



March 2010

## Assistant Secretary's Message



It is with great pleasure that I introduce myself to you as A/g Assistant Secretary of AusCheck. I am covering the role for Karl Alderson who will return to this position in April this year. Karl remains in touch with AusCheck in his current role as A/g First Assistant Secretary of the National Security Law and Policy Divi-

sion of which AusCheck is a branch.

This edition of the AusCheck newsletter contains details of AusCheck's Final Finding email-notification trial. The benefits of this trial include the improvement in notification delivery time-frames and a better ability for AusCheck and issuing bodies to track adverse final finding notifications. AusCheck welcomes any comments you have on this proposal and requests that they be forwarded to [AusCheck@ag.gov.au](mailto:AusCheck@ag.gov.au) by Thursday 1 April 2010.

This newsletter also contains details of our upcoming annual client

survey. Our third survey will run from 7-23 April. I encourage each of you to provide your feedback in response to this survey.

AusCheck are happy to welcome feedback at any time, but the annual client survey provides issuing bodies with a particular opportunity to review how we are going. Your results have proven invaluable each year when we set about preparing strategic and operational plans for the year ahead.

Finally, on behalf of the AusCheck team, I look forward to working with you for a productive 2010.

Danny Ramsden

## AusCheck Client Survey

AusCheck is holding its 3rd annual client satisfaction survey from April 7 to 23 April 2010.

Orima Research will independently conduct the survey on behalf of AusCheck and will report its findings in May 2010.

AusCheck will provide Orima Research issuing body email address for the sole purpose of conducting this survey. Your email details will only be used for the purpose of conducting this survey and will be destroyed upon completion. If you do not wish to participate in the survey or do not wish for your details to be shared with Orima Research please advise AusCheck by emailing: [AusCheck@ag.gov.au](mailto:AusCheck@ag.gov.au)

## AusCheck Photo Exemptions

The *AusCheck Regulations 2007* specify that issuing bodies are required to submit applicants' photos when applying for background checks. AusCheck reminds issuing bodies that without specific written consent, all applications for background checks must be accompanied with the applicant's photograph.

AusCheck has previously granted temporary exemptions to issuing bodies that had expressed difficulties in conforming to the obligation of supplying applicant photographs. If issuing bodies are unable to fulfil their requirement to supply photos with applications they must write to AusCheck's Assistant Secretary requesting an exemption.

A complete photographic record of applicants significantly enhances the se-

curity capabilities offered to aviation and maritime security. AusCheck store these photographs on our database in conjunction with the other information printed on ASICs and MSICs. This information provides additional security to issuing bodies when verifying the identity of card holders. If exemption is provided issuing bodies are requested to begin submitting photographs as soon as the capability has been established within their organisation.

The development of the AusCheck system is one way that Government and industry are continuing to harmonise their joint efforts to increase the security and prosperity of all those involved with the aviation and maritime industries.

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### AusCheck Consultative Committee

The next AusCheck consultative committee is being held on Tuesday 13 April 2010. The Committee is held via teleconference each quarter and issuing bodies are able to attend for the price of a local phone call. No special equipment is required. The objective of the Committee is to meet and discuss current and future developments within the AusCheck process and to address general issues relevant to issuing bodies.

To attend the next committee, issuing bodies are requested to register their

interest by sending an email to: [AusCheck@ag.gov.au](mailto:AusCheck@ag.gov.au) and ask to be placed on the Consultative committee mailing list. Existing members do not need to re-apply. Issuing bodies are able to add or remove their names from this list at any time.

Once registered, Committee members are sent a call for agenda items a week prior to the meeting. AusCheck compiles the submissions we receive and prepares a final meeting agenda which is distributed by email prior to each committee.

The issues raised are usually items that are likely to affect issuing bodies generally rather than specific single issuing body items. For the convenience of the group, AusCheck prefers to make itself available to discuss issuing body specific issues in a one-to-one environment.

If you would like to take part in the next AusCheck consultative committee or even attend as a spectator just to see if the meeting is right for your needs, please forward AusCheck your contact details.

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### Processing Statistics

Total Processing statistics for the current financial year: 1 July 2009 to 31 January 2010. This table represents completion rates of all applications received and completed between 1 July 2009 and 31 January 2010. These percentages reflect the total time required to complete the checks, incorporating the time taken by AusCheck, CrimTrac, ASIO and the response time from individuals to draft findings.

<u>Percentage of completed checks</u>	<u>5 Days</u>	<u>10 Days</u>	<u>15 Days</u>	<u>20 Days</u>	<u>&gt;20 Days</u>
<u>ASICs</u>	<u>72%</u>	<u>81%</u>	<u>89%</u>	<u>95%</u>	<u>5%</u>
<u>MSICs</u>	<u>53%</u>	<u>67%</u>	<u>80%</u>	<u>92%</u>	<u>8%</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>68%</u>	<u>78%</u>	<u>87%</u>	<u>95%</u>	<u>5%</u>

### AusCheck Bill

The Government Amendments to the AusCheck Amendment Bill 2009 were passed in the Senate on 29 October 2009. The Bill was returned to the House of Representatives for final passage and on 20 November. The Bill received Royal Assent from the Governor-General Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC on 7 December 2009.

There is currently scope for the introduction of a background checking scheme for persons with access to

security sensitive biological agents (SSBAs).

SSBAs are agents like anthrax and SARS. They are a potential risk to human health or the Australian economy if subject to deliberate misuse.

The Minister for Health and Ageing is responsible for determining whether an agent should be regarded as an SSBA. The framework and timing of any SSBA background checking scheme are still being considered.



The Governor-General Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC

## Proposed MSIC Changes



The Hon Anthony Albanese MP The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government announced on 29 January that the Government will introduce changes to the existing MSIC scheme.

The changes will strengthen security at Australian ports as well as oil

and gas facilities to better protect maritime infrastructure from the threat of terrorism and serious and organised crime.

Changes include the ineligibility of applicants to hold an MSIC if they have been convicted and imprisoned for a wider range of offences.

New offences will also be created for MSIC issuing bodies that fail to suspend an MSIC card once they receive information that an MSIC holder has been convicted of a relevant offence

In addition, MSIC holders will be required to undergo a compulsory criminal history check and ASIO secu-

rity assessment every two years, instead of the current five year period

Existing MSIC holders will not be required to resubmit applications or take any action. Existing cardholders will be screened against the new criteria when they are next required to renew their cards.

The changes are scheduled to commence in mid 2010.

AusCheck is working with the Office of Transport Security to implement a smooth transition to the new arrangements and will advise issuing bodies of all changes as soon as the details are finalised.

**The process of emailing notification letters significantly reduces delays in notification times.**

## Adverse Final Finding Letter—Changes

After consultation with industry AusCheck has revised the existing Adverse-Finding Final Letter which is sent to issuing bodies when an individual is found ineligible.

The previous notification process contained several pages of generic information that was sent to issuing bodies each time an individual was found ineligible.

AusCheck has moved this information to a new web site: [Ag.gov.au/AusCheckFinalletter](http://Ag.gov.au/AusCheckFinalletter)

By storing this information in a single location, the website provides a central easy to access repository of standard information concerning adverse decisions. The new website URL is contained on the final letter which is sent to issuing bodies and is also available on AusCheck's existing web site: [Ag.gov.au/AusCheck](http://Ag.gov.au/AusCheck).

**Email Notification**  
AusCheck is also currently trialing a system whereby notification of Final Findings

occurs by email. The process of emailing notification letters significantly reduces delays in notification times. Please note that these changes only affect the notification sent to issuing bodies. If issuing body comments received by 1 April support the trial, the new will be implemented as a business practice immediately. The Notification sent to individuals remains unchanged and will still be posted and contain the generic appeals information.

## Canberra Day Shut Down

Canberra Day is held on the second Monday in March each year. The Day commemorates and celebrates the official founding and naming of Canberra as the nation's capital on 12 March 1913.

This year Canberra day is celebrated on 8 March and is a public holiday in the ACT. AusCheck advises issuing bodies that it will be closed for business on 8th March and will recommence on Tuesday 9th March.

## We're on the Web

[ag.gov.au/AusCheck](http://ag.gov.au/AusCheck)

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