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Departure

Introduction

8.1   This Chapter considers the pressures expected to be made on Australia's border controls by departing Games visitors, and the proposed arrangements to handle these. A number of issues of relevance to this have been examined in Chapter 7 and are not repeated here. These include computing capacity, staffing, and language capability. The special arrangements for the Olympic and Paralympic family were examined in Chapters 3 and 4.

8.2   The number of people leaving through Sydney airport on the day after the Olympic Games conclude is expected to exceed the number who arrived on the pre-Olympic peak day. Visitors' departure experiences will establish their last and freshest memories of Australia's short-term immigration arrangements, and of how successfully they were planned and coordinated to meet the special needs arising from the Games period. The pressures of the main departure day will test the arrangements already in place or being finalised.

Homeward bound

8.3   An estimated 46,000 overseas participants and spectators, having shared in the closing ceremony, will be eager to return home on the day after the Olympic Games conclude.[1] They are expected to place a peak demand on

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1   SAC, Submissions, p. 146, which also indicates that total Sydney airport departures (international and domestic) are estimated to be 95,000.

immigration resources at Sydney International Airport of 3,500 passengers per hour. SAC advised the Committee that the terminal (but not the border controls) could sustain about 4,000 check-ins for about four hours, but that there would be some degradation of service.[2]

8.4   The actual demand at check-in and baggage handling may be lessened by special arrangements to handle these formalities at hotels and other accommodation.[3] The scale of these off-site arrangements is not yet known.

8.5   Whether or not passengers use off-site check-in, they will have to depart through the international terminal. SAC notes that the international terminal departures set-down kerb and coach parking bays are critical nodes which will require additional resources to be deployed during the peak periods.[4]

8.6   Whether checked in off-site, or at the airport, an estimated 6,600 pieces of outbound baggage per hour will have to be handled at the airport. The estimated outwards capacity of 12,700 bags per hour is well in excess of this. However, that is an optimum figure, dependent on factors such as utilisation of the transfer baggage system, check-in timing and the mix of group and individual check-ins.[5]

8.7   All those departing will have to pass through the border exit areas of the airport, which are expected to be quite crowded during peak periods. Currently, departing passengers are streamed into "Express" and non "Express" passengers. Unlike the arrivals terminal, there are no "bank" queuing arrangements, so the speed with which passengers move through the process is determined by the speed at which their own queue moves. Once at the outbound primary line, those with "Express" Passenger Cards are subject to a shorter process than are those without such cards.[6]

8.8   The Committee also again heard evidence that the API-generated "Express" Passenger Card system was not well explained nor widely understood by passengers. Some with "Express" cards were not using the booths reserved for them and were not aware that they could. Advice to passengers of the advantages of the "Express" Passenger Card, coupled with single lane queuing, as used in the arrivals hall, could facilitate faster processing.

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2   ACS, Submissions, p. 68.
3   SAC, Evidence, p. 103.
4   SAC, Submissions, p. 150.
5   SAC, Submissions, p. 148.
6   ACS, Evidence, p. 219.

Recommendation 19

8.9   **The Committee recommends that the border authorities consider the implementation of all methods to ease congestion at the departure checking lines, such as a single line/multiple counter queuing system for departing passengers.**

Summary

8.10   It was clear from evidence presented to the Committee that there was potential for congestion at the departure point. Delays to visitors now eager to return home could have adverse effects on the departure processing efficiency, and on visitors' perceptions of Australia's planning and coordination abilities.

8.11   The Committee therefore draws attention to its previous recommendations concerning improved understanding of API (Recommendation 14), and action to minimise land-side congestion (Recommendation 18).