



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEES

Public Accounts and Audit Committee

Report

SPEECH

Wednesday, 20 October 1999

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Speaker Cox, David, MP	Question No.

Mr COX (Kingston) (4.41 pm)—by leave—The aspect of the JCPAA report that I wish to focus on is aviation security. This is going to be an increasingly important issue over the next couple of years. There is no doubt that considerable resources are being expended in dealing with the possibility of terrorist activity around the Olympics, and other politically motivated violence. By way of more relevant local interest, I am more concerned in the general case about deficiencies in dealing with criminal related activities at Australian airports. There have been some significant changes in jurisdiction over the past few years. The actual airside security at domestic airport terminals is conducted in almost all cases by Australian Protective Services officers and at Canberra airport by the Australian Federal Police. Most criminal activity that takes place at airports is more likely to be of interest to state police forces and there is a significant need for an improvement in the coordination between state police forces in their dealings with Australian Protective Services, in the case of most airports, and with Australian Federal Police with respect to Canberra airport.

There are also issues relating to significant issues relating to criminal activity that passes from one jurisdiction into another. There was one notable incident earlier this year that involved the member for Bonython and me where there was a miscommunication between police in South Australia and the Australian Federal Police in Canberra—which resulted in some embarrassment ultimately for both police forces, I think. There was some focus on this in the inquiry to which I am referring. I was very pleased that the committee has seen fit to make a couple of recommendations to the government which I hope will be taken up with some expedition, namely:

2.27 The Committee recommends that the Department of Transport and Regional Services and the Attorney-General's Department review arrangements for cooperation between airport authorities and police forces in dealing with criminal activity at airports.

The Committee recommends the Department of Transport and Regional Services review passenger and hand luggage screening, including: the training, capability and responsibilities of operators; and the effectiveness of response by relevant authorities (Federal Police or Protective Services officers) in the event of contraband being detected, or other critical events occurring during screening procedures.

I hope that the government will take up these matters with a degree of thoroughness which it has not heretofore employed.