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Country can fend for itself!

PM will not guarantee Regional Airport Security

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor is very disappointed at the Prime Minister's attitude towards securing safe flying for travellers from country airports given the Prime Minister's response to a question from Mr Windsor in Federal Parliament today.

Mr Windsor asked the Prime Minister, "... given the heightened terrorist alert as instanced by the increased security of this Parliament House and other buildings and numerous statements of your's, will the Government use any of its increased national defence budget to boost security at regional airports so that city and country travellers have equity of safety regardless of where their journey commences or will it be left as an unaffordable dilemma for local Government airport owners?"

In his response, the Prime Minister could only state that Mr Windsor could have access to the risk assessments of regional airports done by the Department of Transport indicating the low risk of regional airports to terrorist activities and that the Federal Government would not fund security at every airport in regional Australia.

In his question, Mr Windsor explained that he had flown from Tamworth to Sydney in a 36 seat Dash 8 aircraft with one flight attendant to ensure the safety of passengers without going through any security screening and that he then flew from Sydney to Canberra in a security screened 36 seat Dash 8 aircraft.

"What was to stop any other passenger on the Tamworth-Sydney leg of the journey, taking on board a weapon that could have been used with disastrous effect anytime during the flight?" Mr Windsor questioned.

Mr Windsor believes that there is a need for equity of access to National defence spending on domestic security to include regional airports to ensure reduced risks experienced by people travelling by air in country Australia just as much as the risk to city-based people.

"The security defence system at airports has become two tiered. We have one for Australians deemed to be most at risk, metropolitan Australians, and another for people flying in regional Australia, many of whom are also metropolitan based Australians.

If a terrorist can board an aircraft at a regional airport and be in Sydney within an hour, why would they bother worrying about Sydney's airport security?

It's a case of being seen by the majority of Australians, those who live in major metropolitan areas, to be doing something rather than achieving full safety for Sydney and the other major metropolitan areas.

If there is a threat, security should be across the board otherwise any terrorist activity may well be directed at regional airports and would in fact negate the benefits of any city airport security," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor said he would continue to pursue the issue of regional airport security in terms of it being part of the defence budget and not to be added to the price of a ticket or put onto local government.

Further information from Tony Windsor - Mob 0427 66 8868 or 02 6761 3080