National Passenger Facilitation Committee

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Communiqué

1 August 2025

The National Passenger Facilitation Committee (NPFC) held an Extraordinary Meeting concurrently in Canberra and Cairns (alongside the CAPA Airline Leader Summit Australia Pacific). The meeting was convened by Ms Tharanie Vithanage, First Assistant Secretary Strategy and Policy Division, and Mr Ryan Both, Executive General Manager Aviation, Brisbane Airport Corporation.

Reflecting the NPFC's important role as the Australian Government's key passenger facilitation with industry, members welcomed the opportunity to consider trade-related initiatives ahead of the Government's upcoming Economic Reform Roundtable (Roundtable), to be held from 19 to 21 August 2025.

Members acknowledged the Roundtable's focus on improving productivity, enhancing economic resilience, and fiscal sustainability complements unlocking international travel through a suite of modernisation and reform proposals that enable a contactless, seamless and integrated digital border.

## Unlocking International Travel Reform Initiatives

The Committee considered a suite of initiatives developed by the Department of Home Affairs and the ABF under the theme of *Unlocking International Travel*. These initiatives were developed through robust consultation with NPFC members and received strong support across industry members as critical enablers of Australia's economic growth and global competitiveness. Members have committed to continuing to work with the ABF to understand relevant frameworks and cost implications.

The proposed reforms include:

Traveller Modernisation—a contactless, seamless and integrated digital border

Traveller modernisation is critical to Australia's prosperity and national security. There is industry consensus on the criticality in progressing this proposal to deliver a contactless biometric border, with priority given to implement the Australia Travel Declaration for all airports, airlines and cruise operators.

Members emphasised the expected increase in international visitors and the need for Australia to implement automation, digitalisation and efficient process to handle this growth. Members highlighted the continued industry and government investment in traveller systems, and the importance in progressing this proposal to achieve the vision for a digital, seamless and secure border.
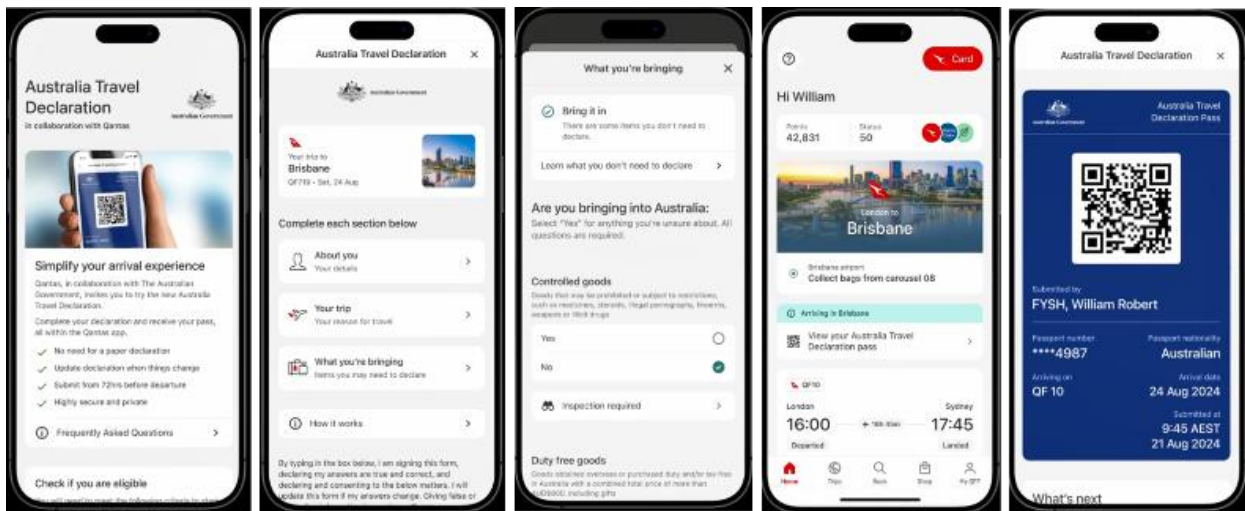
Combined International Departures and Domestic Operations

Members discussed this proposal to implement CIDDO to deliver a streamlined traveller experience. Members noted that a number of major port developments are underway and are reliant on decisions to drive design with the potential to unlock hundreds of millions of dollars in productivity gains.

It was emphasised that CIDDO enhances the traveller experience for seamless connections between domestic and international operations and a contactless biometric experience (including at border). CIDDO also has the potential to significantly improve the competitiveness of airline hubbing leading to improved schedules.

Members re-iterated the expected increase in global passenger numbers and the need for Australia to innovate to handle this growth. Members noted the work underway in co-designing a concept to progress this proposal.

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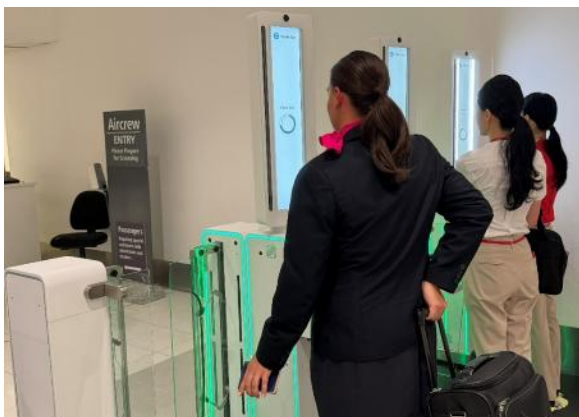
Tourist Refund Scheme Reform

Members discussed the proposed reform of the Tourist Refund Scheme, which allows departing travellers to claim a refund of Goods and Services Tax and Wine Equalisation Tax paid on goods they take offshore with them.

The current service delivery model is cumbersome for claimants, inefficient, and labour intensive. For many travellers, lodging a TRS claim is one of their last experiences before leaving Australia. Too often, it is not a positive experience. Growing traveller and claim volumes, particularly in the lead-up to the 2032 Brisbane Olympics, will exacerbate issues and could degrade Australia's reputation with international visitors.

Reforms discussed were:
- digitising, automating, and outsourcing service delivery to improve the passenger experience, reduce ABF workload demands, and to encourage genuine visitors to spend more in the Australian economy,
- self-funding service delivery by imposing a small administration fee on all approved refunds, and
- removing or restricting citizens' and residents' access to the scheme to address unacceptable levels of non-compliance.

It was agreed that digitising, automating, and outsourcing service delivery would improve the passenger experience considerably and allow claimants to better enjoy the in-terminal experience.   At larger airports it would free-up considerable space used for TRS facilities for retail, hospitality, or other amenities. Reducing workforce demands on the ABF would allow officers to be deployed to other priorities, such as passenger facilitation.

There was unanimous and enthusiastic support for digitising, automating, and outsourcing TRS service delivery, and this would be recommended to proceed as a priority.

Some members expressed concerns regarding the proposed eligibility reforms. It was suggested that this aspect of the TRS proposal should be considered through a staged approach, including further consultation, following digitising, automating, and outsourcing TRS service delivery.

It was acknowledged that while some of the proposed reforms involve short-term costs, there was strong consensus that investment is essential to secure significant long-term benefits – ensuring certainty for industry on a once in a generation investment in aircraft, vessels and new and redeveloping Australia's port infrastructure.

Members reaffirmed the value of collaborative, industry-driven approach to unlock significant productivity gains by modernising the traveller experience, delivering high quality and efficient services and maximising traveller growth to Australia.

NPFC attendees

Adelaide Airport Limited	Australian Border Force
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Australian Trade and Investment Commission
Australian Pacific Airports (Melbourne) Pty Ltd	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Australian Travel Industry Association	Department of Health
Avalon Airport	Department of Home Affairs
Board of Airline Representatives of Australia	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sports and the Arts
Brisbane Airport Corporation	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Cairns Airport Pty Limited	
Gold Coast Airport	
Hobart Airport	
International Air Transport Association	
Newcastle Airport	
Northern Territory Airport	
Perth Airport Pty Ltd	
Qantas Airways Ltd	
Sunshine Coast Airport	
Sydney Airport	
Tourism and Transport Forum Australia	
Virgin Australia	
Western Sydney International (Nancy Bird Walton) Airport	