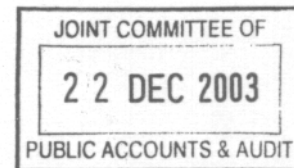


17<sup>th</sup> December 2003



Mr James Catchpole  
A/g Secretary  
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

Dear Mr Catchpole

I refer to your correspondence of 2 December 2003, which was forwarded to my office on behalf of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA), who are currently conducting a review of aviation security in Australia.

The JCPAA has sought my views and observations in regards to the incidence of airport rage (incidents where passengers 'act out' their frustration at delays and screening requirements). The Committee is aware that the function of screening passengers is not the responsibility of either the Australian Federal Police (AFP) or the Australian Protective Service (APS). The function of screening is the responsibility of airport operators and major airlines, and is regulated by the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS).

AFP/APS officers only respond to screening point incidents when requested to do so by the screening point staff, once the incident has escalated to a point where it cannot be resolved by the screening staff themselves. On these occasions, the responding agency is primarily the APS who perform Counter Terrorist First Response (CTFR) at 11 Categorised airports throughout Australia.

The first question you asked was:

- *Have incidents of airport rage been reported to AFP/APS officers during the past three years? If so, have the numbers been significant (if possible can you provide a figure)?*

Incidents of airport rage and disturbances at screening points have been reported to the AFP/APS during the past three years.

AFP/APS records show that the number of incidents of airport rage / disturbance from the 11 categorised airports where the APS perform CTFR are:

2000 = 24 recorded incidents  
2001 = 28 recorded incidents  
2002 = 76 recorded incidents  
2003 (not complete) = 39 recorded incidents

The statistics show a rise in screening point incidents and subsequent responses by the AFP/APS post September 11, 2001. As you are aware, September 11, 2001 was the catalyst for aviation security throughout Australia to be reviewed and DOTARS subsequently imposed stricter screening practices and reporting requirements upon screening authorities which may have contributed to the increase in reported airport rage incidents and disturbances.

The figures for 2003 appear to reflect a slight decrease in the number of reported incidents.

The second question you asked was:

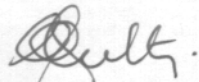
- *Have your officers observed a trend over time in either the nature or number of incidents?*

The statistics provided do indicate an increase in the number of reported incidents post September 11, 2001.

Advice from APS staff at airports indicates that the nature of incidents tend to be due to conflicts between screening point staff and the travelling public. In the event an incident escalates, then AFP/APS intervenes in order to assist with resolution of the incident. In some instances the passenger who refuses to comply with all screening measures is denied access to the security-restricted area and therefore denied uplift by the carrying airline.

I am advised that DOTARS have specific reporting requirements that are imposed upon screening staff and authorities. DOTARS may be in a position to provide more detailed information of reported incidents of 'airport rage' in addition to the information I have provided.

Yours sincerely

  
M J Keelty