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Media Release

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Travel safe! How to avoid drama and stay safe while travelling this holiday season

Editor's note: [Vision of individuals arrested at airports is available via Hightail](#)

The AFP will be highly visible at major airports this holiday season to help passengers arrive safely and without unnecessary delay.

Passengers are being urged to be mindful of their alcohol intake while waiting for flights or while flying on aircraft.

AFP Aviation Commander Craig Bellis said the AFP had responded to more than 400 incidents involving intoxicated individuals at major airports or on aircraft this year, and since January 2024, the AFP had responded to an average of 57 incidents a day.

Commander Bellis said 419 people this year had been charged with 574 offences, including drug-related offences, acts of violence and theft.

"A number of these people charged were affected by alcohol at the time they committed the alleged offences," Commander Bellis said.

"We know people are ready to wind down as we head into the holidays, however, we are encouraging people to think about whether they need that extra drink.

"Don't change your destination because of poor choices. Your holiday will be much nicer than a holding cell.

"Assaulting a crew member in a way that impacts on their duty on board, can carry a maximum penalty of 20 years' imprisonment."

The AFP is responsible for security at nine designated airports - the Gold Coast, Cairns, Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane, Darwin, Perth, and Adelaide. With tens of thousands of airline passengers expected to travel in the coming weeks, the AFP has worked with key partners to provide the following advice:

- If available, save time by checking in online or via an airline's app;
- When possible, check traffic conditions to the airport to allow time to arrive and check in luggage;
- Consider pre-booking if parking at an airport car park, or travelling to the airport by public transport, ride share or taxi;
- Be aware of weight restrictions of check-in luggage and other potential restrictions, such as lithium batteries and other dangerous goods;



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- Be patient and follow directions when going through security screening;
- If travelling with children, consider packing extra food or activities to entertain them as the busy travel period could result in longer times waiting in lines.

The AFP this year has conducted more than 45,000 hours of preventive actions, such as intelligence-led active patrols, perimeter inspections and targeted identity checks.

As of November 30, the AFP has issued 169 criminal charges at Melbourne Airport, followed by Perth Airport (128), Sydney Airport (90), Brisbane Airport (71), Gold Coast Airport (59), Adelaide Airport (24), Darwin Airport (17), Cairns Airport (14) and Canberra Airport (2).

Examples of the antisocial incidents on board aircrafts and at airports in the previous 12 months include:

- A WA man, 29, [charged in May, 2024](#) for the alleged unprovoked assault of two strangers at Perth Airport.
- A man, 41, was issued [a court attendance notice in September, 2024](#) for allegedly making aggressive and sexually graphic comments towards a female crew member on a Gold Coast-bound flight.
- A NSW man, 27, was [issued a court attendance notice in October, 2024](#) after he allegedly punched a security guard unconscious at Sydney Airport.
- A British national, 31, was [charged with assaulting a man](#) in the carpark of Melbourne Airport in February, 2024.

AFP Aviation Commander Craig Bellis said the AFP worked closely with airlines, airports and regulatory authorities to ensure a safe environment across the festive season.

“Times when we have more passengers than usual passing through our airports, combined with potentially longer waiting periods, is when we sometimes see an increase in disruptive or anti-social behaviour,” Commander Bellis said.

“The AFP is encouraging the travelling public to be patient with unexpected delays, be mindful of their alcohol intake and follow airline advice.

“We have seen examples of unacceptable behaviour by travellers on aircraft and at airports. People who engage in antisocial behaviour should understand this not only impacts their family holiday plans – with potential travel bans enforced – but also that of hundreds of other people if they cause a flight to be delayed or cancelled.

“Passengers who break the law will be dealt with swiftly and will be brought before the courts.”

Australian Airports Association CEO Simon Westaway said it was important for travellers to be prepared for the end-of-year holiday rush, particularly with some terminals undergoing future-proofing upgrades.

“The festive season and New Year is a very busy time at airports around the country as millions of people travel domestically and internationally,” Mr Westaway said.



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“There are billions of dollars’ worth of critical infrastructure upgrades now underway at many local airports and the necessary construction works could change the journey of passengers through terminals.

“We simply ask all travellers to plan ahead, be patient and respectful to hard-working aviation staff and be considerate of others.”

ABF Superintendent Operations and Planning East Geoff Quinn also urged passengers to have patience with airport staff and Border Force officers as they facilitate your travel in a safe manner.

“At Sydney International Airport during this period, ABF officers can be processing upwards of 50,000 passengers daily, which can from time to time result in disruptions and delays,” Supt Quinn said.

“The ABF has the capacity to surge additional officers to airports across the country to accommodate peak periods, and to deal with any issues which may arise.

“We encourage travellers who are either leaving Australia for the festive season or entering the country to ensure all their visa requirements and applications have been followed, any incoming passenger cards are filled out promptly, and to always show courtesy and respect to fellow travellers and airport staff.

“We understand and appreciate you are at the start or the end of often long travel journeys, with ABF officers here to streamline the clearance process whilst also protecting the Australian border.”

The AFP encourages the public to call Airport Watch on 131 237 if they see or hear something unusual while travelling through Australia's major airports.

Airport Watch plays an important role within aviation security. It delivers critical information to the AFP to enhance the detection and resolution of suspicious or criminal activity at airports.

Suspicious activity or unusual behaviour includes:

- A person observed displaying an unusually keen interest in security procedures;
- A person observed recording or taking photos in or around sensitive areas of the airport;
- Anyone acting strangely or in an unusual manner;
- Anyone heard asking questions to gain information about the airport; and
- Anyone trying to gain unauthorised access to secure areas.

**Data correct as of 30 November, 2024.*

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