
From: David Walsh
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To: Quarantine Biosecurity Review
Subject: Quarantine and Biosecurity Review
Attachments: kiewa.vcf

Unfortunately I did not hear about the Quarantine and Biosecurity Review until this week and therefore missed the date for formal submissions. However I would like to provide the review with a few comments if I may.

I am a reasonably frequent international traveller. I travel internationally between two and four times per year. Previously I did a lot of travel for business but over recent years it has been mostly private travel. In a previous career I was a senior executive at a major business travel management company and I have been involved in the hospitality business for over 3 years. However I am making this submission on a private basis. I am basing my comments and suggestions primarily in relation to Melbourne airport because most of my international arrival experience related to that airport. I have read the Melbourne Airport submission and I consider it over diplomatic to a worrying degree and seriously understating the problem.

I have had multiple annual arrivals at Melbourne Airport from overseas since 1999. In my experience and opinion over that nine year period the delays in quarantine intervention have been overall unacceptable and at times absurd. There have been many times when it has taken over 30 minutes queuing to be face to face with the quarantine officer. Over that period there have been complaints in the media. Whether it was in reaction to those complaints or not I do not know, but on a number of arrivals it would reduce to a more acceptable 10 to 15 minutes, and then blow out again on a subsequent arrival to a totally unacceptable 30 minutes or more. I do not see evidence that the problem has improved over the last 9 years. My recent arrival when the wait until I got face to face with the quarantine inspection officer was over an hour has definitely been the worst. I don't want to think about what will happen in a few years when we get multiple super jumbo's arriving in a short time frame.

Processing delays on arrival do cost the inbound tourist industry in a competitive environment. No one who wants to come to Australia is going to be deterred simply because it takes an extra half an hour to get out of the airport than a competing destination or business location. However it becomes another negative factor along with distance, cost, exchange rate etc.

- Delaying passengers for 30 minutes is an economic cost. If we use a conservative \$20 per hour, this adds to an additional \$60mill per annum that inbound traveller quarantine is costing which is not reflected in the budget but is a real cost which needs to be matched against whatever we see the economic benefits of inbound intervention. This is in addition to the losses because the delays were a factor in deterring some travellers from coming to Australia.
- Increased quarantine delays have offset benefits in bringing immigration and baggage handling up to world class. Quarantine seems to have squandered the efforts of others.
- Effective inbound intervention relies on the co-operation and goodwill of the passengers. Customs and quarantine have used PR and advertising to create goodwill and then quarantine destroy it by unreasonably punishing by delay those who try to help them.
- Most people are honest and will hand in lost property. But a lot less will do it if they think it will tie them up for an hour at the police station. Why do the police not get all the co-operation that they would like? Because they know that the court system will give all consideration to the needs of the accused and none for the witness and they do not want to get involved.
- How long will it take before significant numbers of travellers, stop declaring that they have

been to a farm, have items that have been in foreign waters, have wood or food products, not only because they hope to reduce unreasonable wait times but eventually just to spite the Quarantine service who they start to see as the enemy stealing their precious time.

Proposition

The wait time from when you get your bags to when you come face to face with the quarantine officer who is going to process you is the important time. This should be the performance indicator. So long as they deal with passengers promptly after that point there is going to be satisfaction. A performance indicator on processing time is probably not so relevant to passengers (although it may be to the department) so long as they are not trying to process three people at once and having them all stand around.

I suggest that the average wait time of ten minutes is a an appropriate target, and that a fifteen minute wait should be considered unacceptable. In my view the current AQIS target of 95% within 30 minutes is out of the question.

If passengers have to wait more than 15 minutes I suggest that they should be entitled to compensation of say \$20 for each 15 minutes or part there of. This would drive home to AQIS the economic cost of the delays. If it is good enough for the government to impose this sort of penalty of the telecommunications industry it should be good enough for AQIS.

Methodology

I suggest the way to reform the inbound process is to make the wait time average of 10 minutes the one given. Then tell AQIS to go away and determine the sample rates, checking, processes, resourcing, procedures and risk factors around that one given. Make time the fixed item not the variable it is at present.

Regards

David Walsh