

Greg Lehey  
PO Box 460  
Echunga SA 5153  
Australia  
23 May 2005

The Hon Alexander Downer MP  
100 King William Street  
Adelaide SA 5000  
Fax: +61-8-8237 7950

## **Inconsistent security screening on entering Australia**

Dear Mr Downer,

I am writing to you in your capacity both as my Federal Representative and as Australian Foreign Minister. I find that the current policies on security screening when entering Australia are inconsistent, inappropriate and an unnecessary imposition on personal comfort.

When flying into Australia, the normal procedure is to undergo a security check at the port of departure, and to pass through immigration, customs and quarantine on entry. Under normal circumstances this procedure is smooth and efficient.

In one case at least, however, it is completely stupid. When flying from Singapore to Adelaide on Qantas flight 82, the plane stops in Darwin at about 4 am. All passengers must disembark. Those bound for Darwin go through the normal procedure described above. Those bound for Adelaide, however, must go through a complete security screening, requiring unpacking hand baggage. This is in addition to the normal security screening in Adelaide. Yesterday, the last occasion that I have been subjected to this procedure, two heavily armed soldiers were present to oversee the operation. I can see no earthly reason for this at any time, especially not at 4 am. Indeed it is difficult to understand any security reason for insisting that transit passengers disembark at all.

Qantas advises me that this is a requirement imposed on them by "security". I ask you to review this procedure, for which I believe your department to be at least in part responsible, and to ensure that it is brought into line with other security practices.

In addition to this issue, I would like to know why it is necessary to unpack laptops and put them through the scanner separately. In my experience, this is a practice otherwise used only in the USA. All European and Asian countries that I have visited recently do not require this step, which makes its necessity seem at least questionable.

In the event of any reply, please indicate if you do not wish this reply to be made public.

Sincerely  
Greg Lehey