7

The arrival experience

Introduction

7.1 This Chapter examines the physical infrastructure and immigration arrangements which will be most affected by the special visitor demands of the Games. Australian entry points will have to handle higher than normal numbers of travellers and accommodate the intense processing peaks while continuing to maintain Australia's border integrity.

7.2 The specific needs arising from the Games are primarily those generated by the expected increase in volume of visitors. The Tourism Forecasting Council predicted in December 1998 that there would be 4,662,000 international visitor arrivals in 2000, an increase of 435,000 on the numbers expected in 1999. Of those expected in 2000, some 280,000 are predicted to visit specifically for the Olympic and / or Paralympic Games.[1]

7.3 Most of the visitors will arrive by air and will expect to move smoothly from their aircraft and complete Australia's border formalities with a minimum of delay. The main factors affecting these expectations are the capacity of the physical infrastructure to accommodate the arrivals, and the ability of the border control agencies to process incoming passengers efficiently.

7.4 To meet these expected demands a number of coordinating bodies have been established. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) is coordinating the Olympic and Paralympic responsibilities of

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1 Comprising: 223,000 Visitors; 47,000 Olympic and Paralympic Family; and 5-10,000 unaccredited media. AQIS, Submissions, p. 16. The ATC quotes 132,00 directly attracted by the Olympic Games. Submissions, p. 53.

federal agencies. The Australian National Audit Office report on security preparations recommended the establishment of a senior level forum to address security concerns. The resultant Border Control Coordination Group (BCCG) comprises DIMA (Chair), ACS, AQIS, ASIO, the Australian Federal Police (AFP), and DFAT. It succeeds the former Group on Olympic and Paralympic Arrivals and Departures (GOAD). These groups and their subcommittees coordinate approaches to Games issues.

Physical infrastructure

7.5 Most attention has been paid to the potential demands that Games visitors will make on Sydney International Airport which already handles nearly half of Australia's international air passenger movements. The number of aircraft which may be handled on any one day is related to the hours during which operations are permitted outside the curfew period, the number of landing slots available during that period and the number of slots used. The passenger numbers generated depend on the numbers of the aircraft arriving, and the actual numbers aboard each aircraft.

7.6 Aircraft arrivals may be affected by weather, runway conditions, and off-schedule arrivals of other aircraft. These will, in turn, affect the numbers of passengers able to be delivered to the terminal by airbridge or bus, and the speed with which this can be accomplished. The range of variables affecting aircraft operations can lead to the bunching of arrivals, with consequent concentrated demands on the airport infrastructure, and potential aggravation of visitors through delays.

7.7 Visitor arrivals at Sydney International Airport for the Games will not be evenly spread over the weeks leading up to the opening. A surge in international arrivals is expected to occur on 14 September 2000, the day before the Olympic Games opens. Arrivals are predicted to be 30,000 that day, with peak arrival rates ranging from 3,400 per hour to 5,770 per hour. In addition, DTRS estimates that daily international arrivals will be at least 15,000 on 15 occasions during the Games.[2]

7.8 From the visitors' viewpoint, delays in landing, parking, and leaving the aircraft after an already long flight will be aggravating. Infrastructure with the capacity to cope with surges in demand will minimise these delays and help to provide a positive experience for visitors arriving in Australia.

2 SAC, Submissions, p. 146; DIMA, Submissions, p. 108; ACS, Evidence, p. 27; SAC, Submissions, p. 146, estimates that domestic and international arrivals will total 69,000.

Sydney International Airport

Capacity

7.9 Sydney International Airport is expected to handle about 178,000 arrivals during the first half of September 2000. The balance of the visitors (44,600) in this period are predicted to arrive through other international terminals, mainly Brisbane, Melbourne, Cairns, and Perth. These visitors are expected to have minimal impact on operations at these terminals.[3]

7.10 Sydney Airports Corporation (SAC) estimates that, on completion of international terminal works by May 2000, the maximum daily capacity will be a total of 100,000 international passengers inbound and outbound. The estimate assumes that 31 aircraft gates distributed between 2 piers would be operating during 17 non-curfew hours, and that aircraft turnaround time will be two hours.

7.11 The upgrade to Sydney airport facilities provides for a peak capacity to deliver 12,400 bags per hour to waiting passengers. Achievement of this level is dependent on the rate of bag delivery from aircraft to the baggage system, and the rate at which bags are reclaimed.

7.12 In practice, given the constraints of maintaining equipment and personnel efficiency, SAC estimates that the maximum working capacity is 70,000 passengers arriving or departing per day. SAC equates this to an arrivals capacity of around 6,000 per hour and an hourly departure check-in of 4,200.[4] The predicted hourly figures are governed by the numbers of aircraft bays and turnaround times, but could increase if the proportion of occupied seats per aircraft was in excess of the predicted levels of 90 per cent. The total daily numbers would also change if the curfew hours were altered. These would have an impact on the primary line.

7.13 The Committee noted that problems with aircraft arrivals and tarmac accommodation delay passengers exiting from the aircraft and create backing up at the primary line. This will affect passengers' attitudes to both the arrival process and their judgements of Australia's capacity to do business efficiently. The Committee remains concerned that the capacity of the physical infrastructure will be sufficient to handle inevitable changes from the planned arrivals patterns.

3 AQIS, Submissions, pp. 20-21.

4 SAC, Submissions, pp. 146-148; Evidence, p. 108.

Primary line

7.14 The primary line passenger processing capacity, which will be achievable for the Games, is generally estimated to be 6,000 per hour, as indicated in the Table.[5] The objective of ACS is to clear 95 per cent of people through entry control points in no more than 30 minutes after disembarkation from the aircraft.

Table 1 Sydney International Airport: Border agencies estimated passenger capacity

	Arrivals/hour	Departures/hour
Current Capacity	3,900	3,000
Peak effort to date	4,200	No data
Expected maximum capacity	6,000	6,000
Predicted peak demand	3,400-5,770	3,500

Source *Current & peak:* ACS, Submissions, p. 168. *Predicted capacity*: Submissions - ACS, pp. 67-68; AQIS, p. 16; DIMA, p. 108; SAC, p. 146. *Predicted demand*: DIMA, Submissions, p. 108; SAC, Submissions, p. 146; ACS, Evidence, p. 27; Submissions, p. 67.

7.15 The relatively close agreement between Sydney International Airport's predicted capacity, and the expected arrivals processing to be achieved reflects, in part, the role which expected Games demands played in setting the parameters for the airport's expansion.

7.16 Despite this, the Committee was concerned at the potential volatility of the arrival estimates, as seen in the predictions for the day prior to the Olympic opening ceremony. They range from 21,000 to 30,000, a variation of more than 40 per cent.[6] Increases in actual hourly arrivals, compared with the expected numbers, could see delays in processing. In those circumstances, visitors eager to start their Games experience would be given a poor impression of Australia's ability to plan and coordinate its immigration handling, and of its commitment to the business of tourism.

7.17 In this context, DIMA noted in its submission that the predicted peak load would be likely to be increased to some extent through airlines seeking to maximise payloads on flights that would otherwise be virtually empty, ie. those leaving before the Games and those arriving at the end of the Games.[7]

5 DIMA, Submissions, p. 108; ACS, Evidence, p. 27.

6 *21,000* - AQIS, Submissions, p. 16; *22,800* - ACS, Submissions, p. 68; DIMA, Submissions, p. 108; *30,000* – SAC, Submissions, p. 146.

7 DIMA, Submissions, p. 109.

7.18 The assumptions underlying the peak passenger processing capacity of 6,000 per hour therefore attracted the Committee's attention. These included:

- the role of Advanced Passenger Information (API);
- the use of streaming to achieve efficiencies;
- passenger processing speed;
- computer capacity;
- staffing; and
- language capability.

Advance Passenger Information (API)

7.19 API systems provide pre-arrival notification of traveller details to Australian border control agencies. The advance information permits faster clearance of those travellers at the border through designated arrival streams.

7.20 According to ACS, the API system allows passengers to be processed at a peak speed of about 25 seconds, or about half the time taken for non-API passengers. The full potential of API was not being realised currently because it was used by only about 37 per cent of international passengers arriving at Sydney airport.[8] The Committee was also aware that the promised rapid transit of individual passengers did not always eventuate because they were unfamiliar with its operation.

7.21 The expansion of API is dependent on the airlines deciding to use the relevant electronic systems. DIMA and ACS are pursuing a Memorandum of Understanding covering incentives for participating airlines.[9]

7.22 The Committee noted that, initially, the DIMA estimates of visitor throughput for the Games period assumed that API would be available for 60 per cent of arrivals.[10] However, the Committee was subsequently advised that the desired API level of 60 per cent had not yet been achieved, but that improved processing rates would produce the desired throughput.[11] ACS noted that an increase in the use of API would provide a bigger safety margin over the anticipated loads.[12]

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8 ACS, Evidence, p. 27; Submissions, p. 350.
9 ACS, Submissions, p. 71; DIMA, Submissions, p. 354.
10 ACS, Submissions, p. 71; DIMA, Submissions, p. 123.
11 ACS, Submissions, p. 194.
12 ACS, Evidence, p. 27.

7.23 The Committee noted that the reduced take-up of API would lessen the processing efficiencies which might be realised through streaming.

Streaming

7.24 Streaming involves categorising incoming passengers. It can facilitate processing by allowing the primary line personnel to focus on passengers with, for example, similar documentation. Streaming does not, however, equate to border risk assessment, which requires attention to each individual in the stream.

7.25 DIMA advised that limited streaming gave processing efficiencies, but that this advantage could be lost if more than about three streams were set up. For the Games period it is intended to stream Family Members. Passengers with API-generated "Express" Passenger Cards are also directed to dedicated booths at the primary line for quicker processing.

7.26 The Committee heard anecdotal evidence that a number of arriving passengers were not always aware of the "Express" lane. There was also evidence presented that the airlines, for whom this special arrangement represented a marketing advantage, did not widely publicise it to their passengers. The Committee felt, therefore, that many members of the travelling public would be similarly mystified concerning its purpose, and noted that no specific survey had been undertaken to discover whether the system was understood and used by passengers.[13]

7.27 The Committee also noted that, currently, only 37 per cent of inbound passengers at Sydney International Airport use API.[14] The potential gains in processing speed from API technology have therefore yet to be fully realised for a number of reasons.

Conclusion

7.28 The Committee was of the opinion that DIMA has failed to properly assess the passenger use of the 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.

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13 ACS, Evidence, pp. 221-222, 229-230.

14 Nationally, the proportion is 33.5 per cent. ACS, Submissions, p. 350.

Recommendation 14

7.29 **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.**

Processing capacity

7.30 ACS advised the Committee that it no longer needed a 60 per cent take-up of API because of improved processing rates[15] which had reduced the average time per passenger to between 35 and 40 seconds. ACS, which staffs the primary line booths, achieved a peak processing rate of 4,200 per hour in 1997-98, prior to the implementation of improved processing cycles.

7.31 ACS indicated that it was already achieving a 35-second cycle during peaks. On the basis of these improved performance figures, and with all 60 booths staffed, a passenger throughput of 6,000 per hour was achievable. ACS' view was, therefore, that it was already matching the expected Games processing rates. ACS noted that an increase in the use of API would provide a bigger safety margin over the anticipated loads.[16]

7.32 The Committee's view is that the predicted safety margin between the maximum capacity of the primary line and the anticipated number of passengers is slender. The margin is based on a predicted ability of improved primary line processing rates to meet the anticipated demand. This itself rested on a number of assumptions. It anticipated that the arrivals were spread relatively evenly between the two piers at Sydney International Airport, that aircraft arrived on schedule, that the proportion of passengers with API did not decline during the Games arrivals surge and that all 60 inward primary line booths were available for processing.[17]

15 ACS, Submissions, p. 194.

16 ACS, Evidence, p. 27.

17 ACS, Evidence, pp. 27-28; Submissions, pp. 67-68.

7.33 However, if a significant number of aircraft did not come in on schedule there would be delays in processing.[18] If four of the 60 booths were not functioning, then passenger throughput (at 35 second processing rate) would fall to 5,760. This is below the predicted peak arrivals rate of 5,770 per hour.

Conclusion

7.34 The Committee is concerned that the narrow margin between predicted demand and capacity at the primary line could result in build-up at the primary line at peak times.

Computing capacity

7.35 Maintenance of secure, robust immigration processing at the primary line requires computer backup. The Committee was informed that these had been reinforced to meet the expected Games demands.

7.36 Australia's immigration system depends on computer technology such as ETA and MAL to permit it to handle large numbers of visitors expeditiously. MAL, which provides a database against which persons and documents can be checked, has been upgraded over the past two years. The management of data input and holdings has also been refined. Both measures permit better border control. Up-to-date MAL data is held by a number of border protection authorities and stored in multiple computers, providing redundancy in the event of problems with a specific computer.

7.37 The introduction of the ACS Passenger Analysis Clearance and Evaluation (PACE) system will provide a capacity calculated to allow for the Games' workload.[19] PACE will operate on local and Canberra servers and has a range of fallback options in the event of a computer problem. Loss of the Canberra link would not affect performance, but full processing via Canberra during a loss of the local server would bring a loss of performance. This would worsen if stand-alone equipment were the only system available. If no computer systems were in place at all, checking by hard copy printout of the Combined Passenger Check List would produce a slower rate.

7.38 The in-built redundancy of MAL and PACE individually and the overlap between the systems offers some assurance that data will continue to be available in the event of computer problems. Yet the Committee was

18 SAC, Evidence, p. 104; ACS, Evidence, p. 28.

19 ACS, Submissions, p. 72.

informed that performance standards for fallback mode had yet to be finalised with EDS (ACS' Information Technology outsourcer).[20]

7.39 The Committee noted that ACS identified PACE as a "Potential Issue",[21] and was concerned with the delays in the PACE implementation. The Phase 1 rollout schedule has slipped by nearly a year, from August 1998 to July 1999. Phase 2, regional implementation, originally scheduled for early 1999, will now occur in April 2000.[22] Instead of more than a year in which to bed-down the system before the Games period, ACS now has only about four months. This delay may have an adverse effect on the ACS border control capability, because the DIMA training timetable for ACS personnel depends on the PACE system being operational.[23]

7.40 The Committee remains concerned about the vulnerability of ACS visitor processing to computer malfunction, particularly because the effect on the systems of continual high levels of demand during the Games period has yet to be determined. EDS is undertaking simulation testing using calculations and models.[24] The expected peaks in processing may impose demands which the systems have not previously had to meet, with an associated potential for overload and malfunction.

7.41 A range of "test events", concentrated in September 1999, which was scheduled to exercise all aspects of the technical and operational interface between DIMA and SOCOG, will now take place in October 1999.[25] The significant differences between the test and Games environments will be the volume of traffic involved.

Conclusion

7.42 The Committee considered that the possible "worst case" of processing passengers using a hard copy printout would not cope with the Games period peak demands and would compromise Australia's border security.

7.43 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.

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20 ACS, Submissions, p. 73.

21 ACS, Submissions, p. 74.

22 ACS, Submissions, pp. 74, 196, 349.

23 DIMA, Submissions, p. 356.

24 ACS, Submissions, p. 73; DIMA, Submissions, p. 356.

25 SOCOG, Submissions, pp. 175.

Recommendation 15

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

Staffing

7.45 None of the immigration systems and innovations will function properly if there is a lack of trained staff. They will also require sufficient experience to handle the expected heavy responsibilities of maintaining border integrity under the pressures of the Games period.

7.46 ACS, which staffs the primary line, was not taking on any more staff overall. It has, however, moved to increase the numbers of trained personnel available for the Games by undertaking recruiting which would otherwise not have taken place until 2001. DIMA is currently providing training for ACS staff on a needs basis, pending the introduction of ACS PACE system. A major training program will commence early in 2000 and continue until the Games, as required.[26] ACS will also arrange for some of the existing trained part-time staff to work full-time. These arrangements are expected to boost personnel numbers by up to 100 full and part-time staff from the current 470 full-time equivalent staff.[27]

7.47 Similarly, AQIS will be moving its permanent part-time staff to full time for the Games. Currently it has 88 full-time equivalent staff at the airport. It is also structuring leave rosters to increase the number of personnel available and their span of coverage. Should the full complement of officers be insufficient, there will be further short-term leave adjustments and limited overtime will be introduced.[28]

7.48 DIMA is identifying personnel with suitable backgrounds within the organisation for formal training to equip them to supplement existing staff at air and sea ports. This may involve some back-filling of positions within DIMA.[29]

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26 DIMA, Submissions, p. 356.

27 ACS, Evidence, p. 35.

28 AQIS, Submissions, p. 20.

29 DIMA, Submissions, pp. 366-367.

7.49 The Committee noted that the major organisations involved in controlling access to Australia do not intend temporarily to expand their staffing. Rather, the peak demands generally will be met within the 2000 staffing levels by restructuring working arrangements to maximise staff availability and deploying personnel to more or different duties.

Conclusion

7.50 The Committee believed that the staffing arrangements 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

7.51 **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.**

Language

7.52 The increased volume of visitors will bring with it a more sustained demand for language assistance and, most likely, an increase in the variety of tongues encountered by staff.

7.53 The Passenger Card which passengers fill out prior to moving to the primary line is available with the Customs and Quarantine questions in 12 languages. The remainder of the information sought is in English. At the primary line ACS will use multilingual staff wherever possible. Consideration is also being given to using appropriately cleared SOCOG volunteers to assist with interpreting.[30]

7.54 DIMA's language service is the Translating and Interpreting Service. DIMA advised the Committee that one of the challenges of the Games period will be maintaining the level of interpreter services for normal operations.[31]

30 ACS, Submission, p. 69.

31 DIMA, Submissions, p. 134.

7.55 On this evidence, it appeared to the Committee that the expected high demand for language services during the Games period would stretch the resources of the main border authorities. This has the potential to slow down the processing of inbound passengers.

Conclusion

7.56 In this situation 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. The refurbishment of Sydney International Airport has provided readily changeable signs, and this technology should be exploited and supplemented.

Recommendation 17

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

Beyond the primary line

7.58 Prior to clearing customs and quarantine, passengers collect their baggage. The expected Olympic Games peak, the day prior to the opening ceremony, is 10,000 bags per hour, based on 5,700 passenger arrivals per hour. This is less than the peak capacity of 12,400 bags per hour.[32]

7.59 Baggage retrieval was a significant problem at the Atlanta Olympic Games. Handling of baggage at Sydney was identified to the Committee as a potential "choke point" threatening "gridlock" within the terminal as queues of passengers waiting to exit the area encroach on passengers waiting at the baggage carousels.[33]

7.60 Some potential sources of congestion in baggage retrieval, such as slow unloading from the aircraft, are outside the control of border authorities. Impediments to effective cross-delivery between piers by the baggage system will reduce the speed with which baggage is made available to the passengers. Slow retrieval of bags by the passengers and AQIS identification of passengers whose luggage requires inspection may also

32 SAC, Submissions, pp. 146-148.

33 ACS, Submissions, p. 68; Qantas, Submissions, p. 168.

reduce the pace at which passengers leave the baggage area. AQIS, however, expects that:

> Most of the passengers coming to the Olympics and Paralympics will be experienced international travellers and the incidence of quarantine intervention is likely to be lower than with other groups routinely processed in Sydney. This will further reduce the potential demand on quarantine staff.[34]

7.61 SAC, AQIS and ACS have acted to facilitate passenger movement through the baggage area. SAC is taking steps to reduce lines that run back into the baggage reclaim areas and is also doubling the number of inspection desks in the northern part of the terminal to eighteen. AQIS will significantly increase baggage-processing staff for the Games period. ACS will make increased use of profiling and intelligence assessment, and apply technology to reduce the amount of baggage physically examined.[35]

7.62 Outside the border control area, the efficiency with which passengers can be transported away from the terminal will also affect their ability to exit the baggage claim areas. The ease with which visitors can leave the terminal at the time of the Games is neither the responsibility, nor within the powers, of the border control agencies. Nevertheless, it will be considered by visitors as part of their arrival experience, and as such is relevant to the Committee's broad terms of reference. In addition, witnesses raised issues such as congestion and the need for adequate transport, such as taxis, with the Committee.[36]

7.63 A range of initiatives to expedite visitor transit from the terminal includes increasing land-side floor areas, road redevelopment, and encouraging the use of public transport such as a new rail link.[37]

Conclusion

7.64 The Committee was sceptical of AQIS belief that most of the Games passengers would be experienced international travellers who would therefore require less quarantine intervention.

7.65 The Committee noted that the ease with which visitors finally enter Australia would colour their assessment of Australia's ability to efficiently plan and coordinate visitor arrivals.

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34 AQIS, Submissions, p. 20.

35 SAC, Evidence, pp. 105-6; AQIS, Submissions, p. 16; ACS, Submissions, p. 69.

36 Cabinet Office, NSW, Submissions, p. 183; SAC, Submission, p. 150.

37 SAC, Evidence, p. 150.

Recommendation 18

7.66 **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.**

Sydney by sea

7.67 Sydney Harbour is both a national maritime gateway and, for the duration of the Games, an alternative accommodation site. In addition to small private vessels, an estimated 10-12 large passenger ships will serve as floating hotels for both Australians and visitors. The visitors housed in the floating hotels are expected to arrive by air, rather than on the ships. The bulk of the relevant immigration issues will therefore be dealt with at the arrival airports, as outlined above.

7.68 Small ships and yachts which arrive in Sydney may well have made their first Australian landfall in another port. The essential scrutiny would therefore have been undertaken there, and their subsequent movements will be monitored by AQIS, as routinely happens.

7.69 Ships require continued vigilance for the duration of their stay because of the materials, food, and possibly animals on board, which cannot be permitted entry to Australia. Rubbish disposal is therefore also an important consideration. The relevant customs and quarantine effort will be required to be sustained for the duration of the maritime visitors' presence.

7.70 The particular quarantine and customs demands of an unusually large complement of residential ships in Sydney will double the need for AQIS staff. This will be addressed through modification of leave rosters, moving part-time staff to full-time, and diverting staff from other duties or locations. AQIS will also work very closely with Customs and the State police.[38]

Summary

7.71 The evidence submitted to the Committee indicates the relevant agencies are confident that sufficient preparations have been undertaken or are in

38 AQIS, Submissions, p. 22.

train to meet the Games demands. This should ensure that visitors to Australia at the time of the Games will have positive experiences which will assist in Australia gaining opportunities for development of business and tourism.

7.72 However, the Committee has reservations concerning:

- the unrealised potential of the API system for prior passenger information and faster passenger processing;
- the slippage of information technology timetables, with the potential to adversely affect pre-Games testing, personnel training and Games period capability; and
- the sensitivity of the assumptions and estimates provided to the Committee relating to predicted demand and capacity for passenger processing.

7.73 These concerns reinforce the Committee's recommendation that specific testing of computer performance in situations approaching predicted levels and duration of demand be undertaken.