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From: Michael Keating [mailto:mgkeating@bigpond.com]
Sent: Friday, 5 September 2003 12:38 AM
To: Carter, John Gordon (REPS)
Subject: AVIATION SECURITY
Importance: High

Dear Mr Carter and Members of the Committee,

I have just heard that the Committee is reviewing aviation security in Australia. I have no issue with this issue in particular, in fact I applaud some of the efforts to date, however I wish to comment on some areas of aviation security.

I have recently returned from 3 weeks in the USA where I travelled every 2 or 3 days by air. I was therefore subjected to a lot of security reviews. I was in fact, along with my wife and teenage boys, subjected to "random" security searches at EVERY check in for EVERY flight. It became tedious but at least the Security Officers were pleasant. It would seem that in Australia, by comparison, we are employing oafs who feel that they "own" the airline and / or airport and must be gruff, rude, inconsiderate and aggressive. I fly a lot in Queensland and am getting sick and tired of being accosted by these people.

You may cry that this is the price of safety, but in my opinion we have taken security too far and I am getting a bit tired of being made to feel like the enemy at our own regional airport in Rockhampton, Qld, and Brisbane is no better.

Secondly, the local Aero Club recently had a visit from the Terrorist Squad of someone's police force, who took it upon themselves to berate the Staff for actually having light aircraft keys where people could actually get them. Funny that, we need the keys to fly the planes! These guys are letting their egos take over and pronouncing Rockhampton, and every other dickie regional airport, a security risk. They are equating us with New York and it just is not so. The cost of these precautions are massive and who will end up paying for all of this paranoia...we will. The traveller and the taxpayer will pay, tourism will drop and then the whole country pays.

Tell me, what is to stop me, a licensed pilot, from walking through the security gate with my own pass, walking over to my own plane and taxiing it across to the terminal and crashing it into a Qantas or Virgin aircraft there.. Absolutely nothing in fact. (Not that I am implying I would ever consider such an act). What I am trying to say is that no matter what you do, there will always be holes in security. There will always be car accidents but you cannot ban cars, under 25's speed more but you cannot ban them from driving. Some measures are just plain silly. Next thing you will want to ban general Aviation, ban Aero Clubs, ban Flight Simulators, ban student pilots. In fact, maybe we should ban airlines then we wouldn't have to worry about airport security. Then the Pollies would have to dream up something else to catch votes. I think a lot of this is just that, chasing votes from the unsuspecting public.

Airport Security is needed. What we need though is a well thought out, intelligent plan to accomplish this. Not a hastily thrown together knee jerk reaction to what happened in the States. Life is risky but you can't ban it.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Michael Keating
Aviation Medical Examiner
Pilot