

**Bankstown Airport Limited  
Submission to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit**

**REVIEW OF AVIATION SECURITY IN AUSTRALIA**

**Overview**

General aviation (GA) airports are a critical component of Australia's air transport system for air charter, flying training, airfreight and other business activities. We must continue to develop, assess measures that can effectively increase the security of these airports without restricting general aviation operations or imposing high costs on the industry. What must be understood in all submissions to this review is that there is no panacea for preventing future terrorist attacks involving aircraft or airports, only practical, affordable and cooperative actions to minimise the risk of attack.

**Current Security Arrangements at the Sydney Basin Airports**

The Department of Transport and Regional Services, to date, have not imposed a security categorisation for GA airports. Nevertheless, at Bankstown, Camden and Hoxton Park Airports we have implemented security measures based on security risk assessments and advice from the NSW Police Service. Examples include man proof fencing and access control devices for vehicle and pedestrian gates, daily airfield inspections, landside and airside signage, newsletters for educating the aviation community, and security training for operational staff.

The NSW Police have also undertaken security risk assessments at the airport and have interviewed airport tenants with respect to their security arrangements. The Police have provided airport tenants with various options to improve security for their business. ASIO have also engaged in a pro-active approach to security at these airports. Through a series of interviews with aviation businesses, ASIO have increased the security awareness and vigilance for both flying school and charter operators located at the airports.

**Security Review Options**

***Securing Aircraft***

One area of security where the general aviation airport operator does not usually control is the securing of aircraft. Most GA aircraft are left unlocked, are not immobilized with physical devices, and many do not require a key to start the engines. Operators have had expensive avionics stolen from aircraft, and there have been some limited incidents where aircraft have been deliberately damaged.

This review should consider measures to prevent the theft and/or unauthorised use of an aircraft. Every aircraft owner or operator should be required to take steps to secure their aircraft at all times when it is unattended.

Options to consider include:

- Anti-theft devices on and/or within their aircraft when not in use.
- Devices to lock aircraft flight control surfaces when not in use.
- Other lockable devices to secure their aircraft to the ground.

### ***Training***

Commercial pilot training should include a security awareness subject. A proactive and standardised training program should be developed by the Department of Transport and Regional Services should be available for aircraft owners and airport operators. As the security environment changes, DoTRS should implement a training program to update the industry. This could be conducted on a periodic basis, for airport and airline security managers as a minimum.

### ***Reporting Process***

A process for reporting unusual or suspicious activity should be standardised. The process for this could be developed as a web or email based report, with the proposed training program providing the basis for identification of suspicious behavior. This standardised report could then become the basis for intelligence reporting which may provide intelligence and security agencies with advance warning of potential terrorist or criminal activities.

### ***Physical Airport Security***

Operators of general aviation airports should develop their own airport security based on a risk assessment process and guidance provided by the Department of Transport and Regional Services and the NSW Police Service. The guidance should be flexible and allow airport operators to tailor their plan to specific site and operating conditions. However, the airport operator needs the regulatory support to ensure compliance with the level of security based on the risk assessment. This support is imperative.

The following example is a clear indication that there is no regulatory support for airports that are not security categorised. Where these airports have undertaken an expensive security risk assessment they have not been subsequently able to implement the recommendations of that assessment because of the lack of suitable legislation or regulation.

Recently Bankstown Airport Limited implemented security measures based on security risk assessments and advice from the NSW Police Service. Part of the security recommendations was to ensure access to airside is restricted. This includes the locking of all airside access gates when not in use. However, an airport tenant has refused to close an airside access gate on their leased site, as they see no value in preventing unauthorised access to the airport. Bankstown Airport Limited were advised by the Department of Transport and Regional Services that there are no legal powers under the Air Navigation Act or Regulations to mandate security measures at Bankstown Airport. Also, there are no relevant provisions within the head lease between the Commonwealth and Airport Leasing Company. Subsequently the Airport

Leasing Company cannot force airport tenants to comply with the requirements that emerge from a security risk assessment undertaken at the airport.

This security review should consider amending the appropriate legislation to give the Airport Leasing Company at airports without formal security categorisation the support necessary to implement security measures based on a formal risk assessment.

### ***Airport Security Plan***

Another tool to assist the GA airports is a simple standardised security plan, which should be developed by the Department of Transport and Regional Services and should include at least the following;

- A list of contact data for airport tenants.
- General and specific airport security standards, control measures and authorised persons.
- Airport map showing access points and security control measures.
- Procedures for reporting suspicious activity and accessing security intelligence.
- Procedures for emergency response & communication.

### ***Photo Licences***

Flying Schools and charter operators should properly identify individuals requesting flight lessons, or renting/purchasing an aircraft, by validating their credentials. This as a minimum should involve a face/photo ID reconciliation, and with current technology this could easily be applied to pilots licences.

All pilot licences, like vehicle licences, should be a photo type licence, based on a central Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) register. All trainee pilots should apply for a photo learner licence through the Civil Aviation Safety Authority prior to any flying training lessons. The same background checks that are in place for Airport Security Identification Cards could be applied by CASA for all pilot licences.

### ***Aircraft Identification***

Aircraft Identification could be made mandatory through an appropriate transponder being fitted to all aircraft that operate within a certain distance from the center of each major city. The transponder would be activated when the aircraft starts and must be operational at all times in flight whether the aircraft is operating in controlled or uncontrolled airspace. Each aircraft would have its own unique code, which would advise ATC of aircraft type, ownership and contact details. This would enable ATC to obtain vital information on an aircraft that is operating in areas without ATC clearance.

While this type of transponder is currently expensive, a lower cost alternative could be developed in cooperative research with Commonwealth security agencies. A phased introduction, and higher production levels, is likely to result in lower unit prices. The transponder could be introduced first on larger aircraft where the risks are higher, and then progressively introduced to smaller private aircraft.

**Funding**

The GA industry or GA airport operator cannot fund any new airport security measures that may be developed from this Review. At present the GA Airports in Australia do not achieve a return on assets from their aviation customers, and given the state of the GA industry are not likely for some time to come.

The significant cost of physical security measures cannot be met through the existing charging base, and there is not the price elasticity in the industry to allow for these charges to be automatically passed on to the airport users. The low passenger throughput on these airports, particulate the GAAP airports, will not allow the charging methodology used by the larger airports where these costs are passed on to passengers as part of the ticket cost. Any additional security costs will place an unacceptable burden on GA Airports.

A separate source of federal funding for security improvements is required at general aviation airports.

**Conclusion**

There are a number of options available to government to improve aviation security for the general aviation industry. However any decision must take into account the overall risk and likelihood of general aviation aircraft being used as "guided missiles" in a terrorist attack in Australia.

Consideration must be given to the practical application of new security arrangements and the overall cost to the general aviation industry. Both the general aviation airports and aircraft play a critical role in Australia's air transport system. Any significant security cost imposed on general aviation operators will impact the viability of the industry being able to provide services such as emergency medical transport, law enforcement, fire fighting, agricultural, forest management, express air freight, flying training and charter operations.