Express service for 40 per cent of incoming passengers

An alliance between the Australian Government and participating international airlines in the Advance Passenger Processing (APP) scheme is resulting in approximately 40 per cent of all incoming passengers now being processed by border agencies via express lanes at Australian airports.

The Australian Customs Service is one of the border agencies responsible for the successful implementation of APP, which is a large-scale project focussed on simplifying and improving border clearance procedures.

The success of this project is a result of strong partnerships and strategic alliances being forged between the Australian Government and the private sector.

What is APP?

APP is a system that allows airlines to verify the travel authority of passengers at check-in and send advance passenger information to Australian border agencies using the Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) communication network.

APP also allows airlines to fully automate the capture of this passenger and flight information and print it on the front of the passenger card. An identifier is simultaneously coded onto the magnetic swipe section of the card to enable the swift retrieval of passenger movement details upon arrival in Australia.

APP is available for the processing of all passengers travelling on participating airlines flying to Australia from overseas airports where APP is in use.

How does APP work?

At check-in, airline staff enter certain passenger details into their computer system. This data is forwarded electronically to Australia's border agencies using

the ETA communication network.

APP confirms:

- the existence of a valid visa/ETA for those passengers requiring authority to enter Australia; and
- the passport status of Australian and New Zealand travellers.

Confirmation of the travel authority is electronically notified to the airline and the passenger's information is printed onto an express passenger card.

Checks normally carried out by border agencies at the time of arrival can now be completed while the passenger is in the air. On arrival, passengers are cleared with little fuss at express lanes designated for Advance Passenger Processing.

What are the benefits of APP?

With APP, Customs and Immigration are able to offer an unparalleled level of service delivery to passengers, airlines and industry. The benefits include:

- Faster clearance and best practice in passenger management by using express lanes set up for APP passengers at major Australian international airports.

- Use by the airlines of the ETA system to verify passengers' travel authorities and the provision of advance passenger information to border agencies. This technology assists the carriers avoid the uplift of non-visa passengers and has the potential to reduce fines for carrying such passengers.

- The maximum use of technology and the advance passenger information assists in the pre-screening of passengers and provides higher level of border integrity. It also allows for a coordinated response to potential risks.

- Better use of resources and infrastructure to meet an increase in passenger numbers.

Implementation is negotiated with airlines as part of a package of measures included in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Australian Government is committed to upholding a universal visa system and to build on this foundation to achieve best practice in passenger management. An opportunity now exists for carriers to defray infringement costs through service improvements by entering into an MOU with the Government.

From 1 July 2000, airlines are fined $5000 for each passenger they uplift into Australia who is not in possession of a valid travel authority. The MOU conveys a clear understanding of Government expectations and objective standards of performance. The MOU is designed to create an environment of certainty and improved service delivery through an integrated, co-ordinated approach.