

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Sub Program 2.1.4

Question No. 187

Senator Heffernan asked the following question at the hearing on 27 May 2009

In relation to the Air Security Officer Program;

- a) Is the Government committed to preserving the Air Security Officers program?
- b) Does the Government accept comments reported in the media allegedly made by Human Services Minister Senator Joe Ludwig early last year (Herald Sun 15/02/08) that the number of sky marshals were to be cut by one third on a number of international flights? Does the Government agree with his comments?
- c) I understand that in the 2008 -09 Budget the Government allocated \$8.4 million to continue funding for the Air Security Officer program.
- d) I note that in spite of this funding, and in spite of the Aviation Legislation Amendment (2008 Measures No.1) Bill 2008 that was passed last year to clarify the powers of sky marshals to lawfully discharge firearms, there have been persistent reports that the Government is cutting this essential security initiative.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

- a) The Air Security Officer Program was allocated funding in the 2009-10 Budget to ensure its continuation.
- b) The quote concerning Senator Ludwig had its origins in comments he made at Senate Estimates about day-to-day adjustments in deployment based on risk (Hansard 14 February 2008, p.411). He specifically said there were no reductions in the number of international flights covered by the Program. Day-to-day adjustments have always been a feature of the Program.
- c) Yes.
- d) The Government has no plans to discontinue the ASO Program.