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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# **Going for Gold**

**Immigration Entry Arrangements for the Olympic and Paralympic Games**

**Joint Standing Committee on Migration**

September 1999

Canberra

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## **Foreword**

The Committee is pleased to present its report on the immigration entry arrangements for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Australia will receive much international attention as the host of these Games in 2000. This period in the limelight will offer Australia many opportunities to expand other countries' awareness of our qualities, skills and strengths.

Visitors' perceptions of Australia as a business-like, multicultural country and unique tourist destination will be influenced by the ease with which they are able to enter and leave Australia. Their views will be coloured by their experience of our visa and border control arrangements.

Australia's immigration arrangements are designed to protect Australia's borders and also to facilitate visitors' travel. The potential tensions between these two aims will be heightened during the Games period.

The Committee has examined the available information concerning the arrangements currently being put in place for the Olympic and Paralympic Games and has made a number of recommendations. These are aimed at maintaining Australia's border security while improving the expectation that visitors will have positive experiences of Australia, and thus enhancing our opportunities for the development of business and tourism.

**Mrs Chris Gallus MP**  
Chair

**September 1999**







## **Membership of the Committee**

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(from 12 August 1999)

Hon Bruce Baird MP

Mrs Julia Irwin MP

Mrs Margaret May MP

Mr Bernie Ripoll MP

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# **Terms of Reference**

**The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia  
JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION**

**INQUIRY INTO THE IMMIGRATION ENTRY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE  
OLYMPIC AND PARALYMIC GAMES**

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The efficient planning and co-ordination of immigration arrangements for the Olympic and Paralympic Games will be a key contributor to the success of the Games. Positive experiences in obtaining visas, entering, staying in and leaving Australia, will assist Australia in gaining opportunities for the development of business, tourism and its place in the world as a multicultural nation.

The Committee will inquire into and report on:

Australia's immigration temporary entry provisions and their capacity to meet the special needs arising from the Games;

The planned immigration arrangements for the entry and departure of Olympic and Paralympic Family Members at the time of the Games; and

The planning and co-ordination arrangements for informing visitors of the entry requirements at the time of the Games.

Referred by the Minister for Immigration: 16 December 1998.





## List of abbreviations

ACS	Australian Customs Service
AQIS	Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service
APC	Advanced Passenger Clearance (a component of the API system)
API	Advance Passenger Information
APP	Advance Passenger Processing (a component of the API system)
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
DTRS	Department of Transport and Regional Services
ERT	Entry Response Team
ETA	Electronic Travel Authority
IOC	International Olympic Committee
MAL	Movement Alert List
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OTA	Olympic Travel Authority (variety of SPV)
PM&C	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PACE	Passenger Analysis Clearance and Evaluation

PTA	Paralympic Travel Authority (variety of SPV)
SAC	Sydney Airports Corporation Ltd
SOCOG	The Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games
SPOC	The Sydney Paralympic Organising Committee
SPV	Special Purpose Visa
VIC	Visitor Information Campaign



# Executive Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This Summary outlines the conclusions reached by the Committee in the preparation of this report, and the recommendations which arise from those conclusions. There were no recommendations arising from the first two chapters which deal with the conduct of the Inquiry and an outline of Australia's visitor and temporary entry provisions.

## Chapter 3: Accreditation of Olympic and Paralympic Family Members

- 1.2 Australia has undertaken to allow accredited Olympic Family Members to visit Australia under specific conditions. Although not obliged to, Australia has also extended this undertaking to accredited Paralympic Family Members.<sup>1</sup>

### Recommendation 1

- DIMA should ensure that the special arrangements made for the Olympic Family are extended to the Paralympic Family.

- 1.3 In relation to the accreditation process, the Committee is concerned about the slow progress with a Memorandum of Understanding between DIMA and SOCOG and its possible implications for border control authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> *Family Members* refers to individuals nominated by the International Olympic Committee, International Paralympic Committee, National Olympic or Paralympic Committees, Rights Holding Broadcasters or other responsible organisations, whose nomination has been approved by SOCOG. The term may include members and guests of the International Olympic and Paralympic Committees, National Olympic and Paralympic Committees, competing athletes and trainers, accredited media, officials and staff of major sponsors.

**Recommendation 2**

- The Committee recommends that the MOU be finalised as a matter of urgency.

**Recommendation 3**

- The Committee recommends that the finalised MOU be sent to the Committee for further assessment.

- 1.4 The accreditation process is vulnerable to delays in the submission of applications. Applicants whose organisation missed the SOCOG deadlines will lack the Games' Special Purpose Visas (SPV), which could hinder their embarkation for Australia. Without an SPV, individuals will not be readily identifiable as eligible Family Members entitled to special treatment. In addition to the implications for the Family Members, the Committee was also concerned that the need to clarify such issues would also interfere with the efficient processing of both Family Members and other visitors.

**Recommendation 4**

- The Committee recommends that SOCOG promote the advantages to accredited Family Members of the early submission of applications, and encourages Family Members to submit their applications for accreditation early.

## **Chapter 4: Special Arrangements for the Family**

- 1.5 The Committee noted that the proposed Entry Response Team (ERT), was intended to resolve arrival problems for the accredited Families during the Games period. The Committee's view was that the early creation of the ERT would facilitate the provision of coordinated authoritative advice on Family entry matters, and would provide the team with practical experience prior to the major Games period demand.

**Recommendation 5**

- The Committee recommends that the proposed Entry Response Team (ERT) be formed as a matter of urgency to enable full and proper training and testing, to ensure that the ERT will be able to perform its duties efficiently.



- 1.6 The peak departure pressure on Sydney International Airport will be on the day after the Olympic Games close. In order to insulate Family Members from some of the airport terminal pressures, consideration is being given to arranging airline and baggage check-in at the Games Village and other locations. At the time of the Committee hearings, however, it was not certain that all airlines carrying Family Members out of Australia would have on-site access at the Village.

**Recommendation 6**

- The Committee recommends that consideration be given to allowing airlines carrying large numbers of Family Members access to the Village on the day of departure.

- 1.7 The possibility of Customs processing at the Village is being examined, as are its implications for border integrity. The Committee endorses the intention to provide specialised services to the Family on departure. It noted, however, that the plans appeared tentative at the time of the hearings.

**Recommendation 7**

- The Committee recommends that consideration be given by the border control authorities to the provision of dedicated border clearance arrangements for Family Members, possibly through off-site processing.

## **Chapter 5: Games Information Campaign**

- 1.8 The Committee noted that the main border control agencies have all contributed to the planning and execution of the Visitor Information Campaign (VIC). Consequently the messages in the main products - the booklet and the website - are coordinated and consistent.
- 1.9 The overall effectiveness of the VIC will depend on the access visitors have to its products, and the use they make of them. The existing budgets for VIC and the agencies do not, however, envisage a more proactive approach to publicising entry requirements at the time of the Games than is already their practice. The Committee's view was that visitor information could be made more readily available.

#### **Recommendation 8**

- The Committee recommends that DIMA, as the coordinator of the VIC website:
- include translations of the abridged booklet on the website as they become available; and
- consult with SOCOG with a view to reviving the hyperlink from the Official Games site to the relevant government sites.

### **Chapter 6: The Visitor Visa Experience**

1.10 The Committee accepted that, with the spotlight on Australia for the Games period, a particularly high visa refusal rate in any one country had the potential to create a public relations problem.

1.11 Further, the Committee believed that the higher visa refusal rates in some countries, and differences between the rates for countries with access to Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) and non-ETA countries could produce embarrassing publicity detrimental to Australia's international image.

#### **Recommendation 9**

- The Committee recommends that, as a matter of urgency, DFAT examine the potential embarrassment if a large number of visa applications from any country is refused, and work with DIMA on reducing this potential.

1.12 The Committee accepts the need to charge for paper or stamp visas to cover costs associated with their issue. However, it notes that this charge may be perceived in some countries as an additional cost, producing a negative image.

#### **Recommendation 10**

- The Committee recommends that an independent review analyse the effect of the visa application fee on applications and the effect on Australia's image as a potential tourist destination.

1.13 The travel industry was generally eager to expand ETA because its simplicity offered improved tourism opportunities in countries currently outside the system. The Committee noted that ETA coverage was recently increased with the inclusion of Taiwan and Hong Kong. Expansion in this

manner is consistent with current practice, and would permit the maintenance of Australia's immigration and other entry standards.

**Recommendation 11**

- The Committee recommends that the number of countries eligible for ETA be expanded.

1.14 The Committee was concerned about the processing charges imposed by agents for ETA.

**Recommendation 12**

- The Committee recommends that DIMA monitor the current practice among agents issuing ETA to determine the proportion charging and the amounts charged by the various agencies.

1.15 The Committee considers that, as favourable media coverage is essential to the success of the Games, and that positive coverage would be facilitated if unaccredited media could be identified and provided with access to Games and general publicity.

**Recommendation 13**

- The Committee recommends that, prior to and during the Games, DIMA and DFAT publicise their willingness to assist the unaccredited media.

## **Chapter 7: The Arrival Experience**

1.16 The Committee was of the opinion that DIMA has failed to properly assess the passenger use of the Advanced Passenger Information (API) system. Its use as a streaming tool has the potential to facilitate visitor border processing. However, the Committee considered that the airlines needed to clarify to their passengers the operation and benefits of the system. Its wider adoption would further assist the border control personnel with their work and assist in creating a positive impression of Australia's efficiency. The Committee felt that these opportunities would be improved if there was more widespread understanding of the system.

**Recommendation 14**

- The Committee recommends that, with respect to API, DIMA and ACS:
  - assess the levels of its use prior to the Games period;
  - pursue expanded access by airlines to simplify and further streamline passenger processing; and
  - liaise with the relevant airlines for more extensive promotion of the API system, awareness of the “Express” card, and its relevance to the arrivals streaming.

1.17 The Committee noted the dependence on information technology to handle the general and specific demands of the Games period, and the consequent need for a robust computer system. The Committee is concerned that the narrow margin between predicted demand and the computer-dependent capacity of the border control operations could result in delays at peak times.

1.18 The evidence presented to the Committee indicates slippage of computer implementation and/or testing timetables in key border agencies. This leads the Committee to question their preparedness in the information technology field, particularly if any unexpected Y2K problems arise. Therefore the Committee questions the assurances of DIMA that there will be no holdups at the primary line.

**Recommendation 15**

- The Committee recommends that border authorities undertake specific early testing of computer performance in situations approaching predicted levels and duration of demand.

1.19 The Committee believed that the staffing arrangements proposed for the Games period were vulnerable to unscheduled events, such as staff illness, which could reduce the effectiveness of border operations. The Committee was concerned that the border control authorities may not be clear concerning the implications of the staffing levels at arrival points.

**Recommendation 16**

- The Committee recommends that, to provide a surge capacity for the Games period, the border authorities consider offering short-term employment to appropriately qualified and/or experienced former officers.

- 1.20 The Committee sees advantages in assisting arriving passengers by ensuring that the signs provide graphic and multilingual information directing them to the appropriate border processing booths. This would also assist the efficiency of the processing. The refurbishment of Sydney International Airport has provided readily changeable signs, and this technology should be exploited and supplemented.

**Recommendation 17**

- The Committee recommends that assistance to non-English speaking visitors be enhanced with increased multilingual and graphic signage

- 1.21 The Committee noted that the ease with which visitors leave the airport terminal after passing through the border controls would colour their assessment of Australia's ability to efficiently plan and coordinate visitor arrivals.

**Recommendation 18**

- The Committee recommends that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, as the coordinator of Olympic and Paralympic responsibilities, pursue the issue of minimising land-side congestion at Sydney International Airport.

## **Chapter 8: Departure**

- 1.22 At the departure booths there are no "bank" queuing arrangements, so the speed with which passengers move through them is determined by the speed at which their own queue moves. Advice to passengers of the advantages of the "Express" Passenger Card, coupled with single lane queuing, as used in the arrival hall, could facilitate faster processing.

**Recommendation 19**

- The Committee recommends that the border authorities consider the implementation of all methods to ease congestion at the departure checking lines, such as a single line/multiple counter queuing system for departing passengers

## Chapter 9: Border Security

1.23 The Committee was concerned about the ability of Australia to undertake effective off shore migration checks at hub airports with flights continuing to Australia. It was also concerned at the use of personnel not specifically trained in Australian immigration requirements to assist with these activities.

### Recommendation 20

- There should be 24-hour on-site coverage by Australian ALOs at the hub airports of Bangkok and Singapore.

### Recommendation 21

- DIMA should not, as a matter of policy, rely on the assistance of ALOs from other countries to monitor travellers to Australia and assist check-in staff. Prior to the Games, DIMA should ensure that it has adequate migration coverage at key hub overseas airports.



## Definitions

### Accredited Family Member

This term covers a person who has been nominated by the International Olympic Committee, International Paralympic Committee, National Olympic or Paralympic Committees, Rights Holding Broadcasters or other responsible organisations and whose nomination has been approved by SOCOG. The term may include members and guests of the International Olympic and Paralympic Committees, National Olympic and Paralympic Committees, competing athletes and trainers, accredited media, officials and staff of major sponsors.

### Advance Passenger Clearance (APC)

This is a computerised visa checking/pre clearance system, which has been operating successfully for several years with Qantas and Ansett Airlines. It relies on a direct computer link between the airlines and DIMA and speeds the clearance of passengers. APC confirms the eligibility of passengers to board a flight and then allows them to be processed prior to arrival in, or departure from, Australia. APC passengers are directed to specially designated primary line processing booths when arriving or departing.

### Advance Passenger Processing (APP)

An enhanced version of APC. Airlines do not require their own direct computer link to DIMA but utilise existing airline/travel industry infrastructure. Trialing of APP commenced in July 1998.

## Combined Accreditation Cards

These are cards issued by SOCOG (following clearance by DIMA) to Family Members. The Olympic or Paralympic identity section of the card contains personal details and is evidence that the holder has been approved by SOCOG to attend the Games. The Accreditation section provides details of the holder's status (ie athlete, observer) and their level of access to Games venues and services.

## Electronic Travel Authority (ETA)

The ETA System is a computerised visa issuing system introduced by DIMA in September 1996 to "high volume low risk" tourist markets (such as Japan, the UK, and the USA) designed to manage substantial increases in off shore workloads. At 1 July 1999, there were 31 eligible nationalities. The ETA System allows the travel authority to be issued by travel agents and/or airlines at any time prior to boarding. The issue of an ETA does not require contact with Australian Missions. Most are issued by travel agents when organising travel arrangements.

## Games Period

This covers the period during which special arrangements apply to the admission of Family Members to Australia. It runs from 15 August to 29 November 1999, ie from one month before the Olympic Games commence to one month after the Paralympic Games conclude.

## Non Accredited Staff and Non Accredited Media

This group will comprise persons coming to Australia on Games related matters who are not part of the Family. It includes entertainers, electronic and print media journalists, technical/professional personnel brought to Australia by sponsors and others wishing to do business here.



