

Additional Comments

Australian Greens

1.1 The Australian Greens referred this bill to an inquiry because of the privacy and health concerns elaborated in several submissions.

1.2 While these issues have been examined in the Committee's report and the government amendment prohibiting the storage and transmittal of images is welcome, the health problems experienced overseas with back-scatter scanners that use ionising radiation are serious enough to warrant more attention. These issues provide compelling reasons to reject outright the use of ionising backscatter x-ray equipment, rather than limit it to 'certain clearly defined exceptional circumstances,' (Recommendation 2), especially as other technology is available.

1.3 The EU has banned the use of backscatter body scanners because of the possible health risks to passengers and staff. They continue to be used in the USA where passengers have the right to request a frisk search as an alternative. Documents before a USA Federal Court indicate that the health implications of the use of this type of technology have been grossly understated by authorities. The presence of a cancer cluster at Logan Airport in Boston has been documented.

1.4 The Australian Greens support the Committee's recommendation that frisk searches should continue to be an alternative to body scanners (Recommendation 1) and that the government should ensure that screening technology is thoroughly tested for compliance with health regulations (Recommendation 3).

1.5 The Australian Greens note that conducting inquiries 'on the papers' might appear to save time, however, clarifying the intention of proposed legislation with experts and Departments at public hearings saves numerous questions on notice and informal information seeking that were necessary in this case.

Senator Scott Ludlam

