

Security screening charges causing concern

NATIONALS leader and Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Warren Truss has expressed concern that some airports are seeking to impose security screening charges on smaller regional aircraft which are not required to be screened under Australian government law.

Mr Truss said he shared the concerns of the Regional Aviation Association of Australia about the impact of the charges.

The extra costs of this screening have the potential to make services operated by small aircraft unviable. In some cases this will mean reduced competition into regional communities and even cancellation of services altogether.

Mr Truss said federal government law does not require passengers travelling on Dash 8 300 and 200 Series aircraft, Saab 340s, Metros, Brasilias, King Airs, Piper Chieftains and other similar aircraft to be screened.

The only propeller-driven aircraft operating regular services in Australia that must be screened under the current law are the cargo passenger Q400 and ATR72s.

Mr Truss said there has been no substantial security case established to justify requiring security screening of passengers on these smaller aircraft.

In Australia, Dash 8s, Saab 340s and other similar aircraft are fitted with government funded hardened cockpit doors as an extra security measure. Passengers are generally required to go through security again when they transit through a capital city or other airport serviced by large jet aircraft.

In some cases, where aircraft which are not required to be screened are caught up through parallel schedules with aircraft requiring screening, their passengers are screened free of charge by the relevant airport. Alternatively, passengers can be kept separate in the departure terminal to avoid the need for screening.

Mr Truss said regional air services in Australia are already facing increasing government imposed cost increases such as the carbon tax and the abolition of the navigation en route subsidy scheme for smaller regional aircraft.

Charges for security screening are an unnecessary cost increase because the screening is not required by Australian law.