

# Report 406

## **Developments in Aviation Security since the Committee's June 2004 *Report 400: Review of Aviation Security in Australia* – An Interim Report**

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

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## Foreword

In light of continuing community concern about and media attention to aviation security, on 25 May 2005 the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit resolved to inquire into and report on developments in aviation security since its June 2004 *Report 400: Review of Aviation Security in Australia*. The Committee is continuing its review and expects to table its final report early next year.

On 7 June 2005 the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services, the Hon John Anderson, announced a cabinet decision to conduct a review into airport security and policing to be conducted by the Rt Hon Sir John Wheeler DL.

On 21 September 2005, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Transport and Regional Services announced the Commonwealth Government's in principle acceptance of the recommendations made by the Wheeler review and additional expenditure of \$194 million to further tighten security at Australia's major airports.

The Committee unanimously supports the recommendations of *An Independent Review of Airport Security and Policing for the Government of Australia*.


Based on the evidence gathered to date, the Committee has identified two areas of aviation security that are the subject of recommendations made by the Wheeler review, where further specific requirements should be put forward. These areas are:

- the proposed review of the *Aviation Transport Security Act 2004* and *Regulations 2005*; and
- the proposed changes to background checking processes of applications for an Aviation Security Identification Cards (Recommendation 10).

The Committee has tabled this interim report in order to allow the Government to consider the following findings at the same time as it develops strategies to implement the Wheeler recommendations.

The Committee will make further recommendations across all areas of aviation security in its final report to be tabled in the new year.

Bob Baldwin MP  
Chair



## Membership of the Committee (41<sup>st</sup> Parliament)

Chair            Mr Bob Baldwin MP

Deputy Chair   Ms Sharon Grierson MP

Members        Senator John Hogg

Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP  
(from 17/8/2005)

Senator Gary Humphries

Mr Russell Broadbent MP

Senator Claire Moore

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Ms Catherine King MP

Senator John Watson

Mr Andrew Laming MP

Hon. Alex Somlyay MP (to 10/8/2005)

Mr Lindsay Tanner MP

Mr Ken Ticehurst MP

## Membership of the Sectional Committee (41<sup>st</sup> Parliament)

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Deputy Chair Ms Sharon Grierson MP

Members Senator John Hogg

Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP  
(from 17/8/2005)

Senator Claire Moore

Mr Russell Broadbent MP

Senator Fiona Nash (from 7/9/2005)

Ms Anna Burke MP (to 14/9/2005)

Senator John Watson

Ms Catherine King MP

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## Terms of reference

The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit will inquire into and report on developments in aviation security since its June 2004 *Report 400: Review of Aviation Security in Australia*, with particular reference to:

- a) regulation of aviation security by the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services, and the Department's response to aviation security incidents since June 2004;
- b) compliance with Commonwealth security requirements by airport operators at major and regional airports;
- c) compliance with Commonwealth security requirements by airlines;
- d) the impact of overseas security requirements on Australian aviation security;
- e) cost imposts of security upgrades, particularly for regional airports;
- f) privacy implications of greater security measures;
- g) opportunities to enhance security measures presented by current and emerging technologies, including measures to combat identity fraud; and
- h) procedures for, and security of, baggage handling operations at international, domestic and regional airports, by both airlines and airports.







# Recommendations

## Review of Aviation Transport Security Act and Regulations

1. The Committee supports Recommendation 9 of the Wheeler Review that the Department of Transport and Regional Services review the *Aviation Transport Security Act 2004* and Regulations to ensure that they promote a proactive culture of ongoing risk assessment.

The Committee believes that every reasonable precaution should be taken in preventing the baggage of unwitting passengers being used for criminal purposes. One such measure would require that each item of checked baggage be individually weighed and the weight recorded on receipt by the airline.

The Committee is aware that the weight of a checked baggage item will vary between different sets of airport scales. However in the event that an allegation of baggage tampering is made, a reading of the baggage weight at the port of arrival can be transmitted to the port of origin. An equivalent weight could be placed upon the scales that recorded the original baggage weight to determine the degree of variation between the scales and to ascertain whether any weight increase or decrease has occurred.

While the recording of individual checked baggage items may not be able to detect small amounts of weight gain or loss, as would occur with the addition of small amounts of drugs, the Committee maintains that this measure would contribute to the peace of mind of the traveling public in Australia and possibly lessen their use of baggage wrapping services at airports, which can inhibit checked baggage screening processes – particularly the deployment of Explosive Trace Detection.

**REC 1: That the Department of Transport and Regional Services amend the *Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005* to require all checked baggage to be issued with weight certification at the time of check in.**

2. During an inspection of the new combined domestic and international terminal at Adelaide International Airport, the Committee was concerned to observe covered rubbish receptacles within the terminal. The Committee was informed that the bins had been designed to direct any internal explosion in a vertical direction, thus minimising subsequent damage to the surrounds.

The covered rubbish receptacles at Adelaide International Airport provide opportunity for persons wishing to leave unaccompanied items in airports and stands in contrast to the open rubbish receptacles, that consisted of shallow-walled trays lined with sand, which the Committee observed during its inspection of Cairns International Airport.

**REC 2: That the Department of Transport and Regional Services amend the *Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005* to require that all rubbish receptacles within Counter Terrorism First Response airports and their designated precincts be designed so as to prevent the concealment of any item that is otherwise prohibited to be left unaccompanied.**

## **Visitor Identification Cards/Aviation Security Identification Cards**

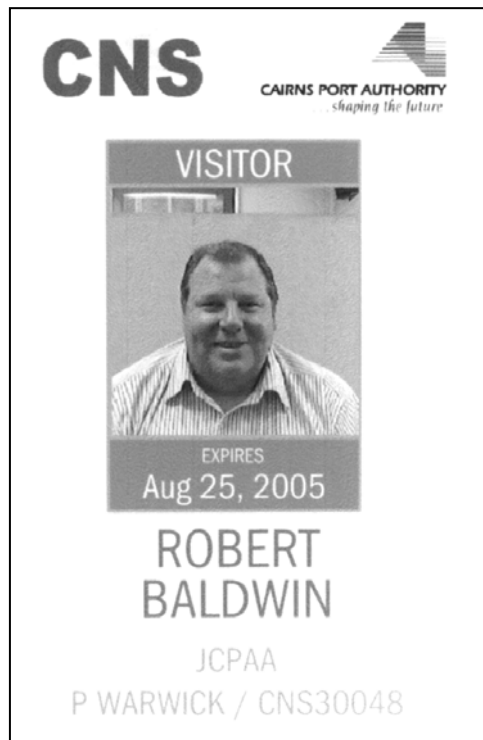
3. The Committee strongly supports Recommendation 10 of the Wheeler Review that the background checking of ASIC applicants be centralised under the Attorney-General's Department.

However, the Committee is also concerned at the potential threat to security posed by the misuse and mismanagement of Visitor Identification Cards (VICs).

At Cairns International Airport, the Committee observed VICs were issued with photographic identification of the pass holder (see example over).

Photographic VICs are low cost items that provide two advantages over non-photographic VICs.

- Photographic VICs allow more certain reconciliation of a VIC with the wearer while the wearer is in secure zones.
- Photographic VICs would provide more certain identification of a person who has been involved in a terrorist attack on an aviation facility.



**REC 3: That the Department of Transport and Regional Services amend the *Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005* to require that all Visitor Identification Cards carry photographic identification of the card holder.**

4. The Committee has heard concerns regarding the misuse of VICs by casual employees working in secure airside areas, particularly employees provided by labour hire companies. The Committee believes that the issuing of VICs should be restricted to exceptional circumstances rather than to facilitate on-going access to secure airside areas.

**REC 4: That the Department of Transport and Regional Services further tighten *Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005* to mandate that all employees, contractors and subcontractors who are required to work in secure airside areas, whether on an infrequent basis or not, obtain an Aviation Security Identification Card before commencing employment.**

**REC 5: That authorised issuers of Visitor Identification Cards be required to keep records of who, when and for what purpose Visitor Identification Cards are issued and that these records be subject to annual audit by the Attorney-General's Department.**

5. The Committee believes that the exceptional circumstance in which a VIC is issued should be reflected in a maximum limit on the amount of times any person can be granted authorised access through this method within a set period of time. If a

person requires more regular access to the security controlled airside areas of airports than the prescribed maximum, they should be required to apply for an ASIC.

**REC 6: That the Department of Transport and Regional Services require that any person be issued with a Visitor Identification Card not more than 12 times in any 12 month period.**

6. The Committee acknowledges that one of the reasons for use of VICs is the relatively long processing periods of applications for ASICs.

**REC 7: That, as a matter of urgency, the period for vetting of Aviation Security Identification Card applications be reduced to take account of the needs of aviation industry participants.**

7. The Committee remains concerned to provide the greatest amount of encouragement for the return of ASICs. To this end, some airports require a bond to be provided that is refundable on return of an ASIC.

**REC 8: That the Department of Transport and Regional Services require the collection of a bond from the *employee* set at a single national rate on the issuing of an Aviation Security Identification Card (ASIC). The bond should be withheld in the event that an ASIC is not returned in all but exceptional circumstances.**

8. The Committee received considerable evidence from the general aviation sector regarding the inefficiency of requiring general aviation pilots to obtain a pilot's license and an ASIC.

**REC 9: That the Civil Aviation Safety Authority provide that applicants for pilot's licenses may apply simultaneously for an Aviation Security Identification Card.**