

Tuesday 8 May 2007

TRS14/Budget

BOOSTING AVIATION SECURITY

The Australian Government will extend checked bag screening to 26 regional airports in a massive boost to the security of airline passengers, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services, Mark Vaile, said today.

Australia's 11 major airports already screen the checked baggage of all international passengers, and these airports are on track to screen the checked baggage of their domestic passengers from 1 August 2007.

Today's announcement will extend checked bag screening to all airports that handle regular jet services. These airports already screen passengers and their carry on baggage. They will now be required to screen checked baggage using explosive trace detection equipment from 1 December 2007. They will be required to undertake full x-ray screening of the baggage from 1 December 2008.

The 26 regional airports that currently receive jet services will receive \$15.4 million in Government funding over four years to fully or partially meet the capital cost of the new screening equipment. The airports will be required to meet the rest of the costs of carrying out the screening.

The airports are: Avalon, Hervey Bay, Newman, Ayers Rock, Kalgoorlie, Norfolk Island, Ballina, Karratha, Paraburdoo, Broome, Kununurra, Port Hedland, Christmas Island, Launceston, Proserpine, Cocos Island, Learmonth, Rockhampton, Coffs Harbour, Mackay, Townsville, Gove, Maroochydore, Williamtown, Hamilton Island and Mount Isa.

"The Government's decision will help protect the nine million passengers per year who fly on jet services through these airports. Passengers who fly on jets from Launceston, Mackay or Karratha will now be covered by the same level of security as passengers who leave from Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne," Mr Vaile said.

"Our decision is a massive boost to aviation security in regional Australia, and is in addition to the \$1.2 billion that we have spent on other aviation security measures since 11 September 2001."

The extension of checked bag screening is part of a \$57.2 million package that the Government is announcing today to increase aviation security.

"The Government will spend an extra \$18.2 million over four years to ensure that the Office of Transport Security (OTS) can maintain the intensity of its audit and inspection programme. In the first six months of 2006-07, its inspectors carried out 248 audits or inspections at airports and 98 inspections or audits of airlines," Mr Vaile said.

“The Government will spend an extra \$18.6 million over four years to establish a special accreditation scheme for land transport operators that carry air cargo for part of its journey.

“It would be excessive to force all these operators into the existing Regulated Air Cargo Agent (RACA) scheme, because they only have a limited role in the movement of air cargo. The RACA scheme was designed to cover freight forwarders and cargo terminal operators, not trucking companies.

“The new Accredited Air Cargo Agent (AACCA) scheme will augment the existing regulated agent scheme and ensure that land transport operators who carry air cargo are covered by an appropriate security regime.

“The final measure in the Government’s aviation security package is \$5 million over four years to post senior aviation security officers to Washington DC.

“Aviation is a global business and our security is affected by policy decisions made by other countries and by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. Australia needs to have a greater voice in the development of international aviation security standards,” Mr Vaile said.

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