

# Submission by

Bryan Seymour  
Reporter  
Seven Network (Australia)

## **Inquiry into airport and aviation security**

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
References Committee

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### **Introduction:**

Thank you for the request that I make a submission to the Senate Inquiry into Airport and Aviation security.

In my role as a reporter I have been involved in a number of report that raised issues that may be of relevance to the Inquiry, including:

- Why are so many weapons, including guns, Tasers, knives and pepper spray, making their way in terminals and onto aircraft in Australia?
- What is the true, unreported number of weapons missed by security screening?
- Why are these weapons mostly discovered only when the passengers carrying them surrender them, or they are found on planes or in terminals by staff?
- How easy is it for anyone to get into secure areas in our Airports?
- Are the entrances to our terminals adequately protected?
- How secure are airport perimeters?
- Do Airports, and does the Department for Infrastructure and Regional Development, take airport security seriously?
- What immediate and long-term action should be taken to secure Australia's airports?

Seven News FOI Editor Alison Sandy investigated airport security breaches in 2010 when reporting for The Courier Mail newspaper. Using FOI Sandy uncovered 182 security breaches at Australian airports; including knives, ammunition, butane torches and box cutters missed by security screening.

Sandy quoted then Opposition spokesperson Warren Truss saying:

"There's been a complacency starting to develop within the checking system at airports and we need to be constantly vigilant," he (Mr. Truss) said.

"I'm particularly concerned how they've dropped the ball on customs and quarantine (and) think it's a tragedy we are now putting at risk the travelling public."

Since the 2010 reports, our investigations suggest that similar incidents are continuing to occur and have increased in number.

Following the 2010 reports, Airports introduced confidentiality agreements with the Federal Department to keep secret the location of security breaches.

Seven News began researching a possible story into airport security in early 2014.

The Seven News Freedom of Information Editor, Alison Sandy, submitted an FOI request on this topic to the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, which was received on April 10, 2104.

This FOI request was deemed too broad for the Department's resources. Accordingly, a 'slim-lined' request was submitted on May 7, 2014.

Over the following months various documents, (some heavily redacted), were released.

In July 2014, Seven News aired stories based on FOI documents revealing photographs of weapons that had breached security at airports.

Following an appeal by Seven News, an internal FOI review by the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development resulted in a decision reversing a refusal to release some documents.

Seven News aired further stories in November 2014, based on FOI documents revealing 282 security breaches at Australian airports between January 2012 and April 2014.

These stories combined separate, yet related, FOI documents to give context to the startling and previously unreported security breaches in our Airports.

These reports led to a motion in the Senate to establish this inquiry into airport and aviation security.

Due to the constraints of the FOI process, we believe the breaches we reported to be the tip of the iceberg. This is because we had to restrict the number and type of breaches we could apply for. In addition, these 282 breaches only relate to seven airports – Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne (Tullamarine), Sydney, Brisbane and Gold Coast.

Further details in relation to the applicable news reports, the FOI requests and the response from Government are set out in the remainder of this submission.

Bryan Seymour  
Reporter  
Seven News