



## **AVIATION SECURITY Committee Reports 4 December 2006**

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (12.37 pm)—I join the member for Casey in endorsing the committee's report No. 409: *Developments in aviation security since the committee's June 2004 report 400: review of aviation security in Australia*. This report was long in coming but is thorough in its work, and it certainly gets right the balance between public safety and making sure that processes are correct in order to support safety and security so that the public are able to have affordable and convenient air travel.

I must acknowledge the work of the committee. Getting a consensus report that is thorough and rigorous was a lot of hard work and a conscientious effort was made by all committee members. I also thank the secretariat. We took them all over the country. They were very patient, no matter the temperature nor the place, and they certainly provided us with outstanding support over a long period of time. The contributions of those who made submissions were often very impressive, and they gave us some faith in the work of good Australians who have the interests of the public at heart.

This inquiry was opened because we were concerned about security incidents in aviation and public alarm when incidents do occur. We know that the media will report things in a way that does alarm. There have been 83 public incidents since 2004, when we completed our last report, and some of those incidents did alarm people. As recently as July this year we had two cars speeding on the tarmac of Sydney Airport and also a man who arrived at Sydney Airport from Canada and found things in his baggage that he had never seen before. I think the committee understood that it had a responsibility to respond to aviation security, because when it goes wrong it is can be so distressing and harmful, something we want to avoid.

The committee made a good decision in supporting the government's risk based approach. There is diversity in our aviation security. We cannot do it all everywhere: there has to be flexibility and there has to be a balance; you cannot impose maximum security that will stop aviation travel at time when it is booming. At my own airport at Newcastle we have seen an almost 400 per cent growth in passengers in the last two years. Basically the report says: 'Let's get it right. Let's improve the consultation processes. Let's keep making

sure that the government invests in the right resources. Let's make sure that DOTARS remains responsive and proactive and let's give a reporting regime to parliament, committees and ministers that really does say that it is accountable, that DOTARS is accountable and Attorney-General's Department is accountable. Let's get that right.'

The only recommendation that I do not see in the committee's report, which some of our evidence did point to, is the need for one department to oversight all these security functions. Some of our recommendations require things of Attorney-General's, others require things of DOTARS and some require things of the security agencies and departments. One would hope that communications between them would always be at the optimum, but the need for a homeland security department is something that both sides of this parliament should consider very thoroughly.

The committee did make some fairly high demands, which I hope will be taken up. Random screening at major airports is essential to give the public, airport owners, airlines and government confidence that everything has been put in place. I particularly support the recommendation about Sydney airport, which is in my state. Sydney airport is the busiest airport in Australia and it must be very difficult for everyone to get it right. Our report recommends that there be random audits at Sydney airport. We know that baggage handling and baggage screening are difficult processes. We know too that they have to be done in such a way that no-one will have any doubt that their luggage will not be tampered with and that there will not be any links with criminality that undermine security.

So there are excellent recommendations in the report. We also made some good recommendations for the people who work in the industry. Having specific and uniform training standards will give more confidence, and will give more certainty to the careers of people working the field. I commend the work of trade unions in this area. The committee recommends an industry code for monitoring CCTV closed-circuit television. It should be done correctly, and having gone to so many airports I do feel that people who sit in front of those screens for long periods do need some standards in order to know that their job can be done very thoroughly.

I think we also pleased regional Australia. There is a good way ahead for regional Australia. Their needs have to be considered, particularly at an airport like Newcastle, which has jet flights packed with people and which is only a very short distance from Sydney, yet baggage is not screened. So we have asked DOTARS to check that out and prepare a feasibility study on whether that should be accepted or not. It is an excellent report and I thank everyone involved. I commend the report to the parliament. *(Time expired)*