



Australian Government

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Quarantine and Biosecurity Review Secretariat
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858
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Dear Secretariat

Thank you for accepting a submission from the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism (RET) to the Quarantine and Biosecurity Review.

RET's main objective is to enhance Australia's economic prosperity through the economic development of the resources, energy and tourism industries. The tourism portfolio's interests in the Review centre on seeking to ensure that international tourists are processed as efficiently as possible through airports and sea ports whilst adhering to Australia's biosecurity and quarantine measures at the border.

The economic importance of Australia's tourism industry

Tourism activity in Australia adds to consumption (through exports) and thereby has a positive effect on Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment and investment. At an aggregate level the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) produces the Australian Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), which provides a measure of the economic activity generated by tourism.

In 2006/07, tourism activity generated \$38.9 billion for the Australian economy, representing 3.7 per cent of total GDP. The tourism industry is one of Australia's top export earners, earning \$22.4 billion in export dollars in 2006/07 and accounting for some 10.4 per cent of total exports from Australia. Export earnings from tourism exceeded earnings from traditional exports such as iron, steel and non-ferrous metals and food and live animals. The tourism industry is labour intensive, employing 482,800 people in 2006/07, 4.7 per cent of the Australian workforce.

Inbound passenger forecast growth

Total inbound visitor arrivals to Australia are expected to grow at an average annual rate of 4.8 per cent between 2006 and 2016. Some 8.85 million international visitors are expected to arrive in Australia during 2016 compared with 5.6 million in 2007.

Much of the growth will be driven by Asia and the Middle East, with inbound visitor arrivals from India increasing at an average annual rate of 16.8 per cent, China 13.0 per cent, the Middle East 11 per cent and South Africa 7 per cent during the forecast period. Australia's core markets of New Zealand, the UK and USA will remain strong.

It is important that Australia's quarantine and biosecurity policies and measures take into account the changing traveller profile and allow for potential tourism and associated economic growth to be realised whilst managing the quarantine risks at the border.

The importance of the passenger facilitation experience

The quality and efficiency of passenger facilitation services at Australian ports (air and sea) impact on Australia's competitiveness as a tourism destination. An international traveller's experience at the airport is part of their overall travel experience and may influence a traveller's decision on whether or not to return to Australia. The attitude of border agency staff and the speed of the passenger facilitation process can play a significant role in shaping a tourist's attitude towards Australia and the message the tourist conveys to their friends and relatives about their experience in this country.

As announced in the 2008/09 Budget, the Passenger Movement Charge (PMC) will increase from 1 July 2008 by \$9, from \$38 to \$47 per passenger, a 24 per cent increase. This increase is estimated to raise \$459.3 million over four years and will contribute to offsetting the cost of a range of aviation security initiatives that until now have not been cost recovered. The Passenger Movement Charge also recovers the costs of processing international passengers at international airports and maritime ports, and the cost of issuing short-term visas overseas. In 2006/07 the PMC collected \$393.22 million. The Government has a responsibility to ensure a quality and efficient level of service (security and passenger facilitation) to reflect the cost to the passengers.

Biosecurity and quarantine risk management strategy

While quarantine measures are important to protect Australia's environment, agricultural industries and human health, it is important that they do not come at the cost to Australia's tourism industry and the Australian economy as a result of increasing passenger inconvenience, airport congestion and unreasonable costs to Government in delivering biosecurity outcomes.

It is important that quarantine measures are justified on the basis of accurate scientific information and identified risk. An assessment of the effectiveness of measures should include a consideration of winding back measures that can no longer be justified, including where the risk has been re-assessed as low. The focus should be on reducing biosecurity and quarantine risks not on the number of passengers screened.

The quarantine tasks should incorporate flexible intervention strategies that are derived from a risk based framework and agency resources can be optimally deployed based on this principle. For example, there should be a balance between physical intervention at airports/seaports and passenger background profiling to assess potential quarantine risks on aircrafts and vessels.

This would enable low quarantine risk passengers to be streamlined through the passenger process more efficiently and allow border control staff to focus resources on managing passengers of potential risk. This approach is critical to assisting forecast tourism growth and will become increasingly important as seat capacity into Australia increases with new aircraft deliveries and introduction of the wider bodied aircraft (Airbus A380 and Boeing 787).

RET supports continued cooperation and communication between industry and government organisations with an interest in passenger facilitation at international ports to improve efficiency of the passenger facilitation process and quality of experience, including through fora such as the Passenger facilitation Taskforce. Cooperative work by industry and government is particularly important to identify initiatives, including new technologies that minimise physical intervention, and in trialling and implementing these with the goal of delivering efficient and effective passenger facilitation.

Education and communication campaigns are also essential to educate Australians and our visitors on the importance of quarantine to Australia and what materials cannot be brought into Australia. Such campaigns should be targeted at markets with specific risks.

RET also supports ongoing regular training programs that assist quarantine staff in delivering their task in the most efficient and effective manner whilst maintaining Australia's reputation as a friendly and welcoming destination, a key element of Australia's tourism product.

RET hopes that the findings/recommendations from the Review that impact on Australia's tourism industry will feed into the Government's recently announced National Tourism Strategy which aims to strategically position tourism and travel to Australia well for future years.

Thank you again for welcoming my Division's participation in this review. If you require any additional information, the contact officer for this issue is Mrs Susan Jabs, Tourism Transport Team, whose contact details are ph: (02) 6213 7080 or email: susan.jabs@ret.gov.au.

Kind regards,



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