

**The following response, quoted in full, was received from the Office of Transport Security, Department of Infrastructure and Transport Canberra.**

Thank you for your email of 18 March 2011 which notified the Department of Infrastructure and Transport (the Department) of its nomination for the Australian Privacy Foundation's 2011 "Big Brother Awards" in relation to "Full Body Scanners for Airport Security". The Department wishes to take this opportunity to provide some comments on the nomination.

Safety and security remain the Australian Government's key priorities in the aviation sector. On 9 February 2010, the Government announced an investment of \$200 million over four years to introduce a comprehensive package of measures to strengthen Australia's aviation security regime. A key component of this package is \$28.5 million to assist the aviation industry to introduce a range of new screening technologies at international passenger screening points. These technologies include body scanners, next-generation multi-view X-ray machines and bottle liquid scanners capable of detecting liquid-based explosives. A joint media statement on the Strengthening Aviation Security Initiative is available at Reference 1.

Body scanners represent the optimal technology for detecting prohibited items on a passenger or within their clothing. They will offer Australians improved security before boarding an aircraft by detecting all items – metal and non-metal – that are concealed beneath clothing, such as weapons and explosives. Body scanners will be progressively introduced at outbound international screening points in Australia's eight international airports (Adelaide, Brisbane, Cairns, Darwin, Gold Coast, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney) from late 2011. There are no plans to introduce body scanners at Australian domestic terminals.

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The Government intends to introduce only body scanning technologies that are fitted with privacy enhancements; that is, those that produce generic 'stick figure' images. This was first highlighted by the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, in media interviews accompanying the media release of 9 February 2010. During an interview on the ABC Radio's Breakfast program, the Minister stated that the body scanning technologies introduced in Australia would only show "stick figures", a "stylised sort of body outline...like a cartoon...". This was widely reported in the media at the time; a sample of the media coverage is provided at References 2-5.

The Government's intention to use body scanners fitted with privacy enhancements has not changed. The Department has been investigating technologies that use automatic threat recognition software algorithms. These detect potential threats and automatically identify their location on a generic human outline or stick figure image. A security screening officer will be able to review the stick figure image then work with the passenger to resolve any identified specific areas of concern. These privacy enhancements eliminate the need for any security personnel to review raw images of passengers and no 'naked images' will be generated, displayed or stored by the body scanners.

This was discussed at some length during Senate Estimates on 22 February 2011, the record of which is available at Reference 6. Media coverage based on the Hansard record also followed and is available at Reference 7. The Government's requirement for the use of stick figure images has been most recently featured by the Sydney Morning Herald on 27 March 2011, available at Reference 8.

In September 2010, the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC, formerly the Office of the Privacy Commissioner) facilitated a roundtable between the Department and privacy and civil society stakeholders to discuss privacy issues relating to the introduction of body scanners at Australia's eight international gateway airports. Following that meeting, the Department commenced developing a detailed Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) to identify and assess privacy issues. Initial discussions on the draft PIA have been held with the OAIC and the document is being further refined. This is a comprehensive document that the Department hopes to finalise shortly and make available to those key stakeholders and the public for comment.

On a matter of clarification in the nomination you provided, in order to travel on a screened air service all people and their baggage (including carry-on and checked baggage) must be screened and cleared. This is a requirement under the Aviation Transport Security Act 2004 and the Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005.

To conclude, given the Government's ongoing commitment to addressing privacy concerns, and the clearly stated intention for the use of non-invasive "stick figure" technology, we would obviously not be a serious contender for your award.

References:

1. [http://www.minister.infrastructure.gov.au/aa/releases/2010/February/AA024\\_2010.htm](http://www.minister.infrastructure.gov.au/aa/releases/2010/February/AA024_2010.htm)
2. <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/airport-x-rays-hide-naked-truth/story-e6frf7jo-1225828478848>
3. <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2010/s2814764.htm>
4. <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/travel/travel-news/passengers-threatened-with-delays-body-scans-20100209-nptd.html>
6. <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/senate/commtee/S13575.pdf>
7. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/australian-it/body-scanners-to-respect-privacy-concerns-over-radiation-still-have-not-been-settled/story-e6frgax-1226013739677>
8. <http://www.smh.com.au/travel/travel-news/grated-scanners-for-travellers-20110326-1cavi.html>

Karly Pidgeon

A/g General Manager | Supply Chain & Screening | Office of Transport Security  
Department of Infrastructure and Transport | GPO Box 594 CANBERRA ACT 2601

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