURST—Have you had the same issues with DOTARS and their guidance and information?

Mr MacLeod—Very much so. With the feedback we have had—and I think Rod might have had this experience too—they actually had an edict not to give information or opinions on regulations. You can ring CASA and say, 'I have the minimum standards here; this is how I interpret them,' and they will give you an opinion and they will give it in writing. If you ring

DOTARS and say, 'I have a person in custody,' or 'I have an anomaly between my security manual and the regulations; what do I do?' you will be told, 'Sorry, guys, we are not allowed to give opinions.' They will tell you, 'If I tell you something over the phone, I will not give it to you in writing.' This is what we get. They will not give you an opinion. You cannot get back-up. However, they go to all the meetings of AAA and they will say, 'We are working with industry and we are there to help you'—and they will not. They told us, 'These are new regulations and none of this has been tested in court, so we are not saying anything.' It is extremely frustrating.

We are reasonably savvy as far as security goes; how do the new entrants cope, having had no security experience in the past? God only knows how they get on when trying to get guidance about what they can do. The department says, 'You go and do it and then we will see if you have got it right and then we will jump on you if you have got it wrong.' It is just terrible. Obviously the problem may be exacerbated by inexperienced people, but they could get the answers from someone who knows them and give them to you in writing—but they will not do it.

The other problem we find with the department is that, unlike other regulators, DOTARS officers have no discretion; they have no discretion to apply commonsense at your airport. They keep saying at all these meetings, 'Oh, we know that one-size-fits-all is not a good idea and we do not want that,' but that is exactly what they do want and there is no discretion. CASA will come around and say, 'You should have a wind sock there. Oh, it cannot go there. Okay, I see now that that is silly for Broome. I will approve it to go over there.' But these other guys have no discretionary power, which is not their fault, but it locks you in to some things which at some airports do not make any sense and the security outcomes are not there.

Mr Evans—If I may back up my colleagues on both sides, to a great extent I agree with Reith. Airports operate 24 hours a day. In the north we are close to other ports, not only intrastate and interstate but overseas. Broome and we are saying that we have international aircraft lobb. It might be on a Saturday afternoon. Then, if there is a situation with an RPT international and you also have an international charter to cope with, you have to try to understand how you apply the legislation or regulations. However, you will find that nobody is available and, if you do get hold of somebody, they will not tell you. Their answer is, 'You have the act, you have the regulations, you are the aviation transport participant so it is your decision.'

Ms GRIERSON—And, 'If you get it wrong, we will be after you'?

Mr Evans—That is right.

CHAIR—Just to flesh that out a bit, how much of that do you think is a function of the fact that they are in a new environment and were not purpose-built to deal with all of this? How do we try and take that forward? Guy has said that the staffing level has gone up and the regulations have come in, but you cannot buy experience. Certainly, looking forward, you can look at ways of streamlining things so that there are some processes in place.

Mr Thompson—I think the only method to do that is with the ideal scenario—and, once you are past it, you cannot do it. Clearly, the ideal scenario is to have the staff trained before you try to implement a new set of rules. Clearly, we are beyond that. The only feasible solution is to have whole industry education and growth occur at the same pace. Effectively, what that says is that you cannot be heavy-handed with regulations—and, to date, DOTARS have not been. I do

not think they would have a hope anywhere of getting it to stand up if they were to come and jump all over Karratha Airport because we were in breach of something in the new regulations.

But the problem with that is that, at some point in time, that button will be pushed and they will say, 'We are now savvy enough, educated enough and understand enough; these guys should be up to speed.' The reality of that is that the test case will be an airport somewhere. You just have to hope that it is not Karratha or—

CHAIR—Reith, could you just run through for us the discussions you have had and at what levels on the funding issue from the moment that the money was announced for new entrants?

Mr MacLeod—That would be difficult, because the CEO does all of that.

CHAIR—That question obviously goes to all of you.

Mr Thompson—I can probably comment—certainly not in terms of what Kim and BIA have done—from an Australian Airports Association perspective, because I chair the WA division of the association.

CHAIR—That is good.

Mr Thompson—At every opportunity we have had regional consultative meetings that DOTARS have organised. We now have a representative in Mike Kindel from Gove on the ASAF group—and I will have to get back to you on what that stands for because it has gone out of my head. We have continually pushed the point that the transitioning ports have not been catered for anywhere on the basis that we can pay for security because we operate larger ports.

CHAIR—The principle is that you have a security responsibility already?

Mr Thompson—Yes.

CHAIR—But the new entrants did not?

Mr Thompson—Yes. The thinking was that new entrants needed money to get them to a base level, I suppose.

CHAIR—Your point is that that base level is beyond your level?

Mr Thompson—It is above our level.

Mr Evans—Correct.

Mr Thompson—Presumably, in a logical situation, the airports that previously had security programs and were categorised were deemed a higher potential risk from a security perspective and, therefore, had a security program. All of the new entrants were lesser risks. They now have standards and security measures in place at their airports—and the cynic in me says that it is because they had funding available—that exceed what is going on at the major regional ports.

As Kim's letter points out, the difference in numbers of travelling public through the ports is significant. The numbers of passengers going through our ports are in the hundreds of thousands. Whether that makes you a higher risk or not a higher risk, I do not know. Our security risk assessment says that what we have in place is doing the job. Therefore, we are not suggesting that we need to do anything else. As I mentioned earlier, the concern will be that the standard will shift. If all of the smaller supposedly less-risk airports have significantly enhanced measures, at some point someone will say to me at Karratha, 'Why don't you have CCTV on your apron?'

CHAIR—So your point really is that there are not things that you think you desperately need to do now; it is just that you think you will be forced to do them anyway?

Mr Thompson—I think it is inevitable. At some point somebody will say that lesser risk ports have a higher level of security regime than the higher risk ports. I am not sure how they do that under the legislation; I cannot see where they can say that you have to put anything in. But we are audited annually and, in those annual audits, certainly if the DOTARS inspectors do not think we are meeting the bill, it will end up being inevitable that we have to do something about it.

Ms GRIERSON—What happens when you get such a disparity in standards? A standard is set and there should be a standard that everyone is supposed to reach, and eventually there will be. If there are incidents at any of your airports and your measures are found to be insufficient, there is a double responsibility: one to you and one to the government and DOTARS. I would imagine that you are concerned that DOTARS will start expecting those things of you. They will go to Fitzroy Crossing one day and then come here and say, 'Why haven't you done this?' But the travelling public have become very accepting of these things now and they expect those sorts of measures to be in place wherever they go as well. So they will now notice that you do not have this or that and they will start pointing those things out.

I am concerned about the funding because, Reith, I think you made the point that your CEO suggested that funds that have not been allocated at this stage under the Securing our Regional Skies program should be allocated to the transitioning airports and the airports that are not new entrants, like you. There are 27 of them around the country and one of them is in my electorate. Do you know how much funding has not been allocated?

Mr MacLeod—I am not sure.

Ms GRIERSON—We should know and I do not know whether the secretariat knows.

Mr Thompson—Figures are being bandied around in the region of \$8 million; that is the figure I have heard. That is unconfirmable but, given that I sit on the national board of the AAA, who are administering the RAFFP, I am aware that there will be funds left but the amount is not known.

Ms GRIERSON—DOTARS have held at least one forum in Canberra. Were regional airports invited to that?

Mr Evans—I am not sure exactly which one you are talking about.

Ms GRIERSON—It was their first users forum.

Mr Evans—You are talking about the RIC airline information meeting. I did not attend that.

Mr Thompson—To date, there have been three regional industry consultative meetings.

Ms GRIERSON—That is different.

Mr Thompson—Yes, I was aware that there was a different workshop.

Ms GRIERSON—They had a major aviation security advisory forum. I wonder whether you were invited to it. Qantas and airport owners were invited, but I wonder whether they just concentrated on the big ones or whether they had anything for—**Mr Thompson**—We get invited to a lot of things. I would be inclined to say that we probably did but, for that particular event, I cannot say for certain. I have been to two of the three regional industry consultative meetings, one in Adelaide and one in Perth.

Ms GRIERSON—How often are they held?

Mr Thompson—About every three months.

Ms GRIERSON—That is the best way for you to feed in your special needs and information?

Mr Thompson—That has been good in that it is an opportunity.

Ms GRIERSON—Who attends from DOTARS?

Mr Thompson—It has been senior people. At the last one in Perth there were not as many DOTARS people, but Mike Higgins, Julie Fox, Graham Hanna—who looks after the ASICs—were there. It is reasonably high-powered at their end, given that they had been able to turn up. The problem with those forums is that there are dozens of issues raised but no answers forthcoming. Every opportunity to discuss a problem raises another series of questions and you just go away with a longer list of questions. The unfortunate thing about it is that we have become more and more specific as deadlines have drawn closer. The questions we are asking relate to information needed, say, for ASIC programs. The last RIC meeting was about two weeks ago in Perth. At that meeting we were still being told that things could change in the ASIC regime, yet I have a date of 31 March to have the whole system implemented at Karratha. All we can do is implement what we have and then, if it changes, we will pick up the pieces both in time and in cost.

Ms GRIERSON—When you seek information, how should it be? How should you be able to get answers to your interpretation of regulations or your operations?

Mr Evans—The best way I think is through a comparison of how we do it with CASA. CASA have a couple of aerodrome inspectors in the regions who are familiar with the airports that they audit. That means that we have an opportunity to liaise with those particular officers and they apply the standards. There are some problems with that, because there can be different interpretations of the legislation across state boundaries. But at least you have somewhere to go.

At the moment we go to a state office from OTS, but the problem we have—and Reith highlighted it very clearly—is that they will not give you the advice; they will say, ‘We do not provide that advice.’ So we are not able to get that information.

Ms GRIERSON—Has DOTARS done an aviation security audit of each of your airports in the last 12 months?

Mr Evans—Yes, two.

Mr Thompson—Yes.

Mr Evans—But it was under the old legislation because we are transitional airports. We have situations like the one at Port Hedland, where we have been a transitional with a security program and we have been issuing ASICs for many years. So now the new act and regulations are in place. We are audited on the new act and regulations, but our transport security program is a transitional, which now does not reflect the new act. We are audited on our old transitional program and found to be deficient. As soon as our TSP—it is a new one—is adopted over the next 12 months, that will disappear and we will have to comply with the new one. There are situations whereby fencing and/or screening requirements in the old act and regulations and our transport security program are required; in the new one, they are not. So you are going to have to expend those funds. How you get a balance with that is where we are really coming unstuck.

Ms GRIERSON—Under transitioning, when do you anticipate your first audit occurring under the new act?

Mr Evans—We get audited now under the new act but with our old transitional programs.

Ms GRIERSON—So eventually these will have to dovetail, won’t they?

Mr Thompson—Yes. The old ones will disappear.

Mr Evans—Another 12 months I think is the target.

Mr Thompson—In March 2007, I think. You have to have your draft in now, today or tomorrow, and then your final program has to be finalised by March next year. That is when we will be working totally under the new program.

Ms GRIERSON—So by March 2007 you do not have to have done everything; you just must have identified and done your plan or your program?

Mr MacLeod—We are operating under the new regulations now.

Mr Thompson—We have to fulfil the intent of the new regulations. The transitioning provisions state that, if there is a deficiency between your existing program and the new regulations, the regulations will prevail. So the new regulations apply and you have to meet the intent of the act. Even if your current program is silent on a particular topic, you have to meet the intent of the act.

Ms GRIERSON—Can anyone say what efficiencies you were identifying and what you are doing about them? Are you happy to do that?

Mr Thompson—In terms of deficiencies between our existing program and the new transport security program, Karratha did not have ASIC cards in the previous regime. We were security controlled but did not have ASIC cards issued. We now require those because the regulations say that we have an RPT service and therefore we need to have ASIC control. So that is something that is different. Technically my program does not talk about ASICs at all. So, in theory, I cannot issue an ASIC, because my current transport program says we do not have them. That is where the overriding principle of your having to meet the intent of the act comes in and they say, ‘You need ASICs as well as your existing program.’ That is logical.

Ms GRIERSON—So there is no regulation that says you must have a secure perimeter fence of a certain height all around your perimeter?

Mr MacLeod—No.

Mr Evans—There used to be.

Mr MacLeod—DOTARS will not tell you anything. What they will say is, ‘You have to have adequate fencing to control what is going on.’

Ms GRIERSON—So you have to justify the adequacy of all your measures, whether it is fencing or whatever?

Mr MacLeod—Yes.

CHAIR—Is that new or has that always been the case?

Mr Evans—That is new; that is under the new act. The old act was quite prescriptive of an Australian standard—and that is the problem.

CHAIR—Did the old act say that you had to have fencing?

Mr Evans—Yes, to an Australian standard.

CHAIR—What was the Australian standard?

Mr Evans—I think it is 17.25 version 2000. That was what was prescribed in the old regulations.

CHAIR—Do you guys have that?

Mr Evans—My transitional transport security program says that. Under the new act, the Australian standard has been removed, so now it is based on a risk assessment. I am in the situation where I get audited and they will say to me, ‘But you say in your program, your old one, that you will meet this standard,’ and I will say, ‘I am not going to expend those funds, because come March 2007 I do not have to meet that standard; it is risk based.’

Ms GRIERSON—That would be fine if it applied to everybody. But, when these new entrant airports are being taken to a certain standard—a fairly universal one, we have seen so far; there are some variations on types of fencing, but they are all high fences et cetera—a standard is emerging that you are obviously falling short of. That is an unacceptable situation.

Mr Evans—That is right. That is what Guy was talking about earlier: we will be asked to bring that standard up.

Mr Thompson—The issue with that in the current regime is where they are saying that you self-assess and then put in what you deem appropriate at your port. That will work fine until you have an incident at your port. Then it will be, ‘So you thought a stock fence was sufficient. Clearly it wasn’t, because you have had five people get through it. Why don’t you have a 2.4-metre-high fence with barbed wire on the top?’

Senator MURRAY—And have machine gun posts!

Mr Thompson—Yes, we are pissed off.

Mr MacLeod—But there are no grey areas around the standard for your fencing around security restricted areas. We know what that is. That has not changed, and that is fine. We are talking about standards in general aviation areas and your perimeter; that is where we do not really know what it is.

Ms GRIERSON—But a holistic approach has to be taken to all the areas on your airport. Rod, you have made the point that there is a problem when airports are shire-run and you have councillors and open and transparent governance. But Reith would have a board that he would have to report to, and I would assume that you would all have in camera or confidential sessions if you were looking at security; yes or no?

Mr Evans—I cannot answer for Reith in his situation. The reason I oppose it is that it applies to all local government airports. What you have in regional Western Australia are some significant players. You have the Karrathas and the Kalgoorlies, which approach 200,000 pax—in Karratha’s case, it is greater—and significant operations with 737- and 717-jet operations being run by councils, and there are needs for the reporting of those processes, which sometimes could conflict.

For example, following the risk management plan, we are supposed to do a cost-benefit analysis of our new transport security program. As an officer of council, I cannot commit council to remedial actions to identify risk problems, because that is done by council at their budgetary process and it will be done as a result of their needs.

Senator MURRAY—And they have the liability that attaches to that as well.

Mr Evans—That is dead right. Under the act, they are the ones that are liable.

Senator MURRAY—So you have to report to them.

Mr Evans—How do you do that when we are talking about transport security issues and programs?

Senator MURRAY—But you cannot ask someone to accept liability and not inform them.

Mr Evans—That is where I think there is a clash of legislation. I have no problems reporting it, but theoretically every security committee should have an agenda, be minuted and be submitted to council for adoption or for information. How do you do that when you are talking about security matters at your airport that then become public documents?

Senator MURRAY—It would seem to me then that, if that matter were to be addressed and people were to be excluded from council—in other words, for it perhaps to be on a need-to-know-only basis with the mayor—you would then need an indemnity situation for the rest of the council in a legal sense. When you are talking about liability, ultimately it comes back to a legal provision. If somebody in law incurs a liability and you do not want to advise them, you need to provide in law an indemnity process. I just put that on the record in case we will have to deal with that.

Mr Evans—Generally, you would have airports of the size of Karratha and Broome in an east coast environment operating in a corporations type environment—in Broome's case, a board environment—and their reporting procedures would be different; you would have to ask Reith about those. But in WA, you have some of these larger airports with these jets and with these passenger numbers being exposed. How do you manage that? What becomes the overriding factor? Is it federal legislation or is it the local government?

Ms GRIERSON—Reith, do you think you have more control over securing your information?

Mr MacLeod—Yes. We have an airport security committee. We meet every three months. But I cannot act on everything that comes out of that within my capacity only. I take it to the CEO and he can report to the board or, if he has already done it, he does not need to report to the board. He has that discretion.

Mr Thompson—If I could comment, I do not have an issue with security of information with my council. The more significant issue, I think, is a potential conflict with the airport as a service to the community and the demands on it from a security control perspective. For instance—we do not have it at our port—Newman used to have drag racing on their runway strip, or they might have an air show. They are extremely popular events in a community. There are now provisions whereby you can have events for which you can turn your security regime off. But the cure is almost worse than the cause, because a lot of effort is required to put a plan together to have drags on your runway, for argument's sake. We have been approached at Karratha by the local police, because it gets the hoons off the street—and two kilometres of straight pavement with nothing to crash into looks really desirable.

But the issue is that, in a security controlled regime, my council, for argument's sake, might deem that appropriate—'Yes, let's do that'—but the effort required to then put that on from a local authority perspective is significant. The easy answer is that you do not have drags on your

runway. We would be happy about that because it would stop them knocking all the lights down and those sorts of things. But there are other community events that potentially go on at airports.

Another issue—and it probably heads into the ASIC area—relates to ASICs for volunteer ambulance drivers who meet the RFDS aircraft. In theory, they should have an ASIC card to go airside or they need to be under the control of the pilot. That works fine, unless the pilot is still in the air and the ambulance has already driven out on to the apron. What is the reality of a security threat of a patient in an ambulance with two volunteer ambulance drivers? There is none. There is no security issue with that. They are not background checked. Unless they are there when there is a RPT jet on the ground, it is not really an issue but it creates a problem. We have 40 volunteers in our ambulance service and any one of those 40 can drive an ambulance on any given night.

Mr MacLeod—It is the same with us.

Ms GRIERSON—So there are lots of volunteers who belong to these regional emergency services?

Mr Thompson—Yes. I will now have to write up an emergency exercise at my airport as an event and have a pre- and post-event plan to re-establish security so that I can have the local fire brigade practise for an aircraft crash. All of those are part of the regime, but the cost, time and effort is not reflected in the—

Ms GRIERSON—And I do not think background checks are undertaken for all volunteers who belong to emergency services by the emergency services people, so there is no assurance.

Mr Thompson—If we end up with ASICs for our volunteer ambulance drivers, the airport will have to fund those. It is hard enough to get volunteers anyway, let alone to have say, ‘By the way, you have to pay \$150 for an ASIC card so that you can do airport transfers.’ They will say, ‘Oh well, don’t ring me when you need the ambulance to go to the airport; I am not interested.’

Ms GRIERSON—As you have said, there might be 20 or 30 who are on the roster to do those sorts of things. We have not had that evidence before, so that is very important.

Mr Evans—Port Hedland is an RFDS base and the regional hospital for the Pilbara, so we have exactly the same problems that these guys have.

Ms GRIERSON—What is the cost of an ASIC issue?

Mr Thompson—Ours is \$150.

Ms GRIERSON—And you could absorb that cost each time?

Mr Thompson—Yes, we will end up doing that for the volunteers. You can say to them, ‘You have to get an ASIC card,’ but the reality in a community is that council will absorb that cost. One way or another, that will be paid for by council because it is probably not a reasonable ask. They did not change the regime; it got changed and they now have to deal with it.

Senator MURRAY—And I bet, if a volunteer paid it, it is unlikely that it would be tax deductible either.

Mr Thompson—Probably not. We struggle with police checks for our volunteers and it costs \$22 for a police check. Our council has resolved that police checks will be paid for by council for any volunteer so that we can get past the issue of, ‘Well, I do not want to be a volunteer ambo because I am not paying \$22 for a police check.’

Ms GRIERSON—So, if there were to be a centralised body to do ASICs, which is what we might recommend and the government might accept, it has to look at those sorts of ancillary people who may require entry once a year; for one person, it may be very infrequent.

Mr Evans—It is the collateral damage that it is doing, yes.

Ms GRIERSON—Someone also mentioned—I do not know whether it was Guy or Rod—that sometimes Qantas or whoever, because they have their own baggage handling and screening operations, do not inform you of a flight coming in. Is that possible?

Mr Evans—Most definitely. We operate as a restricted international airport, in the same way as Broome, which is done not under the CASA Act but under the Customs Act. We have four or five or thereabouts international charters a week and those aircraft do not advise us that they are coming.

Ms GRIERSON—So they make an arrangement with Qantas or whoever for—

Mr Evans—For baggage handling and—

Senator MURRAY—Are they passenger or freight, or both?

Mr Evans—Both. Generally they are charter or private.

Ms GRIERSON—They are not regular routes?

Mr Evans—No.

Senator MURRAY—Are they generally freight or generally passenger?

Mr Evans—A bit of both. A lot of it is private. We have a private 146 that comes from overseas regularly that heads east to the casinos and so on. These people just lob in without our knowledge. We have local arrangements with refuellers, ground handling agents and Customs, but things still slip through. There is no obligation on people to report to an airport.

Ms GRIERSON—Does that happen at Karratha and Broome? Planes can just turn up out of the sky, can't they?

Mr Thompson—They will not land at Karratha in terms of international, because we are not on any list to say that we have international operations.

Mr MacLeod—We do not have too many problems. Normally we are notified. We also do the refuelling and the ground handling.

Ms GRIERSON—So they have to contact you for all the other backup services?

Mr MacLeod—We know that they are coming. But occasionally someone will drop in and they will say, ‘Oh, we thought that you knew’—yet no-one will have told us.

Mr Evans—Whereas we do not have that offer.

CHAIR—Do they radio ahead anywhere?

Mr Evans—That is how we pick it up—somebody is listening to the radio, yes.

CHAIR—So they do not radio you?

Mr Evans—No.

Senator MURRAY—Where is the air traffic control for your airports?

Mr Evans—We have a control tower, but it is unmanned. We have a fire station at the airport, but it is unmanned. Those services were removed over the last four or five years.

Mr Thompson—Melbourne is our air traffic control.

Senator MURRAY—Didn’t Karratha have a control tower that was removed?

Mr Thompson—And we have exactly the same as Rob: we have a control tower and a fire station that are both empty.

Senator MURRAY—That is daft. Really, the basic in security is to have those sorts of services available. Tell me what the security consequences of those being removed are.

CHAIR—Just before we do that, Ms Grierson, do you have many more questions?

Ms GRIERSON—The only other thing I want to ask about is signage. I am happy for this line of questioning to continue.

Senator MURRAY—I must apologise to Ms Grierson.

CHAIR—Let us do the signage now and then move to Senator Murray, who has a series of questions.

Ms GRIERSON—I think it was Guy who wondered about some signage products. So many of these signs are required, but I am not quite sure what they all say.

Mr Thompson—The comment I would like to make about signage relates to the fact that each of the previously categorised airports have to have signage on their perimeter fencing. The words are slight different to the words on the new signs.

Ms GRIERSON—But is it the same intent?

Mr Thompson—I think so, and that is an arguable point. A comment was made by one of our councillors when I raised the issue of the new signs—because they bear the government logo and the right text. It is about having the right words so that the act becomes enforceable so that the penalties can be applied; I understand why and how. The comment from our councillor was, ‘Well, if the government want to help fund the airport, we will put their logo on the fence. Until they do that, we will stick with our logo.’ That may have been tongue in cheek but—

Senator MURRAY—We could extend that to terminals.

Mr Evans—Absolutely.

Mr Thompson—On a more serious note, on the issue of signage, when we talked earlier about lack of funding, it is not strictly correct to say that we have not had any assistance. The transitioning airports have been offered, free of charge, 86 signs for each port because evidently there are some left over from the millions that were produced for the new entrants. So we have been offered up to 86 signs. We have all accepted that and are very happy with the generosity in that we have been able to get those.

But I ran an exercise in WA and I just spoke to the Western Australian transitioning ports. The total number of signs needed to do each of the transitioning airports—and I think there were nine in Western Australia—was 1,970 signs. The purchase price for those signs is just under \$49,000. Installation costs are about \$74,000. So the total cost of the new signage—the one paragraph in the new regulations that says that you need new signs—in WA alone is just under \$125,000. All of these airports have signs on the fence now.

CHAIR—What do the signs say now?

Mr Thompson—‘Access to this Area is Restricted. Authorised Personnel Only’—I cannot remember the exact words. Basically it says that, if you are not allow to be in here, do not go in here. The new signs are these versions.

CHAIR—You have just handed me photocopies of the new signs.

Mr Thompson—Yes.

CHAIR—Is it the wish of the committee that the documents, being direct copies of security signs for airports, presented by Mr Rod Evans, be accepted as evidence to the committee inquiring into aviation security in Australia and included in the committee’s records as an exhibit? There being no objection, it is so resolved. We will get you to send that through at another time.

Mr Thompson—In terms of the signage, from my perspective, that is the thin end of the wedge. One paragraph in the new regulations says that you will have these signs at your airport. With nine airports in WA, that will come to \$125,000. If you translate that to the 27 airports around the country, it is probably in the half a million dollar bracket—all because we need to have a different sign on the fence.

Senator MURRAY—WA has one-third of those 27?

Mr Thompson—Yes, there are nine in WA.

Senator MURRAY—Could you name them for us quickly?

Mr Thompson—Yes, but I will probably miss some. I will start at the top: Kununurra, Broome, Port Hedland, Newman, Paraburdoo, Karratha, Kalgoorlie and Cocos and Christmas islands.

CHAIR—And you cannot name the rest around Australia?

Mr Evans—Townsville, Mackay, Newcastle. If I may, I will make one comment on the signs. Keep in mind that Broome, Karratha, Kununurra, Port Hedland, Paraburdoo and Newman are also in cyclone areas. Signs sitting on fences in a cyclone environment can be very dangerous and, if we lose signs, we then have to put them back up again. It is an ongoing cost.

Ms GRIERSON—We have seen closed-circuit television and monitoring systems at airports now that are very impressive, but they have been at new entrant airports. We saw them at Broome and we saw your monitoring system. Does yours go back to a central agency that monitors and so on?

Mr Waters—No, it does not. The alarm systems on certain of those camera operations do, but the actual footage is just direct to the office.

Ms GRIERSON—So you have to manage that yourselves. You do your own monitoring of your CCTV. They are not linked into a network where someone else does it centrally for you. You could choose a security firm to do that, but it would be at your own expense. Is that right?

Mr Waters—Yes, that is correct.

Ms GRIERSON—It would be a significant expense, I imagine, monitoring and putting those in.

Mr Waters—Yes, it is.

Ms GRIERSON—Do you have any idea of how much you have spent on that equipment?

Mr Waters—It would probably be in the vicinity of \$25,000 just recently upgrading, putting extra cameras in areas where we are not required to put them but purely for our own security outcomes. I would say at least \$25,000.

Ms GRIERSON—If I came to Karratha and Port Hedland, I would see no CCTV?

Mr Thompson—I have CCTV inside the terminal because of the previous requirements. Because we had baggage carousels inside the terminal, we were required to have CCTV and then to watch bags. It is more about a theft issue. Our system we have installed in Karratha was in about the \$100,000 bracket to monitor the baggage carousels inside the terminal, but there is nothing at all outside of the building.

Mr Evans—There is an anomaly there. We have baggage carousels but we have no CCTV at all at the airport, full stop.

Senator MURRAY—That is another area of inconsistency. The security issue is not just terror; it is the increasing sophistication of almost global crime, if you like. A big issue at the major metropolitan airports is having CCTV on work areas, particularly where baggage is dropped or stored on the airside and not on the passenger side. At Broome there is no CCTV on that side and yet other airports have it. I do not know why there is that inconsistency, but it shows to me that there is an inconsistency with determining where CCTVs are put. When you put yours in, Reith, did anyone tell you where, how, why and what you had to do?

Mr MacLeod—Certainly within the terminal area we did, because it was all up before DOTARS when we extended and established the sterile area. We had the open sections of roof, so we had to put cameras in all around there to monitor them. The officers of transport security were concerned that somebody could jump up on to the roof and then leap down into the sterile area. We had to put them there. More recently we put them in the arrivals area.

Mr Waters—Yes, in the arrivals area, the screening point and a few other positions also. But we were required to activate that sterile area. There were six cameras placed in there, three separate alarm systems, about nine monitors on the roof. Additional to that, we placed another 10 around the airport's main areas of operations just for our own benefit.

Senator MURRAY—I know where you placed them. My question is: were you told to place them there?

Mr Waters—No.

Senator MURRAY—So you made that decision?

Mr Waters—We made the decision about the areas.

Senator MURRAY—That is in complete contrast to CASA. CASA as to air safety places are very precise. They say, 'This is where we want the lights, the signs and the markings.' They are very clear and it is very easily understood. I would have expected the same process to be apparent for security—

Mr Waters—No, there is no direction.

Mr MacLeod—Not really, because there is no requirement for us to have CCTV at all. The only requirement we had from DOTARS was to do with getting our sterile areas passed when we renovated the buildings.

Senator MURRAY—I think your fears are right. I think there will be a requirement to have CCTV.

CHAIR—It is the way of the world.

Senator MURRAY—Yes. If that is to happen, I think you need clear direction, otherwise you will end up wasting your money being asked to redo things or add things later. As you know, that is always a greater cost.

Mr MacLeod—That worries us with fences. If we put up a perimeter fence that we determine will keep people out and all of a sudden they prescribe one that does not fit that, we will have wasted hundreds of thousands of dollars. That is why it would have been good if they had said, ‘This is the minimum standard of fencing for general aviation areas; this is what you should have.’ At the moment I know I could put up, say, a ringlock fence and, provided it is high enough with its barbed wire, it will do what a link mesh fence will do. However, if we put that up and all of a sudden they come along and say, ‘No, we want the same standard as you have in your security restricted area,’ all the stuff you have placed there is a waste of your money. That is what worries us.

Senator MURRAY—Senator Panizza, who is now long dead, liked me because I know the value of a dollar and I listen to money as I go around. It strikes me that to properly fence to the new standard the nine airports would be relatively low cost from a federal perspective. From an airport owner’s perspective, it may be substantial, but you are probably looking at a maximum of \$500,000, \$600,000 or \$700,000 for the worst case and less for other cases. Is that right?

Mr Evans—I can give you an exact cost because two days ago a tender closed for fencing at our airport. We have reduced our boundary to try and save on costs from 14 kilometres down to just on 10 kilometres. To do 600 metres of 2.44 chain mesh fencing around the security restricted area and then put in a 1.9-high griplock fence around the whole boundary is in excess of \$300,000—and that is on our existing fence. I have exactly the same concerns that Reith has, that we are going to put that griplock up—

CHAIR—Senator Murray has raised a good point. Reith says, ‘Look, the other new entrant airports have that fencing and we do not.’ I think you have a slightly different perspective, Guy, which is that you do not have it and we do not feel that you need it, but you are worried that you may be forced to pay for it yourself. If the federal government, through DOTARS, were minded to go down Senator Murray’s track and say, ‘We will pay for fencing and other things like cameras, which are still to be discussed in the future,’ that would not worry you, would it?

Mr Thompson—I am not opposed at all to having a different fence at our airport. I am concerned that we will have to pay for it.

Ms GRIERSON—I would just put on the record that, in our observations of the new entrant airports, we saw at least four different designs of not perimeter fencing but airside-to-the-

terminal type fencing of that secure area. We saw Zincalume type fencing that is gridded so that you can actually climb on it—it is not made up of long divisions—with nothing on the top. We saw ordinary chain mesh type fencing with nothing on the top, which was 2-point-something metres high. We saw some with barbed wire strands across the top of it and we saw some that were curved backwards with barbed wire. We saw four different types of fencing around secure areas. Each of those airports has made their own decision and there has been no standard or regulation. I think that is worth noting because already one airport is saying, ‘We wish we had put barbed wire on top, but we had no advice and we just put up what we thought was okay.’

Mr MacLeod—There is AS1975—2.4 metres was supposed to be what you put up in a restricted area.

Ms GRIERSON—That is not what they say.

Senator MURRAY—And they were using consultants and so the consultants themselves said that.

CHAIR—Certainly in one of the cases, what was being referred to was old fencing and not the new stuff.

Ms GRIERSON—Which one do you think that was?

CHAIR—That was one of those we saw yesterday, where there was the higher fence with the barbed wire all the way around but one section was old existing fence. When I quizzed them about that—I think that was in Derby—they said, ‘We may go back and do that.’ But they simply had the existing fence pre the new entrant. That really was not a fence; it was just a barrier at the start and then they had fenced everything around it.

Mr MacLeod—But they would not be running a full-blown SRA—

CHAIR—That is right. Therefore, that point does not apply.

Senator MURRAY—Let us leave that for the moment, because I think it is an equity issue. My view is that you cannot ask people to change one type of asset that you have already invested in, which is fencing, to another type and not contribute towards the cost. That is my view, but I do not know whether the committee will end up taking it. But it is useful for us to know the cost. I think my early assessment is right: the very maximum to look at would probably be \$600,000 to \$700,000 and I would think the average is around \$300,000.

Mr Evans—Depending on the type of fence. I am talking about a griplock fence. You could double that for a chain mesh fence—1.8.

Senator MURRAY—Which is why I said a maximum of \$600,000 to \$700,000 for nine airports, and we are talking about nine airports. Another issue is that it seems to me that much of the security regime, with the exception of Broome, is often remote. The CCTV material is examined remotely, the monitoring is remote and the fundamental services are remote, such as air traffic control in the case of both Karratha and Port Hedland and even fire services. As you know, there are two types of incidents. There is one you prevent—and that is the best one

because you have stopped it happening—and there is the one that is happening where you have to react. I would have thought it was an unwise federal cost saving—because that was the motivation—to take fire services away from high-passenger-usage areas such as Karratha in particular but even Port Hedland. What is your attitude towards not having your control tower and fire service manned?

Mr Thompson—The control tower is more an issue for those who fly. Anecdotally, the pilots at Karratha do not have an issue with not having the tower functioning. I am not able to comment on that, because I am not flying the aircraft. But certainly the pilots at Karratha do not have an issue with air traffic control.

Senator MURRAY—Neither general aviation nor passenger?

Mr Thompson—Not at all that I am aware of. I have never heard anyone say, ‘I wish we had a tower function here.’ That is not to say that they do not say it, but they have not said it to me.

In terms of fire service, the death knell for fire services at both Karratha and Port Hedland was regionally specific costing that Airservices Australia applied. Across Australia, costs of fire service used to be in the 30c a tonne bracket. It went to site-specific pricing and I think Karratha went to \$26 a tonne. That translated to airlines like Ansett and Qantas saying, ‘We’re paying \$1.2 million or something at Karratha Airport a year for a fire service that has never responded to an accident in X number of years.’ If you say that fire services are an essential service at airports of a certain size, they should be centrally funded. It is the only way it will work. Pricing for fire services at Sydney, which has however many million tonnes of landed weight, is in the cents per tonne; it is insignificant. But at Karratha at \$26-odd a tonne, suddenly we drew the attention of the airlines, who then put pressure on Airservices Australia to find out why they needed a fire service.

Our council looked seriously at whether or not we would put in our own fire service. The CASA regulations did not allow anyone to have their own fire service; there are only certain providers. Broome, because they had a fire service, is one of those listed providers. So you could not have your own fire service even if you were prepared to fund it. The issue in our community is that we now have our volunteer fire brigade responding potentially to a 160-seat passenger jet accidents. Never in a prayer will they cater for that.

Senator MURRAY—You have two major jet services coming in and out daily?

Mr Thompson—I have six jet services a day.

Senator MURRAY—Do you also have smaller prop craft coming in?

Mr Thompson—We probably have in the region of 30 or 40 light aircraft movements a week and about the same number of helicopter movements a week. So there is a reasonable traffic mix.

Senator MURRAY—In all the discussions that you have had on security, has the entire discussion been related to preventative measures—say, lighting, fencing, screening and those sorts of thing? Has any attention been paid to what I would call instant specific measures?

Mr Thompson—Not really. In terms of discussion about security, we have not had anything suggested by anybody that we do anything differently—DOTARS or, in fact, any of our security committee at the airport. The only issue that we have ever had was identification of persons airside and the ASIC regime will fix that. It is the only thing that people at my airport thought we needed in terms of our current provisos.

Senator MURRAY—Surely that cannot be true. For instance, the rapid response group is an incident-specific mechanism. You must have had some discussions in that area?

Mr Thompson—I am aware that the rapid response group are able to attend our airport in an incident, but I have had no contact with them.

Senator MURRAY—So that group, when they visit, do not have general discussions with airport managers about layout and who is who?

Mr Evans—I cannot comment on Guy's situation. We have only had one visit from the regional rapid response team and it was brief. They were in Karratha, drove to Port Hedland, spent an hour at our airport and went back to Karratha. Unfortunately, West Coast lost the grand final that day.

Senator MURRAY—So how would they know on the ground, when an incident occurs, who the people are, where the fuel tanks are, where the various keys are kept, where the security systems are and who the control officers are?

Mr Thompson—I am not sure. We have a Federal Police agent based in Dampier now. I presume that he would be their point of contact on any of that.

Ms GRIERSON—One of those signs we saw said 'access code 12345' for everyone to see.

Senator MURRAY—You can see where I am going to with this. I should say that I spent nine years in the civil war, so I am aware of what happens when things go wrong. It would seem to me that there are always two sides to security; one is prevention and one is how you deal with an incident when it occurs. You have to know the key people. If you have any further thoughts on that side of things—I can see the Chair looking at me because of the time—and you want to send us a supplementally submission just giving us some views, I would be interested. I have a particular concern about Karratha because it is located practically next door to the biggest economic concentration in Australia in value terms. Also the export value of the entire North West Shelf is huge. Therefore, Karratha Airport and everything to do with Karratha and Dampier and the local area I think matters. I am interested in both sides of the coin: prevention as well as instant specific reaction.

CHAIR—That is a good suggestion of Senator Murray's. As a matter of course, we will send you the *Hansard* transcript of today's hearing once it becomes available. When you review that, if there are any other issues on which you feel you could add some further thoughts, please do so by way of a supplementary submission.

Senator MURRAY—It is a request, not a demand.

Mr Thompson—Thank you.

CHAIR—As the deputy chair has pointed out to me when discussing some matters, the evidence you have given on the volunteers, for instance, is good. We had not heard that before today. That has been most useful. Mr Ticehurst has one final question.

Mr TICEHURST—Do you see a value to your operations with the CCTV cameras?

Mr MacLeod—Yes, they are valuable.

Mr TICEHURST—In what way?

Mr MacLeod—Mainly with theft and stuff like that. If you suspect that something has happened, you can go through those to see who has been in and out of the terminal, especially outside of hours, or even when it is crowded and someone picks up a bag when they should not.

Mr Waters—You may have suspicious-looking characters in certain areas. The cameras do cover certain areas of public movement. On the request of the Federal Police or anything like that, you do have footage there.

Mr TICEHURST—Are they motion activated?

Mr Waters—Yes.

Mr TICEHURST—Do you have broadband access at all these areas?

Mr Thompson—Yes.

CHAIR—How long has it been in?

Mr Thompson—I cannot recall it being a new thing, so it has been in for quite a while—years.

Mr Evans—My council would be reluctant to spend funds on CCTV, unless it were prescribed.

CHAIR—Once again on behalf of the committee, we thank you very much for your time. I know that you have taken a lot time out to come here, but your views have been well thought through and you have given us very important evidence as it relates to your airports for consideration for our report, which should be out in a month or two. It has been most useful coming here. You can appreciate that it is simply not possible for a joint committee of the parliament to visit every regional airport, but we had to make a judgment call on where we thought we could get the breadth of evidence we needed, and that was Western Australia. To that end, I also want to place my thanks on the public record to Senator Murray, who I know as a Western Australian felt that this was the right place to come to. Can I say at the conclusion of these hearings that he was right. He makes no apology for the fact that he backs very hard his home state of Western Australia. When he said that this was the best place to come to see the breadth of those airports, he was right, as we have found in travelling up the coast of Western

Australia over the last 48 hours. I thank the witnesses wish them a safe trip home. If there is further information you wish to provide to the committee, please feel free to do so. That is an open invitation.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Smith**):

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 9.30 am