



30<sup>th</sup> June 2005

Secretary  
Joint committee of Public Accounts and Audit  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

### **Review of Aviation Security in Australia**

I wish to start this submission by categorically stating that Gove Airport and myself as Airport Manager are firmly supportive of appropriate airport security measures. Unfortunately, it is quite clear that whilst enacted legislation may be relevant/appropriate for Capital City/International Airports it has not been cognisant of the smaller and sometimes remote/rural, regional airports. This then, in my opinion, places unnecessary constraints on these smaller airports. I now provide for the Joint Committee a number of areas where legislation has created problems for the regional airports.

#### **1. ASIC's:**

- (a) Legislation makes the issuing authority responsible for the return of ASIC's when leaving employment. In remote areas where a person is working for a contractor or is an employee of another company working at the airport, the individual will often leave the region without the airport operator knowing that they have finished employment. Unless the individual is extremely conscientious, and this would certainly be the vast minority, the person leaves without handing in his ASIC. Currently the responsibility is with the Airport Operator to chase the return of the card. This would obviously be both time consuming and costly if at all possible.
- (b) Where an employee leaves employment in one aviation location, he is supposed to hand in his/her ASIC as indicated in 1(a). If this person takes up employment at another aviation location he has to apply for a new ASIC which takes approximately 6 weeks. In other words the current system has no transferability.
- (c) The airport operator, when an ASIC Issuing Authority, has to keep a great deal of paperwork, photographic evidence etc of ASIC's issued. This means that the information from a national perspective is spread out over many locations across the country.

## **Solution:**

I believe that the best solution to alleviate these three issues raised would be to have one central issuing authority. All records would be in one place and ASIC transfers would be simple. The airports, currently issuing authorities, would still have to apply for all employees working at their airport, but the issuing, recording and in the longer term acceptance of return, would be centralized. A charge for the issuing would need to apply to cover the cost of the organisation, but this is not felt to be too onerous when compared to the current situation. This suggestion would presumably also address the concern of government in relation to a standardisation of personal checks.

## **2. Signage:**

Legislation has put a requirement for airports to completely renew perimeter and terminal signage. In the case of airports being funded via R.A.F.P, these signs are being paid for by government. This is total discrimination as other airports who were already security categorised had relevant legal signage. The new sign design results in all of these airports having to replace their existing signs and no financial assistance is forthcoming. In the case of Gove Airport this will result in a totally unfair expense in the order of \$20,000. Dare I also suggest that the new signs, whilst making legal action possible, will have actually no effect on airport security. It is unlikely that a terrorist or even someone just gaining illegal access is actually going to read the sign!!

## **3. Airport Security Guards**

Generally speaking private security guards are not available in small communities such as ours, Nhulunbuy – population 4000. Legislation identifies that the three groups of people capable of issuing infringements on an airport such as Gove are; law enforcement officers (police), an aviation security inspector (DOTARS employee) or an airport security guard. This then puts an onus on airports such as ours to employ airport security guards. In Gove's case it has been necessary to have four employees undertake Security Certificate II training at a direct cost to the airport of \$4,000. It appears from the legislation that the airport operator/owner has no powers to challenge, remove or issue infringement notices unless they are "airport security guards" or employ one. This puts an extensive cost on airports such as Gove where remoteness is a key issue requiring high wages and the provision of accommodation for an employee. This difficulty has obviously never been considered as the problem doesn't arise in major urban centres.

Finally, I understand that security training and licensing capabilities are considerably different between states and territories thus resulting in a non uniform standard.

## **4. Traditional Land**

A number of airports such as Gove are located on "Aboriginal Land" and have certain requirements associated with the "Aboriginal Land Rights Act". Security Legislation takes no consideration of these traditional land owners. Funeral services where the deceased are brought in by air, invariably need understanding and sensibility to be applied in relation to airside access. Legislation makes no suggestions on how to handle these situations. Again this is highly unlikely to happen at capital city airports, but is a regular occurrence in locations such as ours.

Further removal of a traditional owners right to hunt by removing his ability to cross airside land could in some cases cause conflicts. This is clearly an area that needs some further consideration by legislators.

## 5. Airport Security Committees

For many years DOTARS Inspectors have been members of Airport Security Committees at airports within their area of responsibility. It has now been stated that these inspectors can no longer be members of these Airport Security Committees and can only be present as "observers". This is a total nonsense!! These inspectors generally know not only what the security requirements are, but also why they are necessary. Their membership to provide feedback and advice is essential and does not affect their audit responsibility. For goodness sake lets bring some common sense back into airport security.

## 6. Charters

Domestic jet charters operating out of an airport do not require their passengers to be screened.

In Gove we have a BAE146 Jet RPT Service twice a day, catering for approximately 75 people each trip. Everyone of these passengers require screening.

A Boeing 737-400 Series jet charter also operates at times with a seating capacity of 140 approximately. None of these passengers who get on and off the plane at the same terminal, but outside jet RPT hours, get screened. The 737 is a much larger aircraft than the 146 and has a much further travel capacity.

I think it is important to understand that any security actions will always have limited effect, especially when you consider that most airports have daily landings by private individuals or small planes with a few passengers on board who have come from authorised landing strips such as farms, accessed airside and have never undergone any form of screening.

I think we need to be realistic and understand that if a terrorist really wants to have an affect on aviation he will do so. Maybe as a passenger of these smaller planes, but lets not forget that a ground to air missile can be launched "off the shoulder" from outside the airport confines. I understand that terrorism is only one aspect that is trying to be covered by increased security; nevertheless that security needs to be sensible. It is no good spending millions of dollars on ineffective measures. Security needs to be sensible and in many cases needs to be site specific.

Finally, maybe the terrorists attempts to disrupt society has already been successful, just consider how much has been spent world wide on increased security provisions, obviously having a financial effect on all economies.

In closing I must again stress that I support aviation security measures but do truly believe that a more risk/site specific assessment and provisions need to be applied

Yours sincerely

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Gove Airport Manager