Freedom of Information Request – FA 23/08/01007

Australian Airports – Explosive Trace Detection requirements for passenger screening

Aviation Transport Security Regulatory Framework

The Department of Home Affairs (the Department) regulates aviation transport security through the *Aviation Transport Security Act 2004* and associated regulations that confer functions and powers which broadly include:

- administering transport security legislation, assessing regulatory submissions and making core regulatory decisions under the transport security legislation
- developing and implementing effective monitoring and enforcement strategies to promote individual and business compliance with obligations under the transport security legislation.

Security screening at Australian airports is the responsibility of authorised screening authorities. The Australian Government sets the standards for aviation security screening, but it is individual airports, airlines and their contractors that have direct responsibility for delivering security screening services on the ground.

The Department specifies who is authorised to carry out screening under the Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005 (the Regulations). Generally, only regulated airports or airport operators and their contractors will be specified as screening authorities.

Explosive Trace Detection (ETD) screening requirements

Screening requirements for screening authorities are set out in Aviation Screening Notices (ASNs) made under sub regulation 4.17(1) of the Regulations, which may apply to specific airports or across multiple airports. ASNs contains confidential information, the release of which may adversely affect aviation security outcomes, and may only be disclosed where a person is directly engaged in aviation security, aviation operations, or a related field, and the person has a genuine need to know, or use, the contents in the course of that activity.

The ASN sets out the methods, techniques and equipment that must and may be used for screening passengers, personal effects, goods and vehicles at a screening point of an airport. Methods may vary depending upon the airport and the particular equipment it uses.

Broadly, Explosive Trace Detection is used in two instances for passenger screening:

1. as a complementary screening method where certain primary screening methods are used – for instance, where walk-through metal detectors are used for primary screening, or
2. as a secondary screening method when the primary screening method alarms.

In the first instance, which only applies where body scanners are not used to screen 100% of eligible persons, airports are required to randomly and unpredictably select a minimum percentage of persons passing through the screening point for ETD. The screening officer must use random selection equipment and cannot select based on a person's gender, ethnicity or category of employment. However, a screening officer may select a person who has not been selected by random selection equipment for ETD screening:

a. if random selection equipment is temporarily unavailable at a screening lane; or

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b. during periods when random selection equipment has not selected a person.

Where ETD is used as a secondary screening method, ETD is one of a number of options an airport may elect to use depending upon the type and location of the primary alarm, though in some limited circumstances ETD must be used.

Due to security sensitivities, we are unable to provide specific details on the methods for performing ETD.

Notes:

1. Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023 (internal documents).

Caveats:

- This information is provided for the specific purpose of this request.
- It is the responsibility of the area providing Department of Home Affairs information to external stakeholders to ensure that the disclosure is in accordance with the ABF Act, Australian Privacy Principles or other relevant legislation.

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