

Australia's regional airports are more secure thanks to PPC technology

The manager of Merimbula Airport and Managing Director of Aviation ID Australia, Ian Baker, says a range of new security measures are currently being adopted so the airport complies with new federal aviation laws which came into force in March of this year.

The Department of Transport says the laws have been introduced because of the heightened threat of terrorism involving the unlawful use of planes and airport facilities.

Mr Baker says the Government has provided initial funding to regional airports so a number of security upgrades can be carried out.

"They provided \$35 million to upgrade the security at 138 regional airports around the country and Merimbula was caught in that along with Moruya and Cooma," he said.

Part of the improvement in regional airports is the introduction of an Aviation Security Identification Card (ASIC).

An ASIC is an identification medium that identifies that the holder has met the necessary threshold assessment requirements to attain an ASIC and is permitted to be in a secure area, of a security controlled airport, in the course of their duties.

An ASIC enables an airport operator to provide the ASIC holder with the ability to obtain unescorted access of a secure area. However, the holding of an ASIC does not in itself give a right of access to a particular secure area of an airport. That capacity remains entirely in the control of the airport operator.

The intent of an ASIC is to ensure that a person who has access to the secure areas of an airport has been background checked and is not considered to be a risk of unlawful interference with aviation.

The Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) is currently reviewing applications from a number of Commonwealth agencies and aviation industry participants to become an authorised issuing body enabling the issue of ASICs.



Such an authority is Aviation ID Australia, operating out of Merimbula airport.

Baker is currently accepting enquiries from persons who have a legitimate need to enter the secure areas of security controlled airports and require an ASIC for that purpose.

Baker says that his company Aviation ID Australia as a part of Merimbula Airport is the first regional airport to invest in the necessary equipment to issue ASICs as required under the new regulations.

"Because we are required to comply with the new ASIC regulations which will come into force on January 1, 2006 I researched the market to see who could provide us with the type of high level ID security cards that we would require," he said.

"When we were unable to outsource this requirement I thought that if I purchased the necessary card printing equipment I would be able to satisfy the requirements of our own airport. At the same time we would also be able to provide a service for other regional airports that found themselves with the same problem in obtaining cards.

"After a lot of research into suitable card printers we approached PPC because when we asked around who provided the best ID security card printers their name was continually mentioned. So it was with the highest recommendations that we contacted PPC and secured a plastic card printer."

Baker comments that he chose the printer as it was the recommended choice when lamination or chip encoding was required as was the case in his situation.

"It is important that we are able to provide our customers the best of quality along with a high level of security features built into the card.

"To date we have produced 700 cards for regional airports from Derby in WA to Strahan in Tasmania," stated Baker.

Baker believes the popularity of the service that he is offering the industry will increase as the January 1 deadline approaches.

"I believe that when other regional airport managers consider the cost of putting in a printer for say printing as little as ten ASICs then they will see the card printing service that we can offer them as highly economical for their situation," said Baker.

"The decision for us to invest in a PPC card printer was partly driven by necessity and partly the opportunity to realize a small business that could assist the industry through the compliance process and as an ongoing service."

"The PPC card printer is now helping us solve what was a real security compliance problem that was facing regional airports throughout Australia.

"The provision of our ASIC printing bureau is being welcomed by regional airport managers around the country as a great solution to the ASIC compliance issue."

With the deadline of January 1 fast approaching Baker admits that the printer is sure to get a thorough workout over the coming weeks.

