Chapter 3

Passenger security screening at airports and airport staff security vulnerabilities

3.1   In this chapter, the committee examines key issues that emerged from evidence to the inquiry regarding passenger security screening. A variety of stakeholders raised issues regarding security screening, including the use of contractors and subcontractors to deliver security services at some airports, and the efficacy of some screening processes.

3.2   The committee also examined the 2016 ANAO report on Passenger Security Screening at Domestic Airports, its recommendations and the response from the department.

3.3   This chapter considers the vulnerabilities that some airport ground staff present to airport safety and security. To this end, evidence from Mr Allan Kessing, concerning reports on security at Sydney Airport produced by the ACS in 2002 and 2003 is considered. These reports highlighted potential vulnerabilities in Australia's aviation security framework, through the employment of various airport staff.

Contracting of airport security

3.4   Airports are commercial operations with considerable operating costs. Airports facilitate the movement of passengers, but must also balance safety and security concerns of travellers and aviation staff. As noted by the ANAO:

> The Department is responsible for ensuring industry participants meet legislated requirements and aviation security is maintained in a way that is cost effective to the Australian Government, industry and the travelling public.[1]

3.5   A key issue considered by the committee was the use of contract and subcontract workers by 'screening authorities' in the provision of airport security. A screening authority is a body corporate, most usually an airport or aircraft operator, authorised to conduct screening by the department.[2] The department uses audits, testing and other compliance activities to ensure that screening authorities deliver screening services in accordance with the Act and Regulations.[3]

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1   Australian National Audit Office, ANAO Report No. 5. 2016–17, *Passenger Screening at Domestic Airports*, August 2016, p. 16.

2   *Aviation Transport Security Act 2004*, division 2.

3   Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, *Submission 3*, p. 7.

3.6   The Act provides that a person authorised to conduct screenings is a 'screening officer', and the regulations must prescribe the training and qualification requirements of screening officers, and the form, issue and use of their identity cards.[4]

3.7   The airport operator, as a screening authority, will generally outsource security roles to private, specialised security screening companies.[5] It was submitted that airport operators often outsource to private companies, which are then able to employ subcontracted workers as security agents.[6]

Screening authorities at airports

3.8   The department told the committee that it is possible for different terminals within the same airport to have separate nominated screening authorities, and that in Australia, there are 64 screening authorities authorised to conduct screening for 81 security-controlled airports.[7]

3.9   United Voice raised concerns with this system, detailing as an example how security services at Perth Airport are delivered by two different authorities. Perth Airports Pty Ltd operates Terminal 1 (international services), Terminal 2 (regional services), and Terminal 3 (domestic and interstate services). Simultaneously, the Qantas Group operates Terminal 4 (Qantas domestic terminal).[8]

3.10   Under this framework, different private security firms are contracted to deliver security services in different parts of the airport. ISS Security Pty Ltd is contracted to provide security services for Terminals 1, 2 and 3, and MSS Security Pty Ltd is contracted to provide security services to Terminal 4. Within these arrangements, MSS Security Pty Ltd then employs subcontractors to carry out some security duties.[9]

3.11   United Voice claimed that MSS Security Pty Ltd utilises similar subcontracting arrangements in providing security services for the domestic Qantas division of Melbourne Tullamarine Airport.[10]

3.12   Evidence provided by Qantas appeared to corroborate the United Voice position. Qantas stated that it employed approximately 800 contractors dedicated to the provision of security services, and noted:

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4   *Aviation Transport Security Act 2004*, s. 94.

5   United Voice, *Submission 18,* p. 5.

6   United Voice, *Submission 18,* p. 5.

7   Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, answers to questions taken on notice on 6 February 2015, pp. 1-4.

8   United Voice, *Submission 18,* pp. 5-6.

9   United Voice, *Submission 18,* pp. 5-6.

10   United Voice, *Submission 18,* pp. 5-6.

> Qantas outsources the task of passenger and baggage screening as well as cargo examination obligations to third party screening contractors. The Contracted Security Services Unit (CSSU), which forms part of the Qantas Airlines security team, has prime responsibility for ensuring contracted services are provided in accordance with contractual arrangements, both from a performance and compliance perspective…
>
> CSSU also manages the security screening equipment owned and deployed at…airports where Qantas is the Screening Authority.
>
> The CSSU follows a governance process for both security suppliers and equipment that includes the utilisation of quality performance reports, annual performance reviews, service delivery monitoring and issue resolution processes.[11]

3.13   There is no legislative requirement that airport security workers must be direct employees of an airport operator, or the government. On this matter, the department stated that:

> ...industry is responsible for ensuring that their staff and contractors are appropriately trained to undertake any specific security roles and responsibilities as needed under the aviation security legislation.[12]

3.14   United Voice argued the decentralised approach to airport security has led to reduced levels of accountability that negatively impact not only the quality of the aviation security workforce, but also the level of service provided. To support this, United Voice noted different and less stringent security standards imposed on subcontracted employees than those covering directly contracted employees.[13]

3.15   United Voice detailed specific instances of where it felt subcontracted employees did not meet adequate security standards. It argued that subcontractors were provided with inferior security training in comparison to staff directly contracted by a screening authority. Anecdotal evidence suggested that subcontractors were unable to meet the minimum target requirements for detecting prohibited items, via x-ray screening. It was also suggested that contracting companies had a 'somewhat relaxed attitude' towards the competency and quality of subcontractors.[14]

3.16   Concerns were also raised about the different working conditions of subcontractors, resulting in unacceptably long work hours. A number of United Voice members indicated that in some cases, subcontractors worked beyond normal shifts, without adequate breaks between them, or worked other security jobs before their shift

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11   Qantas Airways Limited, *Submission 14,* pp. 6-7.

12   Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, *Submission 3*, p. 5.

13   United Voice, *Submission 18,* pp. 7-10.

14   United Voice, *Submission 18,* p. 7.

at an airport. It was claimed that subcontractors were working extensive hours, leading to fatigue, and thus putting co-workers at risk.[15]

3.17   United Voice argued that when combined, these issues increased risk levels and compromised security and safety outcomes, both for airport employees and the travelling public.[16] It argued that:

> Achieving the highest standards of aviation safety requires consistency. The decentralised model of security control and the increasing use of sub-contractors in this field has led to inconsistent security practices. This inconsistency exists between contractors and sub-contractors at the same airport as well as between airports across Australia.[17]

3.18   In addition, United Voice recommended:

> …that if outsourcing, and particularly sub-contracting, continues to be permitted in Australian aviation security, contractors and sub-contractors must be held to the same high quality and high standards of training, qualifications, working conditions and security clearance requirements.[18]

3.19   However, Australia Pacific Airports (Melbourne) Pty Ltd (the Melbourne Airport) argued that some unwarranted concerns had been raised regarding contracted security service providers. It urged the committee to look at the evidence carefully as contracted providers are 'occasionally the subject of misinformed and misleading commentary by some parties'.[19]

Screening processes

3.20   AIPA argued that the 'repetitive screening of flight crew and the repetitive mini-power-plays by screeners' did not serve any security purpose and merely provided a visual image to the travelling public that security was taken seriously. It called for the complete halt of flight crew screening processes for these reasons.[20]

3.21   AIPA further noted that its members 'observe little or at best desultory security checking' of those airport staff who have airside access and who do not enter the airport via the airport terminal. It called for urgent action to address this inadequacy and the corresponding risk of unlawful entry. AIPA argued that the approach to airside access staff was in contrast to flight crew, who went through extensive security screening within the terminal. AIPA continued:

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15   United Voice, *Submission 18,* p. 8.

16   United Voice, *Submission 18,* pp. 7-10.

17   United Voice, *Submission 18,* p. 9.

18   United Voice, *Submission 18*, p. 10.

19   Australia Pacific Airports (Melbourne) Pty Ltd, *Submission 8*, pp. 5-6.

20   Australian and International Pilots Association, *Submission 6*, pp. 5, 6.

Until such time as Australia completes the establishment of uniform screening, we must presume that a serious threat to the safety of aircraft exists and that our security dollars are not being allocated on the basis of properly determined risks.[21]

3.22   In this regard, United Voice argued that any employees who have access to secure airport areas should be subject to metal detector screening and baggage examination. Additionally, all checked baggage should be subject to the same standards of security screening, including x-ray.[22]

3.23   Addressing some of these concerns, on 1 December 2016 the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, the Hon Darren Chester MP, introduced amendments to the Act that would allow airports to randomly select people, vehicles and belongings for screening, while in an SRA, to search for prohibited weapons. The Minister continued:

The changes are the first stage of the Government's plans to strengthen airside security by mitigating the insider threat. In addition to screening of airport workers, the Government will also introduce stronger access controls for airside areas and security awareness training for airport and airline staff.[23]

Passenger delays

3.24   AIPA submitted that security screening processes resulted in queues or 'largely stagnant masses of people', who were kept at the front of passenger terminals with limited freedom of movement. While noting that appropriate risk assessments had likely been undertaken by the relevant agencies, AIPA considered this a security concern and encouraged procedural changes that would improve the movement of people through screening.[24]

3.25   This concern was also raised by Mr Kessing, who highlighted the security impact of disruptions to people movement:

Delays in the filtering process can be exponentially expensive as even small disruptions to the free flow of people can bring chaos which then ripples out to other areas, especially domestic and international connections.[25]

3.26   A similar point was raised by ASIAL, which argued that the security screening of passengers could cause delays in airports. It suggested improvements to ameliorate these situations:

21   Australian and International Pilots Association, *Submission 6*, pp. 4, 6.

22   United Voice, *Submission 18*, p. 3.

23   Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, the Hon Darren Chester MP, 'New measures to strengthen airport security', *Media Release DC206/2016*, 1 December 2016.

24   Australian and International Pilots Association, *Submission 6*, pp. 5, 6.

25   Mr Allan Kessing, *Submission 21*, p. 4.

> The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has indicated that on average security checkpoint passenger processing per hour has decreased 50% since [the] 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001. Strategies to increase checkpoint throughput rates are required to enhance operational efficiencies without degrading security measures.

> …Strategies including more appropriate passenger targeting, passenger behavioural risk management and passenger education coupled with a more customer service screening officer approach could increase passenger throughput rates without diminishing security.[26]

Screening training

3.27   ASIAL noted a reduction in security certificate training courses available for screening staff, and the risks associated with limiting training providers. ASIAL argued that several training providers recognised that screening with a customer focus improves the passenger experience and assists with the flow of passengers through security checkpoints. ASIAL called for an 'open training environment for security screening to enhance options, resource management and system transparency'.[27]

3.28   In an example of issues in training screening staff, the National LGBTI Health Alliance (the Alliance) raised concerns with the committee about the inappropriate behaviour and attitudes of some airport screening and security staff towards LGBTI people. The Alliance had received numerous complaints from its members about discrimination and mistreatment in airport security contexts, and argued that airport security should operate within the sex discrimination laws, to safeguard the LGBTI community from discrimination and unwarranted attention.[28]

3.29   The Office of the Inspector of Transport Security (OITS) advised the committee that it had been instructed in 2013 by the then Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development to 'inquire into aviation and maritime transport security education and training in Australia'.[29]

3.30   Under the terms of reference, OITS was required to examine, among other things, current industry and other in-house security training programs; review the standards of security training in the industry, and 'identify areas of inconsistency in education and training in the aviation and maritime industries in security related positions and tasks'.[30]

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26   Australian Security Industry Association Limited, *Submission 13*, pp. 2-3.

27   Australian Security Industry Association Limited, *Submission 13*, p. 5.

28   National LGBTI Health Alliance, *Submission 20*.

29   Office of the Inspector of Transport Security, *Submission 15*, p. 2.

30   Office of the Inspector of Transport Security, *Submission 15*, p. 3.

3.31   Despite a scheduled reporting date in the first half of 2015, it appears the inquiry is yet to be finalised. In March 2016, the department indicated the inquiry's report would be finalised by mid-2016 but this does not appear the case.[31]

3.32   The OITS was also due to cease as of 30 June 2015 following the rationalisation of Commonwealth agencies, with the Inspector instead appointed on a retainer basis. A new Inspector of Transport Security was appointed in late 2015.[32]

3.33   The committee is concerned that the OITS review does not appear to have been completed, under the new Inspector of Transport Security. Given the wide consultation undertaken during the OITS review, including over 150 meetings across Australia, consultation with international peak bodies and input from key industry stakeholders,[33] it would be advantageous for the review's findings and recommendations to be released.

Screening costs

3.34   A number of contributors to the inquiry raised concerns about the cost of security screening and associated processes, particularly the disproportionate cost of security measures on rural and regional airports.

3.35   The RAAA noted that while it was a strong supporter of security screening, the matter had been reviewed a number of times in recent years with further reviews likely. Due to the high cost of screening, the RAAA encouraged its use only 'in airports where the threat assessment warrants such a process', and that screening should be avoided:

> …where the threat assessment does not justify the introduction and where the cost will be prohibitive to the continued provision of regular air services, for example, small regional and rural airports with low passenger numbers served by small aircraft and where the treat assessment does not recommend the introduction of screening.[34]

3.36   Regional Express Holdings Ltd presented similar arguments as the RAAA about screening. While it was supportive of the process, it maintained that screening should only be introduced where the threat level warrants it and the costs are not prohibitive to the main function of air services. Regional Express argued that for

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31   Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, *Inquiry into Aviation and Maritime Transport Security Education and Training in Australia*, 29 March 2016, https://infrastructure.gov.au/security/its/inquiry.aspx (accessed 30 January 2017).

32   Office of the Inspector of Transport Security, *Submission 15*, p. 3; Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, *Inquiry into Aviation and Maritime Transport Security Education and Training in Australia*, 29 March 2016.

33   Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, *Inquiry into Aviation and Maritime Transport Security Education and Training in Australia*, 29 March 2016, https://infrastructure.gov.au/security/its/inquiry.aspx (accessed 30 January 2017).

34   Regional Aviation Association of Australia, *Submission 9*, pp. 3-4.

smaller rural and regional airports, with limited passenger traffic, 'the screening cost would certainly mean that the community would lose its air services'.[35]

3.37   This position was also advanced by ASIAL, who noted that the requirement for regional airports to undertake security screening has increased costs to those airports. Any increased cost as a result of security technology 'may impact on the viability of many regional airports although regional areas need to maintain the benefits provided by the offered air services'.[36]

3.38   ASIAL called for a review of regional airport security classifications, noting that:

> Regional airports with a lower classification should not be permitted to disembark passengers and/or cargo at higher classified airports without the passengers/baggage/cargo being subject to inbound security clearance before entering the higher classified airports secure area.[37]

3.39   The department acknowledged in its submission that the varying risk profiles and operating circumstances between Australia's varied airports would see different screening methods and technologies used at different categories of airport.[38]

ANAO audit of passenger screening 2016

3.40   In this report, the ANAO was very critical of the department's oversight of passenger screening systems:

> The Department has implemented a regulatory framework that establishes minimum standards for passenger screening and a program of compliance activities at security controlled airports. However, the Department is unable to provide assurance that passenger screening is effective, or to what extent screening authorities comply with the Regulations, due to poor data and inadequate records. The Department does not have meaningful passenger screening performance targets or enforcement strategies and does not direct resources to areas with a higher risk of non-compliance.[39]

3.41   The ANAO found that over 100 recommendations had been made regarding passenger screening, including the need for the department to develop performance measures, analyse compliance data, implement an enforcement policy and provide effective and adequate training. However, solutions had yet to be delivered, despite

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35   Regional Express Holding Ltd, *Submission 11*, p. 2.

36   Australian Security Industry Association Limited, *Submission 13*, p. 2.

37   Australian Security Industry Association Limited, *Submission 13*, p. 3.

38   Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, *Submission 3*, p. 9.

39   Australian National Audit Office, ANAO Report No. 5. 2016–17, *Passenger Screening at Domestic Airports*, August 2016, p. 7.

the identification of these gaps in the department's regulatory capability by successive reviews since 2009.[40]

3.42   In its response to the ANAO report, the department noted that it 'agrees with all the recommendations'. As part of its response, the department provided an outline of the three key elements of future departmental reforms already underway, including:

- broad reform of departmental transport security regulatory operations to ensure the OTS is 'well positioned to respond to changing threats and risks, future industry growth and diversification, and that its approvals and compliance operations are efficient';

- improving the department's collection and analysis of data pertaining to passenger screening. This includes 'revising its compliance approach to better incorporate non-compliance risk into its planning'; and

- establishing a Working Group to 'develop a framework to measure the effectiveness and extent that screening authorities are complying with passenger screening regulations'. This framework will incorporate 'regular inspections and audits that are undertaken to monitor an airport's compliance with passenger security screening requirements' including testing the effectiveness of their ability to 'detect and control the entry of prohibited items and weapons into the sterile area'.[41]

3.43   During a Senate Estimates hearing on 22 November 2016, the department provided an update on its implementation of the ANAO's recommendations. While noting the difficulties in measuring security, the department explained that it was working with industry on its performance data to support the development of key performance indicators, to measure the performance of passenger screening.[42]

3.44   The committee notes that the recommendations made by the ANAO support evidence considered over the course of this inquiry.

Airport staff security vulnerabilities

3.45   The committee spoke with Mr Allan Kessing, a former ACS who contributed to two confidential reviews of security at Sydney Airport. Mr Kessing's team prepared a first report on security screeners, which was completed in late 2002. A second report examined a number of airport staff and activities and their relevance to airport security. This report was completed in mid-2003.[43]

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40   Australian National Audit Office, ANAO Report No. 5. 2016–17, *Passenger Screening at Domestic Airports*, August 2016, p. 19.

41   Australian National Audit Office, ANAO Report No. 5. 2016–17, *Passenger Screening at Domestic Airports*, August 2016, pp. 10-11.

42   Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, *Estimates Hansard*, 22 November 2016, pp. 26-29.

43   Mr Allan Kessing, *Submission 21*, p. 1.

3.46   The reports were heavily critical of the security arrangements then applicable in Sydney Airport.[44]

2002 report

3.47   The 2002 report, 'Threat Assessment of Sydney Airport Screening Personnel', noted that security breaches at Sydney Airport included:

> unauthorised access, the unlawful purchase of duty free products, the facilitation of passengers in bypassing the screening points and the alleged involvement within an internal conspiracy to import narcotics.[45]

3.48   According to Mr Kessing, the first report compiled by the unit provided comprehensive evidence of:

> …accumulated abuses of Customs regulations, theft, smuggling and systemic criminality. Long time failures had been set in concrete during the run-up to the Olympics and many new rorts and abuses had been accreted on since then.[46]

3.49   The report provided evidence of staff with a criminal history who were employed in a security role, including one individual who had a conviction and eight-year sentence for the possession of a prohibited import (narcotics). Other offences included 'violence, aggravated assaults, motor vehicle thefts, car re-birthing, escape from custody, and numerous firearm offences'.[47]

3.50   The report also examined the provision of screening services at Sydney Airport, then undertaken by Sydney Night Patrol (SNP). SNP operated autonomously and had commenced employing casual staff, through subcontracting arrangements. The report noted:

> Increased security scrutiny has forced many guards to undergo additional security training in relation to the operation of x-ray imaging equipment and the use of metal detecting hand scanners. Not all security personnel, including the casually employed, underwent this training, or were capable of completing the training.[48]

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44   Heavily redacted versions of these reports were published in 2013 by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, subsequent to a Freedom of Information request.

45   Australian Customs Service, *Threat Assessment of Sydney Airport Screening Personnel*, 2002, p. 4.

46   Allan Kessing, 'My side of the story', Crikey Online available at www.crikey.com.au/2009/09/14/allan-kessing-my-side-of-the-story/ (accessed 24 October 2016).

47   Australian Customs Service, *Threat Assessment of Sydney Airport Screening Personnel*, 2002, p. 11.

48   Australian Customs Service, *Threat Assessment of Sydney Airport Screening Personnel*, 2002, p. 7.

3.51   The report recommended adopting an approach similar to the US, where security screeners become federal employees. It was hoped that this would 'result in better dedication, allegiance, job satisfaction and a greater sense of job permanency'.[49]

3.52   However, recent media reports indicate that airport security in Australia is more robust than in other countries, including in the US. As reported in *The West Australian*:

> The US failure rate for detecting weapons is alarming. Last year [2015] it was revealed the failure rate was 95 per cent for dummy weapons carried out at screening points at locations across the US. Transport Security Administration staff, did not detect weapons in 67 of 70 tests. In one test, an undercover agent was stopped when he set off the checkpoint alarm but staff failed to find a fake explosive taped to his body when they patted him down.[50]

2003 report

3.53   The 2003 report, 'Sydney Airport Air Border Security: Risk Analysis 2003', supported the findings of the 2002 report, with investigators finding that 'a high number of personnel [were] selected on recommendations by existing staff members, with limited checking of criminal histories'. Incidences of theft from aircraft stores, cargo and passenger baggage were also discovered.[51]

3.54   The investigations that formed the basis of the report focused on staff across a variety of airport services. This included staff from the blanket bay, baggage handling, aircraft and airport cleaning, air crew, aircraft engineering, ramp operations, toilet truck and water truck driving, refuelling, catering, security screening, supporting services and retail outlets.[52]

3.55   Air crew were found to be particularly high risk to border security, given their interactions with passengers and all other working groups that approach arriving aircraft. The report's risk assessment found 'baggage handlers, ramp handlers and aircraft cleaners as having the greater potential to become involved in organised crime or an internal conspiracy'.[53]

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49   Australian Customs Service, *Threat Assessment of Sydney Airport Screening Personnel*, 2002, pp. 14-15.

50   Geoffrey Thomas, 'Airport weapon seizures soar', *The West Australian*, 25 October 2016, https://au.news.yahoo.com/video/watch/32995538/credit-card-knives-found-at-our-airports/?cmp=st (accessed 6 December 2016).

51   Australian Customs Service, *Sydney Airport Air Border Security: Risk Analysis*, 2003, pp. 1-2.

52   Australian Customs Service, *Sydney Airport Air Border Security: Risk Analysis*, 2003, pp. 12-61.

53   Australian Customs Service, *Sydney Airport Air Border Security: Risk Analysis*, 2003, pp. 29, 62.

3.56   Research indicated to the investigators that both NSW Police and the AFP had major concerns about high levels of criminal behaviour occurring in the basement areas of Sydney Airport, involving a number of persons of interest and crime syndicates. Police were at the time continuing their investigations.[54]

3.57   The 2003 ACS report also found that there was a lack of co-ordinated law enforcement activities in airports. It argued that:

> The risks posed by terrorism should not be underestimated at any international airport as personnel arrive for duty each day by entering through staff gates unscreened into restricted areas, with access to aircraft and airport facilities.[55]

3.58   The report acknowledged the unique opportunities for criminality in an airport environment. It made a number of important conclusions, including that:

> There is a need to convince the airport community that turning its attention towards the problem of internal conspiracy or criminal networks is as equally important as the attention to other issues – which fall under the umbrella of aviation security. There is a general tendency among airline management to refuse to acknowledge the possibility of internal conspiracies being applicable to their staff…there is a current need to fully identify persons working in organisations which could pose a risk in terms of overall aviation security.[56]

3.59   In 2005, soon after some excerpts of both reports were published in *The Australian* newspaper, the Australian Government announced a review of Australian aviation security to address the serious issues raised (the Wheeler Review).

3.60   The Wheeler Review drew on the findings of the ACS 2002 and 2003 reports to recommend that the AGD work with state and territory governments to require that private security officers in the aviation industry, including those responsible for screening at airports, be background-checked, licenced and trained to more adequate minimum national standards. Wheeler also recommended that the involved department require a more comprehensive training program for all security related airport staff.[57]

Current situation

3.61   Mr Kessing claimed that no action had been taken to address the security issues raised within the 2002 and 2003 reports. Mr Kessing argued that:

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54   Australian Customs Service, *Sydney Airport Air Border Security: Risk Analysis*, 2003, p. 18.

55   Australian Customs Service, *Sydney Airport Air Border Security: Risk Analysis*, 2003, pp. 8, 10.

56   Australian Customs Service, *Sydney Airport Air Border Security: Risk Analysis*, 2003, p. 63.

57   Rt. Hon Sir John Wheeler, *An Independent Review of Airport Security and Policing for the Government of Australia*, Australian Government, September 2005, p. 78.

> The Wheeler Report endorsed my second report and proposed changes which the government promised $200 million to implement. I suggest that the recommendations of the Wheeler Report…have not been effectively implemented.[58]

3.62   Despite his absence from Australian Customs for some time, Mr Kessing argued that 'the similarities of [current] reported offences, breaches and arrests of officers suggest that there has been little improvement in the [security] situation despite the many reports and recommendations, both commercial and official'.[59]

3.63   Mr Kessing maintained that the 'greatest vulnerability in an airport is ground staff', given these employees are often low skilled, engaged casually or part-time, and yet have access to restricted and secure areas. With a focus on passengers, ground staff are often neglected. He concluded that the 'currently highly disruptive and expensive screening undergone by innocent travellers is out of all proportion to the threat they pose'.[60]

3.64   Mr Kessing suggested that, while proper background checking could delay employment processes, it would prevent the unemployment of unsuitable staff especially as subcontractors. Mr Kessing reiterated the Wheeler Review position that the 'use by subcontractors of external staff is an example of the commercial imperative being inimical to security'.[61]

3.65   Mr Kessing proposed that security resources and financing would be better directed to 'intelligence targeting which would be more effective in identifying potential threats'.[62] Mr Kessing continued:

> screening, however ineffective, must remain purely as a very visible deterrent. However, I would advocate that the real resources be put into intelligence gathering, proper analysis and proper targeting to stop potential threats before they have breakfast and leave home.[63]

Committee view and recommendations

Contracting of airport security

3.66   Numerous aviation reviews have identified long-term and ongoing issues with the engagement, training and background checking of security screening and other

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58   Mr Allan Kessing, *Submission 21*, p. 1.

59   Mr Allan Kessing, *Submission 21*, p. 1.

60   Mr Allan Kessing, *Submission 21*, pp. 2-3.

61   Mr Allan Kessing, *Submission 21*, p. 4.

62   Mr Allan Kessing, *Submission 21*, p. 3.

63   Mr Allan Kessing, private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 24 November 2016, p. 6.

airport staff. Despite these reviews and recommendations, some airport staffing practices continue to present ongoing and significant security risks.

3.67   In 2011, the PJCLE raised serious concerns about the potential for security lapses as a result of high staff turnover, particularly of security guards. To address this concern, it recommended that security at major airports be undertaken by a suitably trained government security force.[64]

3.68   However, this recommendation was not accepted by the government on the basis that the industry-led and government-regulated model provided an 'effective, efficient and sustainable security service, notwithstanding evolving threats, increased security requirements, and increase in domestic and international aviation traffic'.[65] Its September 2011 response further noted that:

> [a] more centralised model was not supported on the grounds that a government agency screening model would be overly prescriptive, more expensive and less efficient than current arrangements.[66]

3.69   The committee encourages the government to rethink this position. Evidence considered by the committee suggests that the issues raised by the PJCLE still exist and, if not properly regulated, the use of subcontracted workers could continue to create vulnerabilities in Australia's aviation security framework.

3.70   Likewise, it appears to the committee that the concerns and recommendations of Wheeler in relation to screening have not been addressed or implemented. Evidence to the committee suggests that there does not appear to be an adequate framework for the department to work with screening authorities. Such work would ensure third-party screening providers implement practices supporting appropriate minimum standards in staff training, security clearance requirements, working conditions and performance levels.

3.71   The department stressed its regulatory relationship was with the nominated screening authority (the airport operators), rather than the screening providers themselves.[67] This arrangement has created a disconnect between regulations and the quality of security services being provided on the ground at airports, by third parties.

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64   Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement, *Inquiry into the adequacy of aviation and maritime security measures to combat serious and organised crime*, Recommendation 2, June 2011, p. 38.

65   Australian Government Response to the Report of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement, September 2011, p. 5.

66   Australian Government Response to the Report of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement, September 2011, p. 6.

67   Ms Pauline Sullivan, Office of Transport Security, Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, C*ommittee Hansard*, 6 February 2015, p. 66.

3.72   It is clear that security screening standards should remain consistent across the sector, irrespective of whether staff are directly employed by screening providers, or contracted or subcontracted by security companies.

3.73   Additionally, given the evidence before the committee regarding aviation security training and outsourcing, and the serious consequences that may result from inadequate security training and education, the committee encourages the government to finalise its inquiry into aviation security training, and address any security issues that may arise from the inquiry's findings.

Recommendation 2

3.74   The committee recommends that the Inspector of Transport Security complete and publish its review into aviation security training and education as soon as practicable.

Recommendation 3

3.75   The committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development develop a framework to ensure that subcontracted screening bodies have appropriate employment standards and provide security training and services consistent with those provided by screening authorities under the Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005. The framework should take into account any inconsistencies in the training and education as identified by the Inspector of Transport Security.