

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

**Question No. 186**

**Senator Heffernan asked the following question at the hearing on 27 May 2009:**

In relation to the Air Security Officer Program;

- a) Air Security Officers, colloquially known as ‘sky marshals’ have been providing a security presence on selected Australian domestic flights since 2001 and two years later, according to page 34 of the Australian Federal Police July 2008 edition of their quarterly magazine, “Platypus”, on selected international flights. Is that correct?
- b) They are armed and are essentially there to deal with hijackings. Is that correct?
- c) What cuts has the Government made to the Air Security Officer program? On what basis has this decision been made? Is it based on a security assessment or purely as a budgetary measure?

**The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:**

- a) The Australian Federal Police (AFP) Air Security Officers have been providing a security presence on selected Australian domestic flights since 2001 and on selected international flights since 2003.
- b) Air Security Officers are armed AFP officers with the objective to contain, or resolve, high-risk security incidents on targeted domestic and international flights. This includes an element of deterrence.
- c) No cuts in funding have occurred to the Air Security Officer program.