

To whom it may concern.

Limbs 4 Life is the peak body for people with limb loss in Australia. It is reported that there are more than \*160,000 amputees in Australia and of that 42,000 have undergone major amputations of limbs. A large majority of those people are prosthetic users and as such undergo additional scrutiny when passing through the security screening process. *\*(KPMG Socio-economic impact of limb loss in Australia)*

In 2019 we conducted a consultation of our stakeholders following a raft of complaints by members who felt violated when travelling throughout Australian airports. The purpose of the consultation was to determine the impact of airline travel and subsequent screening process.

This report was compiled in response to the feedback from our stakeholders and shared with the Aviation Authority, the Department of Homeland Security and a number of other departments. Our understanding following their yearlong consultation process was that changes needed to be made to the training of security staff in relation to people with disabilities travelling through Australia airports. We are unsure of the outcome of that consultation process and/or the policy changes adopted in response to the consultation.

Please find a copy of our report attached for your reference. We would be willing to provide additional information as required.

Yours sincerely,  
Melissa

**Melissa Noonan AM | CEO**

# The Impact of Australian Domestic Airport Security Screening Process on Amputees

## 2019 Report



**Limbs 4 Life™**  
Empowering Amputees

**Limbs 4 Life empowers amputees with knowledge and support to make a real difference, because no one should go through limb loss alone.**

**Limbs 4 Life is a non-profit organisation and registered charity.**

Making a real  
difference together

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## Definitions

Amputee	A person living with limb loss, due to the absence or surgical removal of a limb or limb/s.
Doffing	The process of removing a prosthetic device.
Donning	The process of putting on a prosthetic device.
Limb deficiency	Congenital absence of a limb at the time of birth.
Prosthesis (artificial limb)	A device which helps to replace the mobility or functionality of a missing limb/limbs.
Pat-down check (frisk search)	A procedure whereby an airport security officer runs a handheld metal-detecting wand over a person, then runs their hand across the person's body to feel for forbidden items (such as weapons).
Wand check	A procedure whereby an airport security officer runs a handheld metal-detecting device over a person.

***Please note: for the purpose of this report all people with limb loss, including children living with limb deficiency or limb difference, are referred to as amputees.***

## Executive Summary

### Report Purpose and Background

While all travellers are required to take part in mandatory airport security checks, amputees who rely on assistive technology (e.g. prosthetics/orthotics and wheelchairs) for mobility and independence are usually required to take part in additional screening checks. In recent years Limbs 4 Life has received anecdotal feedback regarding a range of difficulties that people living with limb loss have experienced when passing through security screening checks in Australian airports. To better understand the situation Limbs 4 Life sought to more formally capture insights via an Amputee Airline Security Survey.

*The Impact of Australian Domestic Airport Security Screening Process on Amputees Report* summarises survey results, shares respondents' unique experiences and insights, and offers a range of recommendations and considerations aimed at improving screening practice in Australia. Limbs 4 Life intends using this report to engage in systemic advocacy, and influence practical and policy change, with relevant Australian airport security bodies. In addition, Limbs 4 Life intends using the results of this report to develop an array of resources aimed at empowering and upskilling the limb loss community as to their airport security screening rights and responsibilities.

### Current Airport Security Screening Guidelines

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development regulates passenger screening at 62 security controlled Australian domestic airports through administration of the *Aviation Transport Security Act 2004* and the *Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005*. Airport operators and screening authorities are responsible for delivering security in Australian domestic airports. These organisations must meet the legislated security requirements, which includes guidelines pertaining to the dignified use of body scanners for those wearing external prostheses or using a wheelchair and the forbidding of any requests to remove or show external prostheses.

### Respondent Profile

A total of 110 people from all Australian jurisdictions responded to the Amputee Airline Security Survey 2019, 96.4% of whom identified as being an amputee with the remaining 3.6% a parent/ carer of a child with a limb deficiency. Nearly six in ten respondents identified as being male, almost four in ten identified as female and the remainder as transgender or other. The age of respondents ranged from 18 to over 75 years, with almost seven in ten between the ages of 35 – 64 years. Over nine in ten respondents are lower limb amputees and almost all are prosthetic users.

### Airport Security Screening Experiences

Limbs 4 Life restricted survey participation to only those who had travelled domestically in the preceding 12 months. Just over five in ten respondents had travelled domestically in the previous three months with the remaining having done so in the last 12 months, six months or nine months. A mix of open and closed questions enabled Limbs 4 Life to gauge respondents' concern about the safety of personal items, and the impact that positive and/or negative airport security screening check experiences had on them or their child.

Just over five in ten respondents indicated that they had 'both positive and negative experiences', almost three in ten 'had positive experience/s' and just under two in ten 'had negative experiences/s'. It is alarming that, when those respondents who selected 'negative experience' and 'both positive and negative experience' are combined, it suggests that seven in ten respondents had experienced an adverse one in an Australian airport in the past 12 months.

### **Concern about safety of personal items**

As per the requirements of all airline travellers, people with limb loss must also place personal items on the x-ray conveyor belt to allow for security checks of these. Amputees who use assistive devices, such as external prosthetic devices or wheelchairs, must also participate in a routine body scan which includes use of a handheld metal detector or pat-down search during which time they are separated from their personal items.

Eight in ten respondents expressed concern about the safety of their personal items when parted from valuables during body checks, with further feedback as to why this caused unease categorised into eight areas:

- valuables stolen when items were physically separated from them and the compulsory wand or pat-down check took place
- concern about theft of personal items when these are placed on the x-ray conveyor belt and the compulsory wand or pat-down check is conducted
- difficulty to monitor separated personal items while simultaneously participating in the body scanning
- inconsistency in the security scanning approaches used in various airports
- imposition placed on other travellers
- concerns alleviated when travelling with another person who can collect and secure personal items.

When asked whether respondents had asked for items to be moved for safety reasons, pleasingly seven in ten had such a request met. However, that three in ten respondents had a request for valuables to be secured during a compulsory body check denied is troubling.

### **Negative airport security screening experiences**

Of those respondents that encountered a negative experience during airport security checks just over four in ten respondents signalled that they 'felt embarrassed', four in ten 'felt angry' and almost four in ten 'felt humiliated'. Just over three in ten 'felt discriminated against', almost three in ten 'felt distressed' and almost three in ten 'felt nervous about future airport checks'. Just over two in ten 'felt nervous', two in ten 'felt harassed', almost two in ten 'felt violated', and almost two in ten 'felt sad'.

A sizeable eight in ten respondents shared impactful details about their negative experience/s, with some of the eight categorised areas pointing to potential risks to physical and mental health and wellbeing, as well as possible contravention of disability rights and national airport security guidelines:

- request for or physical removal of a prosthesis
- request for or physical removal of footwear
- incorrect, insensitive or inappropriate information provided by security staff



- sense that they had been inappropriately touched
- found the experience stressful
- found the experience embarrassing
- lengthy delays which almost led to missed flights
- inconsistency in domestic security check approaches.

### **Positive airport security screening experiences**

Of those respondents who experienced a positive experience five in ten indicated they 'felt respected', just over three in ten 'felt relaxed', almost three in ten 'felt relief', just over two in ten 'felt confident', and two in ten 'felt happy'.

Almost five in ten respondents shared details about their positive experience/s, with the three categorised areas highlighting the impact this encounter had on them:

- a necessity in order to protect national and passenger security
- appreciated being listened to and acknowledged by airport security staff
- pleased when adequately trained and informed staff conduct the screening.

While it is pleasing to hear that many respondents felt their airport experiences were positive it is troublesome that some indicated this is not always the case, suggesting that practices which conform with national guidelines are not harmonised and/or consistently employed across all domestic airports.

### **Suggested Improvements in Airport Security Screening Approaches**

When asked to suggest improvements to airport security processes almost eight in ten respondents did so, pointing to a strong desire from this limb loss community to propose measures aimed at improving knowledge acquisition and transfer, service delivery and harmonised approaches:

- provide consistent education and training to airport security staff
- increase airport security staff awareness of amputees (and disability more generally)
- educate and upskill amputees as to their rights and responsibilities
- ensure consistency of amputee screening approach in all domestic airports
- listen to amputees, understand their unique needs and show respect
- protect amputee's valuables
- ensure airport security screening is conducted safely and appropriately
- consider use of full-body scans.

### **Recommendations and Considerations**

This report provides a snapshot into amputee's domestic airport security screening experiences. In turn, this has led to development of seven recommendations and considerations with key companies, institutions, governing bodies and Limbs 4 Life in mind.

#### **Limbs 4 Life**

##### ***1. Upskill and inform amputees about Australian airport security screening processes and national guidelines.***

Respondent feedback points to some amputees lacking knowledge about their airport security screening rights and responsibilities. It is recommended that Limbs 4 Life educate and upskill amputees

about domestic airport security screening processes, and their rights and responsibilities. This could be delivered through provision of empowering information on a Limbs 4 Life fact sheet, website, webinars, *Amplified* magazine and/or conference presentations. Limbs 4 Life should also aim to work collaboratively with the appropriate governing body to ensure accuracy and currency of any information developed.

**2. Disseminate The Impact of Australian Domestic Airport Security Screening Process on Amputees Report to key airport operation companies, airport security organisations, training providers and governing agencies, and seek opportunities to meet with these bodies to discuss the issues raised.**

This report has the capacity to open up conversations and put a spotlight on issues faced by amputees with organisations, institutions and governing bodies associated with domestic airport security oversight. Dissemination of this report, and actively seeking opportunities to meet with noted bodies, will provide Limbs 4 Life with scope to discuss matters raised, issues of concern and positively influence structural change.

### **Government Departments and Agencies**

**3. Understand the issues which amputees face when travelling through Australian airports and ensure that national airport screening processes are harmonised and compliant with disability discrimination and human rights conventions.**

It is recommended that key government departments and agencies meet with Limbs 4 Life to discuss amputees' human rights, problems in amputee security screening practices, and ensure that industry practices are harmonised and compliant with Australian discrimination and human rights conventions.

Key departments and agencies include (but are not limited to): Department of Home Affairs, Aviation and Maritime Security Division; Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development; Australian Skills Quality Authority; Australian Human Rights Commission; and, Disability Ombudsmen and Commissioners.

### **Airport Operations Companies and Professional Bodies**

**4. Ensure that the airport security screening of amputees is conducted in accordance with national guidelines, disability discrimination acts and human rights conventions.**

It is recommended that representatives from Airport Operations Companies, and the professional bodies of which they are members, meet with Limbs 4 Life to learn about issues raised in this report and collaboratively seek solutions to security screening difficulties experienced by the limb loss community.

### **Airport Security Organisations**

**5. Co-design amputee-specific information resources for domestic airport security staff with Limbs 4 Life.**

A variety of airport security organisations are contracted to deliver screening, and employ airport security staff, in domestic airports across Australia. It is recommended that airport security organisations collaborate with Limbs 4 Life to co-design staff information and professional

development resources which ensures they are well informed about amputees, prosthetic and other mobility devices, and the most appropriate ways of screening amputees.

Possible means of achieving this include: provision of co-designed static amputee awareness information for staff; involving Limbs 4 Life in professional development sessions; having staff participate in a Limbs 4 Life delivered webinar; and/or, developing co-designed video providing general amputee information and correct and incorrect amputee security scanning process demonstration.

### **Registered Training Providers**

#### ***6. Co-design training resources and information for airport security students with Limbs 4 Life.***

A number of education institutions provide nationally recognised airport security training across Australia. It is recommended that registered training providers collaborate with Limbs 4 Life to co-design information and/or training resources which would ensure that future airport security officers are well informed about amputees, prosthetics and other mobility devices, and understand the most appropriate ways of screening amputees.

Possible means of achieving this include: embedding amputee awareness information in relevant training module/s; provision of co-designed static amputee awareness information; and/or developing co-designed video providing general amputee information and correct and incorrect amputee security scanning process demonstration.

#### ***7. Ensure that disability awareness training is a component of airport security training programs.***

While disability awareness training may be embedded in airport security curriculum, the results of this survey suggests that students may require further education about the needs of Australians who live with disability and pass through domestic airports.

## 1. About Limbs 4 Life

Limbs 4 Life empowers amputees with knowledge and support to make a real difference, because no-one should have to go through limb loss alone.

Limbs 4 Life is the peak body for amputees in Australia and was founded as an incorporated charity in 2004. Limbs 4 Life provides services to thousands of amputees and their care givers, who rely on its programs and services for assistance prior to, or after a limb amputation. Limbs 4 Life is supported by over 200 trained Peer Support Volunteers, located across Australia, who visit people pre or post an amputation.

Since its formation, Limbs 4 Life has greatly extended the supports available to amputees, their families, primary care givers and healthcare staff. Limbs 4 Life's services include:

- Peer Support Programs
- Evidence-based resources and wellbeing information
- Independent support and advocacy to assist people to navigate the healthcare and disability systems
- Access to social and economic inclusion events and programs.

Limbs 4 Life also advocates for amputees by initiating or taking part in research, advocating to government, and educating the community about amputation and limb loss.

Limbs 4 Life has proven to be an important and in-demand organisation with links to amputee support organisations internationally and in other parts of Australia. Over the years the value of Limbs 4 Life's work has been recognised by a range of philanthropic, government and corporate supporters.

For more information visit [www.limbs4life.org.au](http://www.limbs4life.org.au)

## 2. Background and Purpose

In recent years Limbs 4 Life has received anecdotal information about the difficulties that some amputees and have experienced when passing through security screening checks in Australian airports.

Limbs 4 Life is conscious of the importance of security checks in airports and has made stakeholders abreast of their rights and responsibilities to take part in these to ensure the safety of the wider travelling population in Australia. This information has been shared via a range of Limbs 4 Life communication resources, such as *Amplified* magazine, website and social media channels.

While all travellers are required to take part in mandatory airport security checks, amputees of all ages, and in particular those who rely on assistive technology (e.g. prosthetics/orthotics and wheelchairs) for mobility and independence, are usually required to take part in additional screening checks. This is generally because the metal components of prostheses, mobility aids and wheelchairs set off alarms when an individual passes through a walk-through metal detector, requiring them to then have a wand scan and/or pat-down check. However, anecdotal feedback provided to Limbs 4 Life suggested that some members of the limb loss community were being subjected to security screening scans and checks which may contravene national airport security guidelines, human rights and disability rights. Considering this, and given that Limbs 4 Life was only receiving information about such experiences informally, it was determined that a more structured and formalised method of capturing both positive and negative airport security screening experiences was vital.

It was deemed that the results of such an evaluation could assist Limbs 4 Life in providing feedback and engage in systemic advocacy with relevant airport operations departments, airport security organisations, relevant government agencies and training providers where necessary. It was also felt that engaging in this evaluation would inform the development of airport security and travel information for organisational stakeholders.

### 2.1 Methodology

The Amputee Airline Security Survey 2019 aimed to collect information about the experiences of amputees of all ages when passing through security checks at domestic Australian airports. It aimed to increase Limbs 4 Life's knowledge of matters that amputees may encounter when undertaking domestic airport security screening and the resulting feedback be used to inform systemic advocacy activity in relation to this matter. The survey was designed by Limbs 4 Life staff, and included input from the members from the Limbs 4 Life National Amputee Advisory Council.

### 2.2 Procedure

The Amputee Airline Security Survey 2019 was designed by Limbs 4 Life staff and National Amputee Advisory Council (NAAC) members, including:

- Melissa Noonan, Chief Executive Officer, Limbs 4 Life
- Fiona Waugh, Policy and Projects Manager, Limbs 4 Life
- Kylie Franson, Program Manager, Limbs 4 Life
- Priscilla Sutton, NAAC, Australian Capital Territory

- Jamie Manning, NAAC, New South Wales
- Shane Grant, NAAC, Northern Territory
- Glenn Bedwell, NAAC, Queensland
- Peter Stringer, NAAC, South Australia
- Lyn Johnson, NAAC, Tasmania
- Ren Gallet, NAAC, Victoria
- Andrew Fairbairn, NAAC, Western Australia.

### 2.3 Survey Instrument

The Amputee Airline Security Survey 2019 was made available and open to amputees and parents of children with limb deficiency for eight weeks (July and August 2019), and accessible through the online Survey Monkey platform. The national online survey was promoted in Limbs 4 Life's *Amplified* magazine, Limbs 4 Life websites and social media platforms.

As the first survey of its kind, it did not build upon an existing questionnaire framework. However, it is hoped that the one developed can be used in future surveys to allow for comparison to 2019 baseline data.

### 2.4 Limitations

The most notable limitation is that the Amputee Airline Security Survey 2019 is not a representative survey, and thus caution should be used when generalising findings to the broader Australian population of amputees. Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants in this survey, as the survey was promoted on an opt-in basis via an array of communication channels. Because of this approach, and that the survey was only offered online, the resulting respondent sample is likely to only represent those with the confidence and capacity to partake in an electronic survey. Therefore, those lacking internet confidence, who are socially isolated, affected by low literacy, and/or have none or limited access to the internet are less likely to have participated and may have led to some response bias.

Many respondents indicated the airport locations where their experiences occurred but, in order to protect privacy of both respondents and airports, Limbs 4 Life has excluded these identifiable details in this report.

### 3. Current Airport Security Screening Guidelines

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development regulates passenger screening at 62 security controlled Australian domestic airports through administration of the *Aviation Transport Security Act 2004* and the *Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005*. The Act and Regulations “establish a framework for aviation security, mandate minimum security standards for passenger screening and provide for the Department to undertake compliance activities to ensure legislated requirements are met”. Airport operators and screening authorities, (not government agencies), are responsible for delivering security in Australian domestic airports. These organisations must meet the minimum legislated security requirements outlined in the Act and Regulations. <sup>i</sup>

The Department of Home Affairs provides information to travellers regarding passenger screening, and other matters, via its *TravelSECURE* website pages. A dedicated section is provided for travellers with specific needs, including information about the use of body scanners for those wearing external prostheses or using a wheelchair. It states that “**alternative screening processes are available for all travellers with special needs to ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect**” and that individuals inform screening officers of their circumstances before the screening process commences so that screening methods suitable to a person’s need are utilised.

With respect to travellers with special needs, including amputees of all ages, the following rights and responsibilities are outlined:

- Screening may involve use of a handheld metal detector, and explosive trace detection test or frisk search
- If a frisk search is deemed to be the most suitable method, the screening officer will ask for a person’s consent, an officer of the same gender should conduct the search and the person may request that it take place in a private room
- Walking aids, such as a walking stick or crutches, and wheelchairs can be taken on board a plane but need to be security screened by X-ray or hand-held metal detector, and chairs for sitting in and walking aids are available for use during the process
- A person can never be asked to remove or show external prostheses, and a screening officer should never touch these items. <sup>ii</sup>

In addition to details provided on the Australian Government *TravelSECURE* website, individual airlines also provide information about screening and travel rights and responsibilities for travellers with special needs.

## 4. Respondent Profile

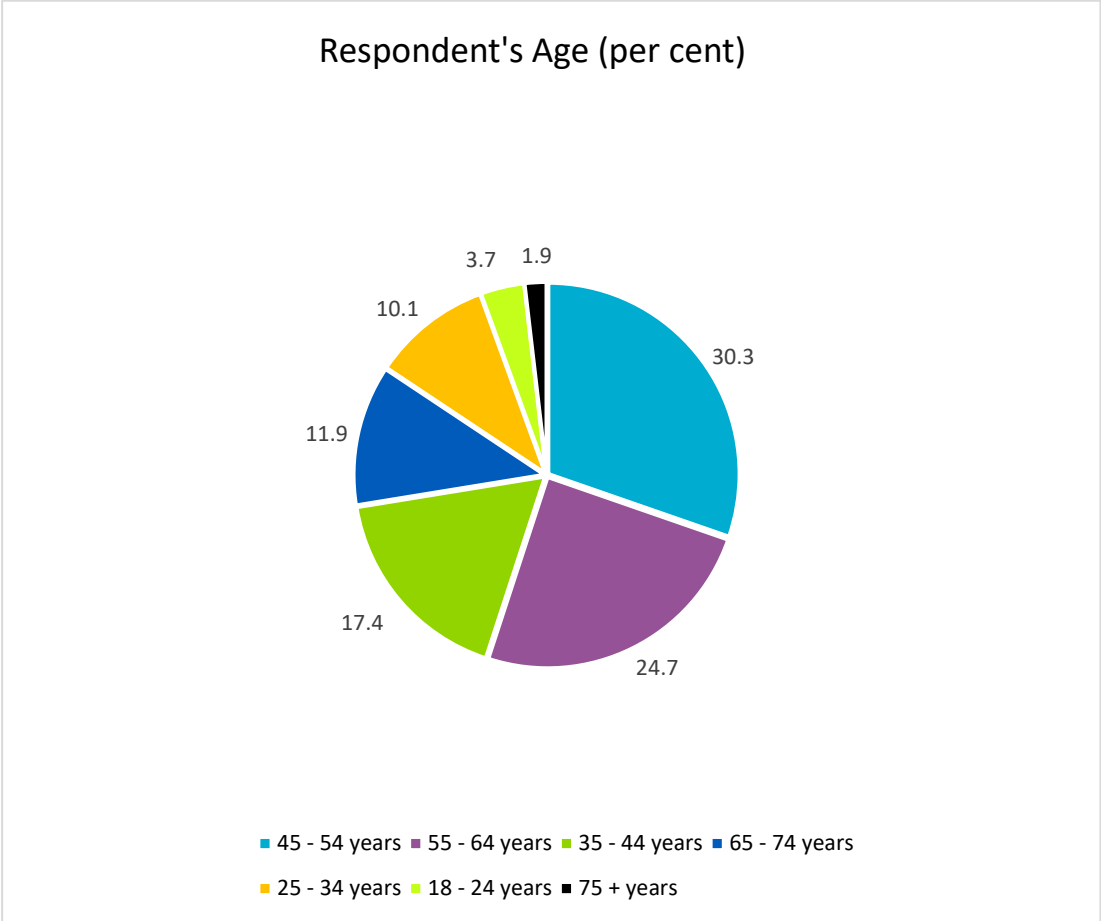
A total of 110 people responded to the Amputee Airline Security Survey 2019, 106 (96.4%) of whom identified as being an amputee with the remaining four (3.6%) being the parent/ carer of a child with a limb deficiency.

### 4.1 Gender and Age

Nearly six in ten respondents identified as being male (58.2%), almost four in ten identified as female (39%) and the remainder as transgender or other (2.7%).

The age of respondents ranged from 18 years to over 75 years, with almost seven in ten between the ages of 35 – 64 years. A full breakdown of respondent ages is indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Respondent's Age

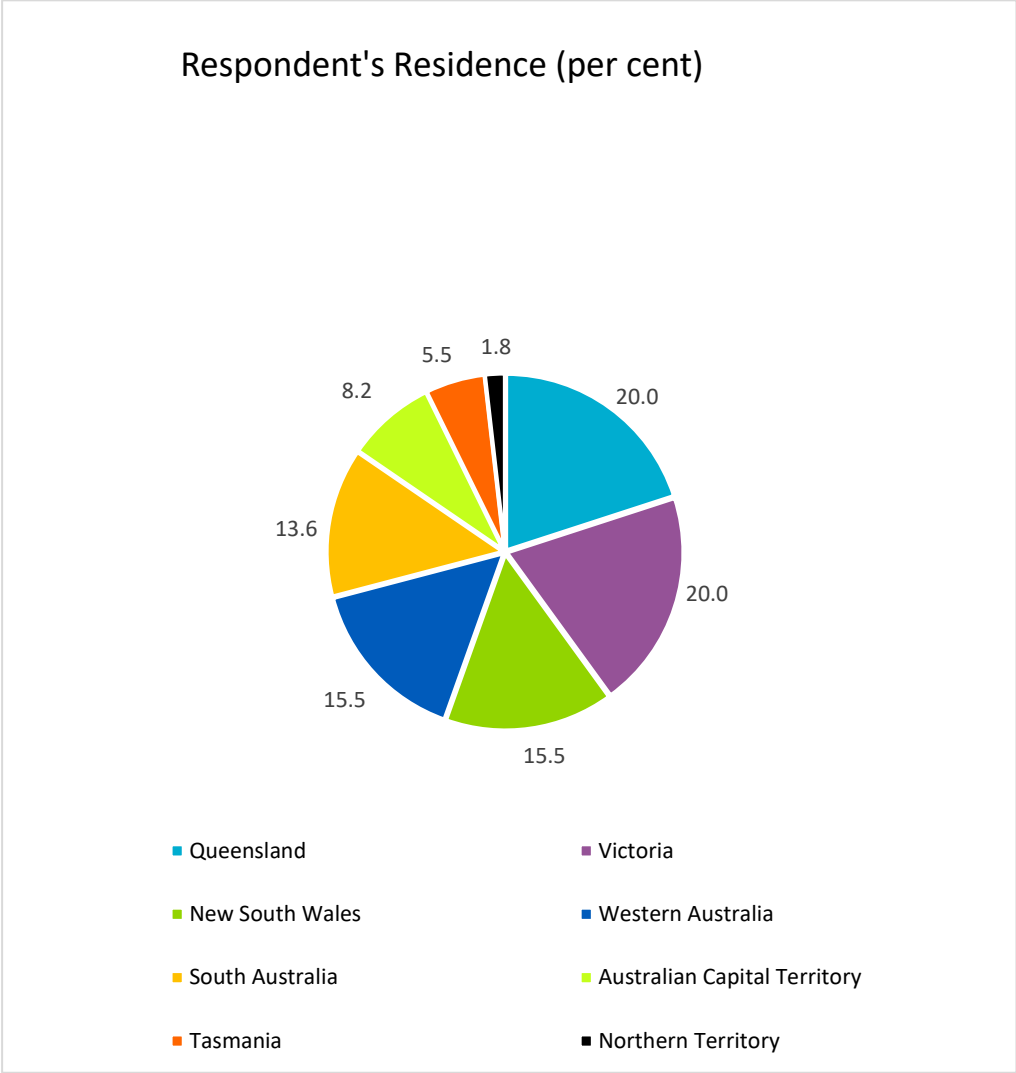


### 4.2 State and Territory Distribution

The 110 respondents came from all Australian states and territories, with Figure 2 indicating the percentages from each jurisdiction.



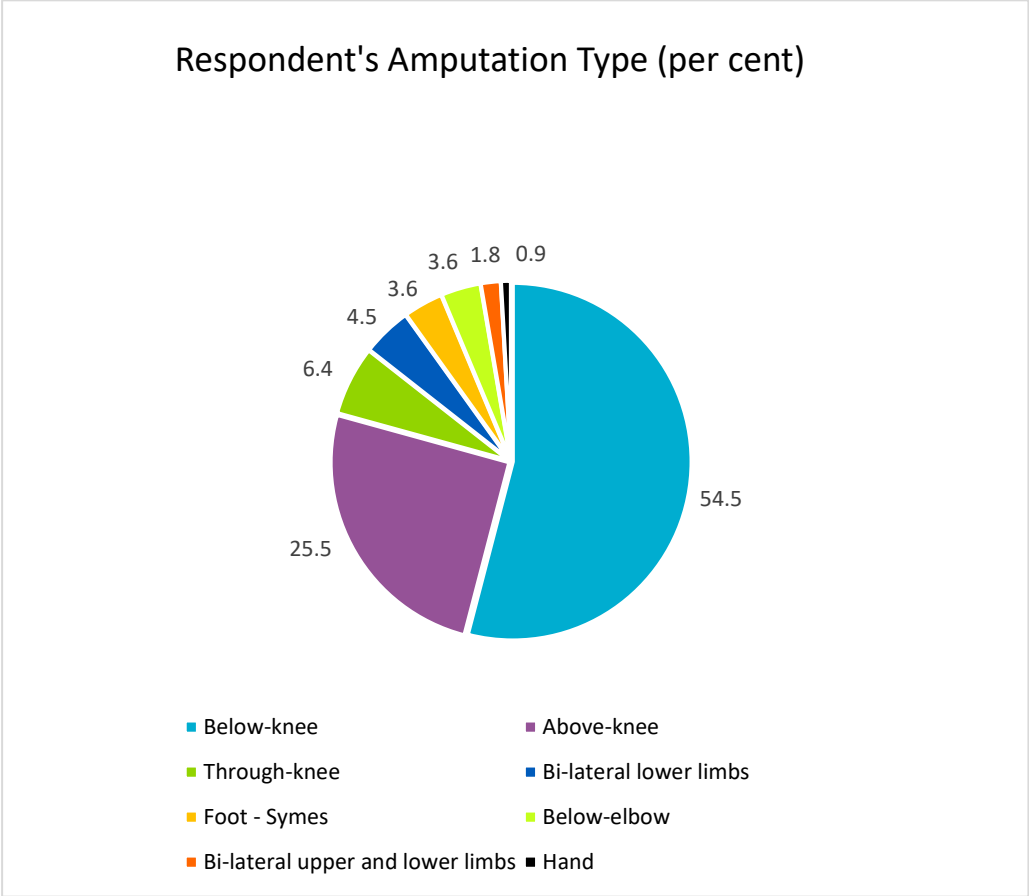
Figure 2: Respondent's Residence



### 4.3 Amputation and Prosthetic Use

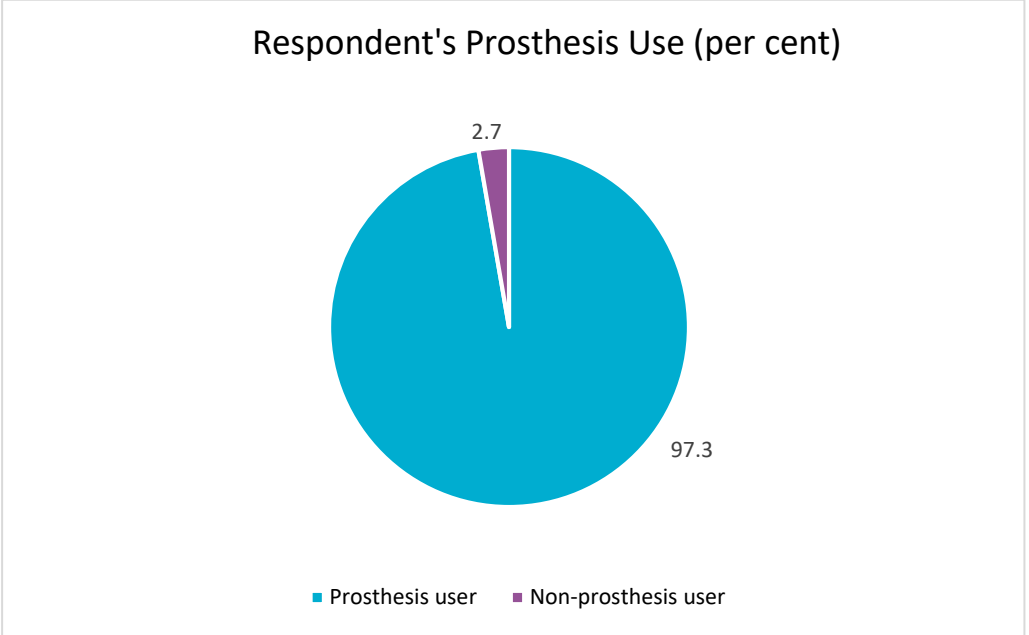
Respondents were asked to specify theirs or their child's level of amputation. As indicated in Figure 3 just over nine in ten respondents are lower limb amputees.

Figure 3: Respondent's Amputation Type



Respondents were asked to advise whether they are a prosthetic user, with Figure 4 indicating that almost all are users of a prosthetic device/s.

Figure 4: Respondent's Prosthetic Use

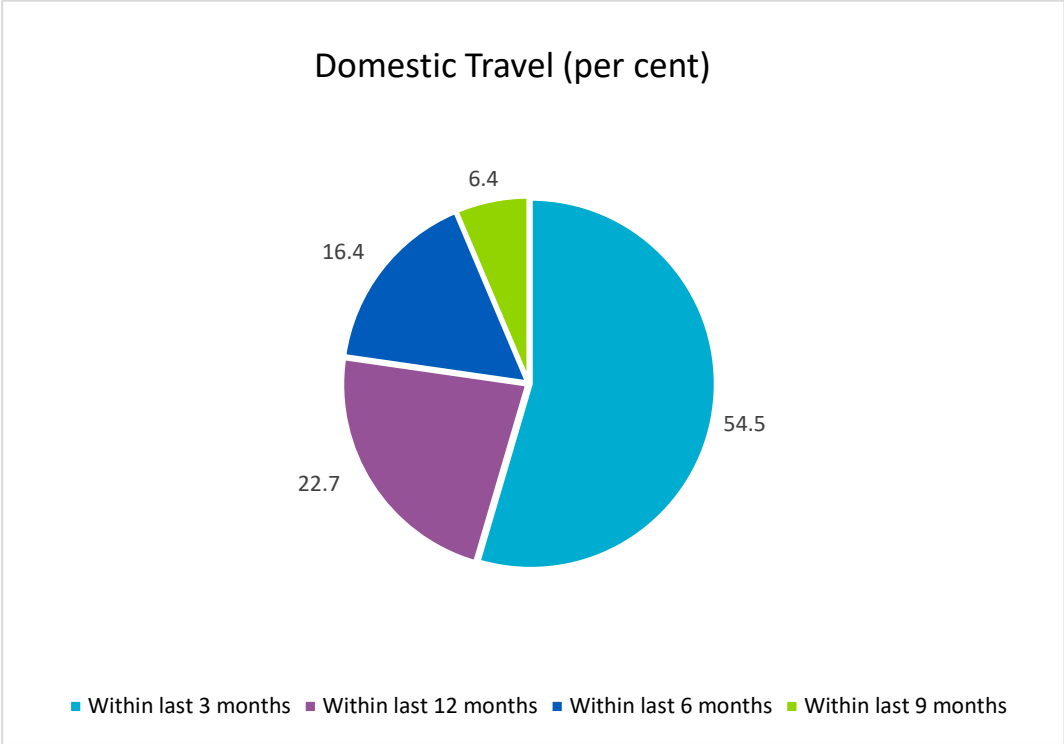


# 5. Airport Security Screening Experiences

Limbs 4 Life restricted survey participation to only those who had travelled in the preceding 12 months, as it was felt that this measure would increase the likelihood of respondents being able to recall and reflect on experiences with greater accuracy and clarity. The survey was confined to seeking feedback regarding about national airport security experiences, as the study sought to capture information about the impact that encounters had on respondents and whether possible contravention of national security guidelines and human/disability conventions had occurred. Furthermore, it enabled respondents to make recommendations for improvements in domestic security processes through an Australian lens. While Limbs 4 Life is interested in the experiences of those who have travelled internationally, investigating the variety and impact of security measures in overseas airports was outside of the scope of this study.

As indicated in Figure 5 over half had, at the time of survey participation, travelled domestically in the previous three months. The remainder of respondents had travelled in the last 12 months, six months or nine months.

Figure 5: Domestic Travel



## 5.1 Safety and Security of Personal Items

As per the requirements of all airline travellers, amputees must also place personal items on the x-ray conveyor belt to allow for security checks of these. Items may include carry-on baggage, handbags, laptop computers, cameras, phones, wallets and belts. In addition, assistive devices used by some amputees for mobility and stability purposes, such as metal walking sticks, must also be placed on the conveyor belt for screening. When required to place a metal walking stick on the conveyor belt amputees must be provided with a temporary wooden walking stick provided by airport security staff.

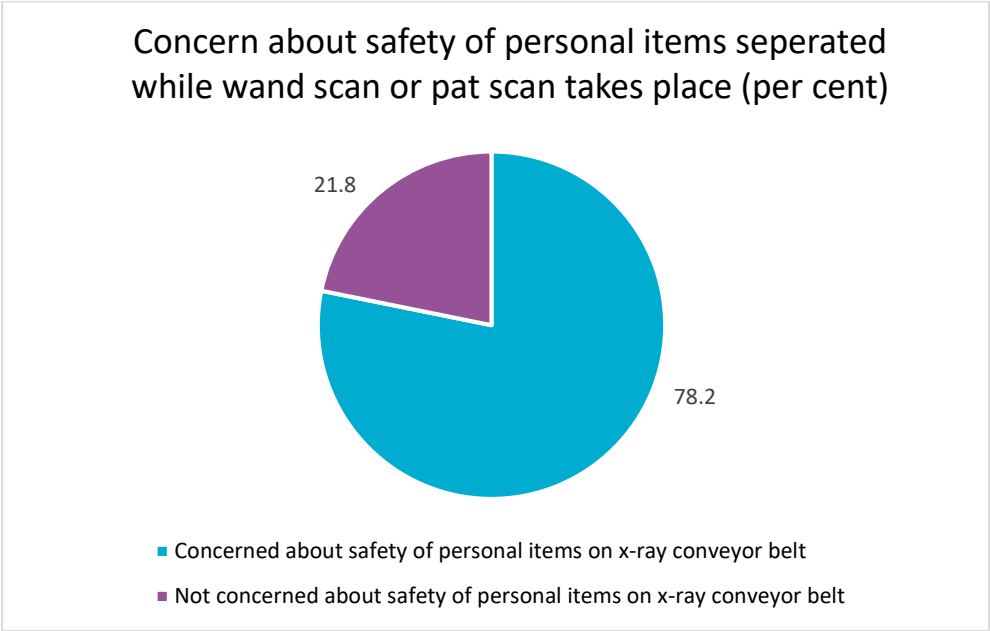
These wooden sticks are a temporary replacement for a person’s metal walking stick while they move through a walk-through metal detector. Once scanned the metal walking stick is returned to the person.

Amputees who use assistive devices, such as external prosthetic devices or wheelchairs, must also participate in a routine body scan. As noted in Section 3 (Current Airport Security Screening Guidelines) this includes use of a body scan, such as a handheld metal detector or pat-down search (also known as a frisk search). While a body scan takes place, the person is separated from their personal items. These items are placed on a conveyer belt for an x-ray scan and cannot be retrieved until the body scan is completed and the passenger is cleared to proceed and collect personal belongings.

**5.1.1 Concern for safety of personal items**

When asked the question “are you concerned about the safety of your personal items (such as bags, equipment or valuables) separated from you when given a wand scan or pat-down as part of your airport security (e.g. bags left unattended on the x-ray conveyor belt)” the vast majority of respondents did express unease. As indicated in Figure 6 almost eight in ten respondents answered ‘yes’ to this question, highlighting a high level of concern about being parted from personal items during security checks.

Figure 6: Concern about safety of personal items



When asked to comment on this issue, 22 per cent of respondents provided further insight and information about personal experiences and why separation from personal items cause unease or difficulties.

When assessed the comments could be categorised into six key areas: stolen items; concern about theft; difficulty monitoring personal items while physically separated from these; inconsistent security screening approaches in domestic airports; imposition placed on other travellers; and, alleviation of concerns when a companion can collect and secure their personal items.

- a) Valuables stolen when items were physically separated from them and the compulsory wand or pat-down check took place.

*“When I was taken aside to be pat down my phone and bags were taken by another woman who walked through the security checks without any questions.”*

*“When your mobile, wallet and other valuables are waiting to be picked up while you wait for your turn. I have had my DSLR camera disappear once when my attention was on security check.”*

- b) Concern about theft of personal items when these are placed on the x-ray conveyor belt and the compulsory wand or pat-down check is conducted.

*“Yes, as I’m being ‘wanded’ I’m anxious that other passengers are passing me, and my items are not always in view, and could be subject to theft.”*

*“Personal stuff left unattended is a big theft concern in such a big place where lots of people pass through everyday.”*

*“Particular concern considering you have to take laptops out of your bag and have them on a separate tray. If I’m being scanned someone could easily take the laptop out of the tray before I get to it and walk off with it.”*

*“Sometimes it takes ages for them to complete the check up and I feel my items could go missing or taken away by mistake! They should allow me to pick up my items first before the check!”*

*“I’ve been told it’s a “secure area and there is nothing to worry about”.”*

- c) Difficulty to monitor separated personal items while simultaneously participating in the body scanning

*“What continually concerns me is the fact that security agents insist that I face them during the wand scanning process, meaning that my back is to my personal items and I cannot even keep an eye on them. Surely the process would be less stressful if I could watch my items?”*

*“Yes, as I am unable to attend to my baggage post results from wand scan.”*

*“Items just sit at the end of the conveyor in a tray while the security check is undertaken and this can take a very long time. It can be almost impossible to keep an eye on things, particularly in very busy airports.”*

*“Your belongings can be left unattended for up to 5 minutes – too long.”*

*“While having the compulsory scan I’m out of sight of my belongings for some time. This includes my wallet that I usually put in my carry bag. I cannot see if anyone has deliberately or by mistake picked up my belongings. The airport security staff seem to take no notice of my possessions while I am being checked.”*

d) **Inconsistency in the security scanning approaches used in various airports**

*“The systems seem to vary from airport to airport. At XXX airport now they ask which bags are mine and take them to the pat down area. Other airports don't do this.”*

*“I travel regularly around Australia for work, no two airports are the same in relation to the security scanning process. What they do or request in one airport is completely different from the next. The only area where the process is the same is being screened by a person of the same gender. Some airports allow you to walk through the scanner and then make you walk back out, meanwhile my personal items have gone through and are no longer in sight while I wait for someone of the same gender. I always choose a lane (even if it has the longest queue) where a female is working but that doesn't expedite the process.”*

*“What I don't understand is why in smaller or regional airports ask me to empty the contents of my handbag. The contents are always the same. This never happens in larger airports.”*

e) **Imposition placed on other travellers**

*“When it is busy items can build up and can cause delays in other passengers obtaining their items from the collection point, and potentially people picking up ones that don't belong to them. Having security staff place your items aside whilst being scanned/patted down would alleviate this issue and bring more peace of mind while having a security check conducted.”*

f) **Concerns alleviated when travelling with another person who can collect and secure personal items**

*“I feel OK if my wife can get through and collect them.”*

*“My able-bodied husband always travels with me and he can grab my items from the x-ray belt.”*

*“Whenever I'm travelling with someone I ask them to go through first so they can collect my belongings on the other side, but this isn't possible when travelling alone.”*

*“Thankfully family members get them but it would be different if traveling alone. When there have been items in my bags they have questioned they have aggressively yelled out who does this belong to but I can't hear as I'm too far away getting patted. My wife has had to tell them it is mine.”*

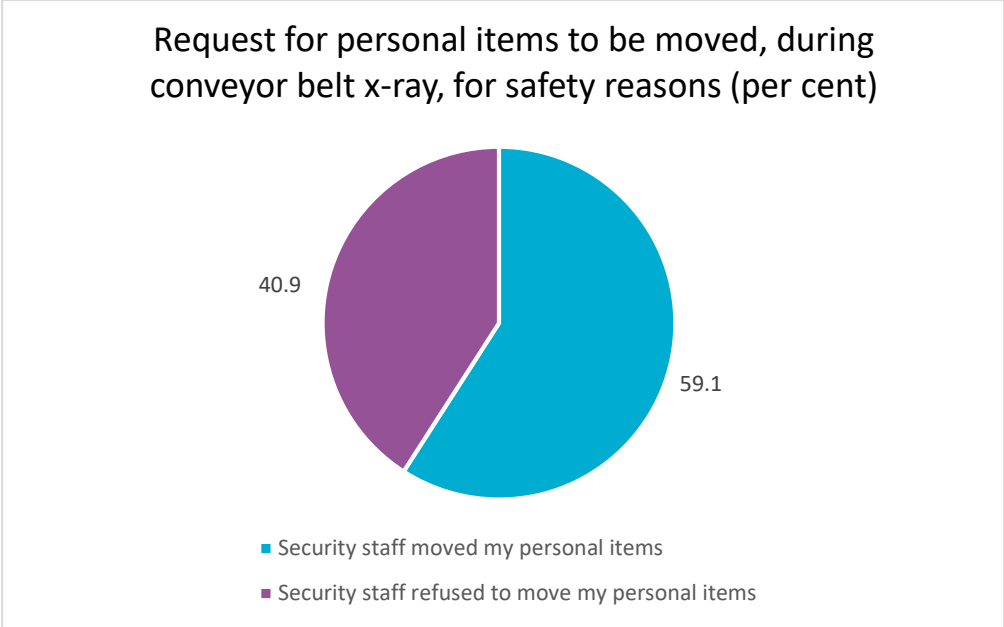
*“Only confident when traveling with someone else so they can pick up my bag and help.”*

### 5.1.2 Request for items to be moved for safety reasons

As indicated in Figure 7, when asked the question “if you have asked for your personal items to be moved for safety, what was the response” almost seven in ten respondents advised that ‘security staff moved my personal items’. While it is pleasing to learn that in most cases the request was met, that three in ten respondents stated ‘security staff refused to move my personal items’ is troubling. It is

alarming that not all prosthetic users, who are compulsorily required to take part in a wand or pat down security check, are being afforded the opportunity to have personal items secured while this body check takes place.

Figure 7: Request for personal items to be moved for safety reasons



When asked to comment on this issue, 30 per cent of respondents did so. When the request to move personal items was denied by security staff, respondents’ perception of the refusal varied. While some felt that the security staff refusal was aggressive, rude or laughable, others perceived it to have been made in a more informative manner. By contrast, when the request was agreed to by security staff respondents expressed gratitude and felt less anxious about potential risks to their personal items.

The feedback suggests that there is inconsistency in the approach, often dependent on the staff and/or airport location. Comments also suggest that some amputees are not aware that they are within their rights to request for personal items to be secured while participating in a body check and/or do not feel confident making such a request. The responses suggest that there is a need to ensure airport security staff are trained to know that this request is reasonable. It also suggests that amputees need to be made aware that it is their right to ask for personal items to be secured while a wand or pat-down check takes place.

**a) Request to move personal items denied by security staff**

*“Told I had to wait ‘til scan finished.”*

*“Most recently I was told that CCTV would ensure that if my bag was stolen the person would be apprehended immediately. I don’t think this is a reasonable response even though it was well-intentioned.”*

*“The usual response is - “they’ll be fine”.”*

*"I was told that they're not allowed to touch stuff."*

*"They seem very reluctant and make me feel like I'm overreacting by wanting to ensure the security of my personal items. I've been prevented from picking up my handbag."*

*"I don't usually ask and it is very rarely offered."*

*"Never had the opportunity to ask as immediately separated from items and have to wait for second person to search me."*

*"While being scanned I raised the issue of my personal items security and person did not answer me (ie. ignored me)."*

*"At the bag scanner we should be able to tell them we are disabled. The scanner should scan items then immediately put them to one side. After we have been searched the security officer should return our belongings to us. It wouldn't be difficult."*

*"My personal items being removed out of my sight because they were waiting for someone to screen/wand/pat me down and my belongings were jamming up the flow of other peoples' belongings. I asked for someone to make sure my things were ok and I was told to stay put and, basically, implied 'shut up'."*

**b) Request to move personal items acted upon by security staff**

*"I've always found security to be helpful and respectful to my needs as an amputee."*

*"I have a valuable instrument, I have asked for it to be taken off the conveyor belt."*

*"They put my bag to one side while they 'wanded' me, and then put it on the conveyer after checking me."*

*"They moved my gear when I asked. Didn't want anything stolen."*

*"Staff were more than willing to help move my bags to where I was being searched."*

*"I was much less stressed because my handbag was brought over to where I was meaning nobody else could have taken it."*

When respondents did not know of, or did not feel confident, to request for personal items to be moved, feedback generally stated: *"I haven't asked"*, *"didn't know I could ask"* and *"I didn't feel comfortable asking"*.

## 5.2 Type of Airport Security Check Experiences

In order to capture the type of experiences encountered when participating in physical airport security checks, such as wand or pat-down searches, respondents were asked to indicate whether they felt theirs was 'positive', 'negative' or 'both positive and negative'. After indicating the type of experience respondents were provided with an opportunity to comment on their encounter/s.



As indicated in Figure 8 when asked the question “during the year what types of experiences have you had while travelling through airport security checks” just over five in ten respondents indicated that they had ‘both positive and negative experiences’, almost three in ten ‘had positive experience/s’ and just under two in ten ‘had negative experiences/s’. It is concerning that when those respondents who selected ‘negative experience’ and ‘both positive and negative experience’ are combined it suggests that seven in ten respondents had experienced an adverse one in an Australian airport in the past 12 months.

Figure 8: Type of airport security experience

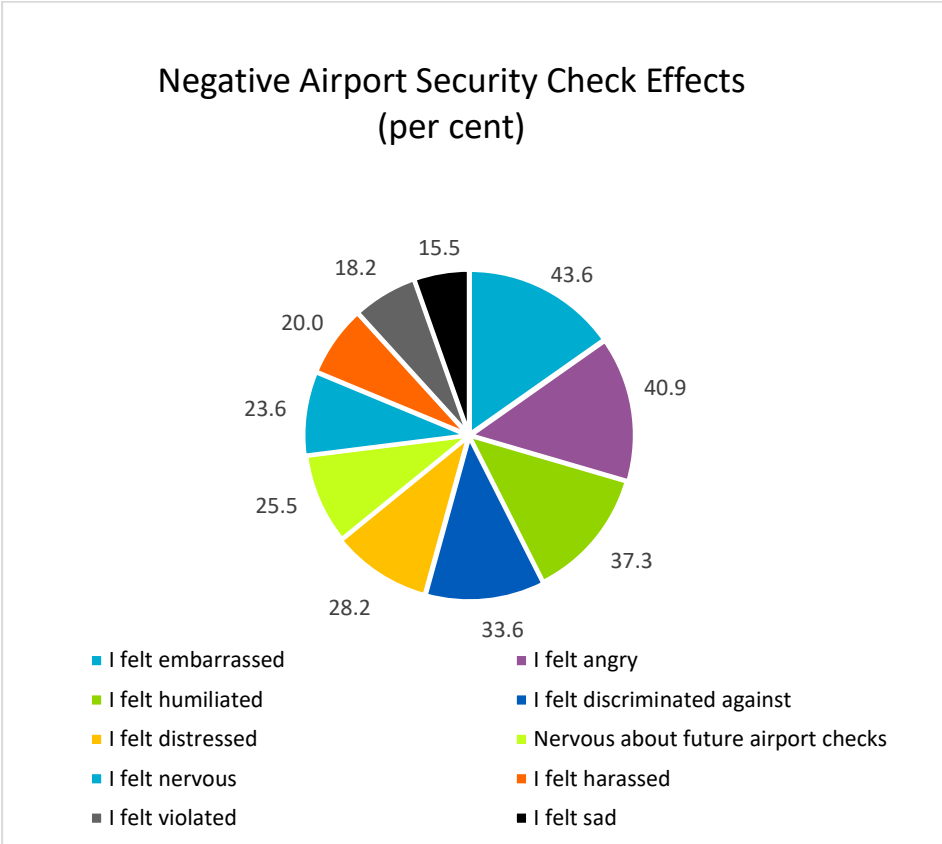


5.2.1 Negative airport security check experiences

When asked the question “If you said that you had a negative experience during airport security checks, how did this affect you?” respondents could, as indicated in Figure 9, select from up to eleven responses centring on how the incident affected them. Please note, as respondents could ‘select all that apply’, the percentages exceed 100 per cent.

Just over four in ten respondents indicated that they ‘felt embarrassed’, four in ten ‘felt angry’ and almost four in ten ‘felt humiliated’. Just over three in ten ‘felt discriminated against’, almost three in ten ‘felt distressed’ and almost three in ten feel ‘nervous about future airport checks’. Just over two in ten ‘felt nervous’, two in ten ‘felt harassed’, almost two in ten ‘felt violated’, and almost two in ten ‘felt sad’.

Figure 9: Negative airport security check effects



Those who felt they had experienced a negative airport security check were provided with an opportunity to share details about the incident/s, with almost eight in ten respondents providing feedback.

When assessed, the comments could be categorised into eight key areas. These included: request for the physical removal of a prosthesis; request to or physical removal of footwear; incorrect or inappropriate information provided by security staff; sense that they had been inappropriately touched; found the experience stressful; found the experience embarrassing; lengthy delays which almost led to missed flights; and, an inconsistency in domestic security check approaches. In addition to comments pointing to respondents’ experiencing risks to physical and mental health wellbeing, others also suggest possible contravention of disability rights and national airport security guidelines.

5.2.1.1 Request for the physical removal of a prosthesis

As noted earlier in Section 3 (Current Airport Security Screening Guidelines), amputees are not required to remove a prosthesis and any demand to do so goes against the national guidelines set by the Australian Government. Removal of a prosthesis, whether in an open setting or a closed room within an airport, is not only difficult but may lead to a fall and/or distress for the individual. Depending on the level of amputation some amputees need to remove clothing, such as pants or tops, in order to then remove their prosthetic device. It is also important to remember that an amputee’s prosthesis

should always be considered an extension of their body and not touched or removed without their consent.

Comments from respondents highlighted that it is not uncommon for prosthetic users to be asked to remove their prosthesis, despite national regulations outlining that this is not a requirement. Respondents' comments highlight that those aware of the national guideline often invoke it as a means of asserting their rights and/or educating uninformed airport security staff. Respondents not aware of this regulation, or perhaps lacking in confidence to deny such a request, have had their physical safety and wellbeing put in jeopardy because of removal of their prosthesis in an airport.

*"My son and I travel alot and on one occasion he was asked to remove his leg so they could put it through the scanner. It wasn't very nice for my son to do this in front of everyone in line and we thought the rules had changed so he took it off. The next time we came through he tried to take it off but the security said he didn't have to and it was inappropriate for him to do it in public. Ever since, our experience through this airport has been great."*

*"I was asked to take my leg off. Not right."*

*"I was asked to remove my prosthesis and hop through the scanner to retrieve it, it was very embarrassing and I found it difficult to hop."*

*"Security tell me to take off my prosthetic leg so that they can x-ray it."*

*"Was told by a young staff member that I would have to take prosthetic leg off before going through the security test. My wife asked to speak to another staff member who escorted me through the security test."*

*"I was asked to take my leg off and they wouldn't listen to me when I said I would fall over if they made me. Eventually they did listen to me but it took alot of time and more staff involved in the discussion."*

*"I have been an amputee for 38 years ... my most abhorrent experiences having to take off my leg to x-rayed in a domestic airport and when I said I was an amputee was told "So what? just do as you are told"."*

*"I was asked to remove my prosthesis (repeated the statement back to the staff member and they suddenly realised how inappropriate the demand was)."*

*"They said they intended to dismantle prosthetic, when refused the leg was taken and x-rayed."*

*"I have been asked to remove my prosthetic leg which I refused to do. I have almost always had demands to remove my shoes which I always refuse. My refusal is sometimes met with some hostility and is only defused when a more senior security staff member intervenes. I do not like to be embarrassed in public."*

*"In my opinion I think it is very humiliating. I would not let anyone take my leg away to do anything to it. It is part of my body and my only means of ambulation."*

*“Got asked to take off leg to go through scanner ... told the guy if he wants my leg that’s fine no probs but he has to carry me through the scanner ... an offer he politely declined, I’m 6’5 and 110kg.”*

*“Both hubby and dad were told to remove their shoes and because neither could they were told to remove their legs and I was told to back away when I offered to assist them with their shoes.”*

#### 5.2.1.2 Request to or physical removal of footwear

As noted in Section 3 (Current Airport Security Screening Guidelines), amputees who are lower limb prosthetic users are not required to remove footwear (e.g. shoes) and any request to do so violates the guidelines set by the Australian Government. The difficulties that lower limb prosthetic users face in putting on their footwear, post removal and without access to a metal shoehorn to assist in this process, is not only difficult but may lead to an inability to put their shoe back on. For most lower limb amputees, footwear is a means of retaining balance and stability.

Comments provided by respondents highlighted that many are being asked to remove their footwear, despite national regulations outlining that this is not a requirement. Respondents aware of this regulation indicated that they invoke this awareness as a means of asserting their rights and/or educating uninformed airport security staff. Respondents not aware of this regulation, or perhaps lack the confidence to deny such a request, commented that they have had their physical safety and wellbeing placed in jeopardy because of removal of their footwear.

*“Advised staff I was amputee, but then told that's how illegal drugs are carried. Told to TAKE OFF SHOES I refused finally they just swabbed them which is all they had to do.”*

*“When asked to removed shoes to which I responded I couldn't I received an eye roll.”*

*“Constantly asked to remove shoes. This is difficult for amputee to put on again. I mention they will need a shoehorn to put back on. Generally, a discussion occurs and they let me go through.”*

*“Had to remove shoes - difficult removing and donning again. Couldn't sit. Had to walk without shoes.”*

*“Security staff insist on difficult shoe removal and explosive tests are the norm when passing through. Often they have no idea what you are talking about when you inform staff prior to metal detector of what "artificial limb" means. Amazingly it often doesn't even speed things up if you wear shorts. Often when passing through a hive of excitement suddenly erupts with calls for supervises being called to rush in.”*

*“I always state that I am an amputee before I go through the metal scanner. Some security personnel then say 'take off your shoes' and repeat it even when I say I will still set off the detector. As it is awkward for me to walk unbalanced, I am concerned about falling over without shoes.”*

*“At XXX airport I was required to repeatedly walk through the metal detector, even after having removed shoes, belt etc and having explained very clearly that I was wearing a prosthesis and that was setting off the alarm. This caused delays in the queue and embarrassment for myself. When done properly, a security check is relatively quick and easy. This instance was a disaster, and caused a backlog of items piling up at the collection end of the conveyor. I simply dug all my items out and walked away in embarrassment and frustration when I was finally cleared.”*

*"They just wouldn't listen when I told them that I can't remove my shoes and kept telling me to go back through the scanner again."*

*"Staff asking for me to remove my shoes when they are difficult to remove and put back on, or remove my prosthesis. I now always agree to remove my shoes and make sure I'm wearing some that are easy to remove/put on, but I refuse to remove my prosthesis, and just wear loose pants so they're easy to pull up if they want to look at it."*

*"Very officious and told me to take both shoes (runners) off. I refused and asked for the supervisor."*

#### 5.2.1.3 *Incorrect, insensitive or inappropriate information provided by security staff*

One of the most significant and frustrating issues commented on by respondents related to security staff lacking knowledge about prosthetic users and correct procedures. This has resulted in some amputees feeling at risk of falls, disempowered, ashamed, victimised and being made to feel responsible for any resulting delays. Comments from respondents highlight that many recognise, and appreciate, that security checks are conducted for the greater good. However, when done, these checks need to be performed in a professional, respectful and fully informed manner.

*"I feel I was targeted as possibly have contraband hidden in my prosthetic. I was subjected to a scan, pat down and swab. I offered to remove my leg."*

*"Staff member complained that I should have gone through the whole body scanner instead of doorway scanner - when I didn't already know to get in that line."*

*"Staff have made me feel like it's was a chore and inconvenience to them to have to pat me down."*

*"I used to travel a lot for work with up to 4 x flights a week, experience is very mixed and varies from airport to airport. I have been told that I must remove my leg so it can be passed through the x-ray scanner. I have been asked to remove my foot shell so the inside can be checked. I have been told my various paraphernalia such as lubricating spray for don/doff cannot be carried as hand luggage. I have been told that I cannot remove my leg on the plane as it is, "gross" and there is no safe place to store it. I could go on but you get the idea."*

*"Security staff confused as to the correct procedures. Long delays in attending to me properly, poor communication as to what they expect of me."*

*"The security officer had no understanding of what a prosthetic limb was. She kept asking me what was on my leg. She eventually called another officer over. She was pointing at my leg whilst speaking in another language. I spoke up and said to the other officer "I've tried to tell her that I'm an amputee and I'm wearing a fake leg, do you understand" he immediately said that he did and was very apologetic. I advised him that his colleague needed training."*

*"I was told that I had to remove my leg as it had to be scanned. I said why as I need to walk. Was then told that I had to remove my leg or I wouldn't be able to continue through. I was told to remove it but not offered a chair to sit on. I stated that I was unable to as I couldn't remove my leg without taking off my pants. Officer said "that I should have known that this was a possibility of this happening". I demanded to see their manager as I felt I was being discriminated against. 10 mins later I spoke to the manager and stated "I was unable to remove my leg without taking off my pants and that in no way was I hiding anything". The security manager stated that I could continue through and be mindful in future."*

*“Negative experiences: inexperienced staff (do not know the correct procedures), valuables left unattended and not allowed to take before being checked, asked to remove shoes, jumpers, jewellery, etc. even though it is definitely the prosthesis making the metal detector beep (happens everytime), asked to remove my prosthesis (repeated the statement back to the staff member and they suddenly realised how inappropriate the demand was).”*

*“I felt ignored and realised airports do not have comprehensive policies/procedures to cope with amputees.”*

*“A staff member was not trained properly to understand that an amputee cannot just take a leg off unless there is a seat to sit on.”*

*“Security have been very abrupt, felt overly intrusive.”*

*“I carry a printed copy of the statement on Home Affairs website, under travellers with special needs, just in case I need to show it to staff.”*

*“I’ve also alerted security staff at airports right before passing through the scanner that my prosthesis would set it off, but if that isn’t properly communicated to people on the other side of the scanner then it can be a problem. This has happened where I passed through and the alarm went off, and the person on the other side aggressively demanded I go back through before I could even tell them why.”*

#### *5.2.1.4 Sense that they had been inappropriately or unnecessarily touched*

Regular travellers who use a prosthesis or other mobility aids are acutely aware that they will undergo a body scan (wand and/or pat-down search) given that when they move through the walk-through metal detector the alarm will be set off. Many users also understand that a wand will set-off an alarm when physically scanning any other area where metal is found (e.g. belt buckle, underwire bra, zips). While many prosthetic users understand that this is necessary in order to keep travel in Australia safe, there have been reports in the media and comments made to Limbs 4 Life that the process is being extended beyond what is necessary.

A prosthetic device has a very definitive edge, usually 2mm to 4mm in width. Once the edge has been felt there would no reason to subsequently feel this area again, especially in the case of an above knee amputee whose socket edge sits high against the groin. While the national guidelines state that a prosthesis should not be touched without consent, it appears from the comments and feedback that this is not the case and happens regularly. Similarly, if a prosthetic user is taken aside for an additional wand or pat down search and is wearing an underwire bra, there is no need for a security officer to touch the underwire in the same place on more than one occasion, or for a male to have the zipper on their jeans patted down more than once. This points to some amputees experiencing an invasion of privacy and personal touching beyond what is required in the national guidelines.

Six respondents commented that they felt personally violated or possibly touched inappropriately during a pat-down check. This screening process places amputees in a very vulnerable position, making it critical that security staff conduct the check in such a way that the person is not touched inappropriately, that it is conducted by an officer of the same gender and that a private room is provided if requested. Of significant concern was revelation that one respondent had even endured a strip search at a domestic airport because this person wears a waist strap (harness) to hold their prosthesis in place; a search that should not have been conducted.

*“It was at XXX airport that I was given a strip search because of the waist strap for my leg. This is the first time I have been strip searched in both domestic and international travel.”*

*“At XXX airport security frisked my groin during a secondary screening process and then claimed it was my zipper that caused the problem and not my prosthesis.”*

*“Some airports do not have good procedures for amputees coming through, and you’re often left waiting at security while they figure out what to do, especially when you’re a woman. I always get pat down which involves someone feeling over my body including around my breasts, which is embarrassing. But if I choose to do it in private it takes too long, so I usually get it done on the spot so it can be over quickly.”*

*“I agreed to the frisk when it was requested because I thought that I could cope with it. The mental anguish afterwards was horrible and so was the lack of sympathy or compassion when I complained by correspondence to XXX airport. The most trauma was caused by a lack of information from XXX of how I could avoid a groin frisk in future.”*

*“Never had to take my leg off but have had some pretty invasive ‘pat downs’.”*

*“On a recent trip I was advised that I would need to come a private room so that I could take my pants down so that the security staff member could see where my prosthesis started. As an above knee amputee I feel like this is an invasion of my privacy. The staff member had already given me a full pat search from top to toe.”*

#### 5.2.1.5 Found the experience stressful

Several respondents indicated that they found the security check experience to be a stressful one, and in some instances not only stressful for themselves but also for their travelling companions. Some respondents even found that the experience led to emotional, angry and traumatic personal reactions.

*“Airport security gives me MASSIVE ANXIETY!”*

*“At XXX airport I am always made to feel like I have done something wrong. Once I was asked to remove my swim leg from its bag for testing. I felt this was very over the top and unnecessary and I refused. The guard became very aggressive and I had to call her supervisor. He agreed that swabbing the bag was sufficient.”*

*“I am willing to go through the scanner and be patted down/ hand scanned in the interests of security however the manner in which I have been treated can reduce me to tears. I always announce my disability and try to line up where there is a female officer. I get frustrated that this process has to be distressing for me.”*

*“Because of the traumatic way I lost my leg, my fear or humiliation causes a rise to anger quickly. This reaction is hard for some people to understand.”*

*“I am always apprehensive about going through security screening. It’s simply the luck of the draw whether it’s a good or bad experience. I’ve had plenty of both.”*

*“Angry because the security officer would not listen and had little understanding of English. I expect that people who are looking after our security should be trained in interpersonal skills and have a good understanding of disabilities and the type of equipment and mobility aids used by people with a disability.”*

*"I would never take my leg off. I try to wear dresses so they can visually see my leg as I have a cosmetic foam cover on my prosthetic leg. Big problem is lack of education and there is attitude amongst some security people. It's upsetting!"*

#### 5.2.1.6 Found the experience embarrassing

Several respondents found that taking part in the security check to be an embarrassing and, at times, humiliating experience. Some found the process to be one which drew unnecessary attention from fellow travellers or airport security staff reactions led them to feel ashamed because of a perceived assumption that they could be partaking in a criminal act.

*"I have been made to pull up my jeans, sit on a chair and lift the soles of my shoes, paraded in front of fellow passengers behind me and made to stand there until the completion of the wand scan."*

*"Always a drawn-out experience, embarrassing to friends and family, members of the public watching assume that you have been caught for smuggling due to the frenzy mode that bored security staff enter when they have a special 'pat down'."*

*"Unsure what to expect when going through with other people watching you, embarrassing."*

*"Why do we always have to publicly announce the fact that we are wearing a prosthesis? It's embarrassing."*

*"Be more supportive of prosthetic users and don't treat me like a criminal hiding something."*

*"It is humiliating, especially if you're a bilateral above-knee amputee. Thing is, if you're bilateral above it means almost completely undressing. It's an invasion of privacy and feels like an assault. There should be a standard procedure."*

#### 5.2.1.7 Inconsistency in domestic security check approaches

A significant number of respondents noted that methods and approaches used for security checking was inconsistent either within the same airport or between different domestic airports. As a result, some respondents found themselves unprepared for what was required of them, had to inform airport security staff of their rights as an amputee, experienced involvement from an unnecessary large number of staff, felt that staff lacked respect and/or felt heightened levels of intrusion. Some respondents indicated that improved and harmonised training and education of airport security staff would ensure consistency regardless of which domestic airport an amputee is entering.

*"Airport security are not consistent with their checks - one airport will have a brief check while another a full check with mirrors. I am 64."*

*"It would be nice to remind staff to talk with the person sitting in a wheelchair directly."*

*"Negative only in the sense that for a federally regulated system it seems inconsistent, shoes off, then no shoes off etc. A set of conditions is now read from a card at XXX airport, new, but not elsewhere. The patdown there is significant, I don't mind in the end, but I think it's reached a level where some people would find it potentially intrusive and perhaps a little embarrassing in a public space. The difference between XXX airport and YYY airport in June this year was significant. XXX airport was just a very cursory pat down, XXX airport read the riot act metaphorically and he was all over me, which is why I then requested after if it was that thorough. He had a sense of humour fortunately, but that's not for everyone. XXX airport also in recent months is the only airport in*



*recent memory where they actually wanted to "see it" (i.e. lift up trouser leg) as if feeling a prosthesis through jeans was not proof enough."*

*"I have had both good and bad. I have had people see me do a quick scan and wish me the best. I have also had people want to strip search me, empty my hand luggage and drug swab me three times because my prosthetic set off the metal detector."*

*"Sometimes they would freak out because I have allen keys to remove my leg with. In XXX airport they were going to confiscate them until I asked for someone in charge. I didn't mind the constant pat downs etc. Some were nice about it some were awful."*

*"I note the card read out about scanning in XXX airport says you have the right to decline a body scan but as I pointed out to him, that's the same as tearing up your boarding pass and he agreed."*

*"Inconsistency is an ongoing issue every time I walk through security check. Not only this, I am deaf too which makes things difficult too."*

*"The only time I'm left alone is when I'm not wearing a prosthetic."*

*"Teach security guards how to be pleasant, 99% of us aren't dishonest."*

*"Respect us we are not abnormal."*

*"I wish there were consistent protocols throughout Australia as what they do with us after we show them a prosthetic and give the initial beep."*

#### *5.2.1.8 Lengthy delays which almost led to missed flights*

Several respondents noted that the length of time it takes to participate in airport security checks can, at times, lead to delays and potentially missing flights. However, most respondents understood that any delays are often beyond the control of staff and contingent on the level of passenger traffic on the given day.

*"At XXX airport I was wearing my myoelectric arm and was allowed to keep that on but had a wand scan and made to put my shoes through the x-ray machine. The staff member then had to call another staff member to search my bags and the process took ages and I nearly missed my flight."*

*"Given the high volume of weekly air travel this has become a thing that I have to live with."*

*"It's annoying to have to go through the process every time, especially when having to wait for a female attendant to be called."*

#### *5.2.1.9 Airports where negative experiences have occurred*

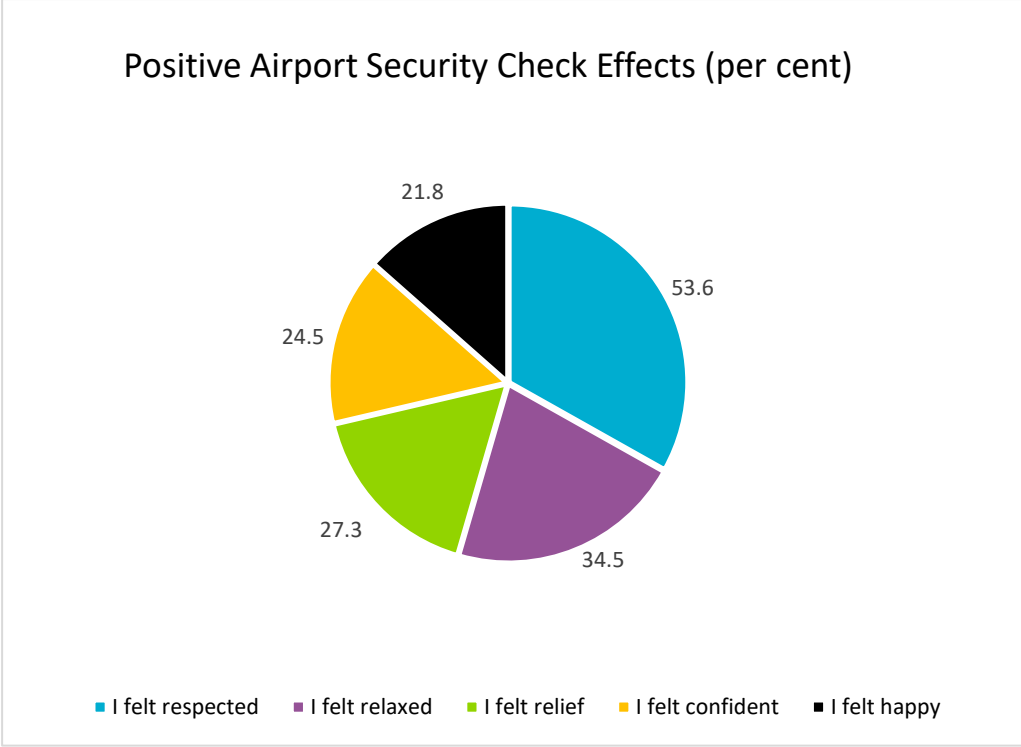
Some respondents advised of the domestic airports where negative experiences had taken place. It is of concern that all capital city airports were amongst these, coupled with some larger regional ones also. This may point to systemic issues, and the requiring of more education and awareness raising amongst airport security staff nationally. Respondent feedback suggests that rural and regional airports tend to have heightened security checks and fewer gender-specific staff at these smaller terminals which is resulting in delays when pat-down frisks are required, particularly when female amputees are travelling.

5.2.2 Positive airport security check experiences

When asked the question “If you said that you had a positive experience during airport security checks, how did this affect you?” respondents could, as indicated in Figure 10, select from up to five responses centring on how the experience made them feel. Please note, as respondents could ‘select all that apply’, the percentages exceeded 100 per cent.

Five in ten respondents indicated that they ‘felt respected’, just over three in ten ‘felt relaxed’, almost three in ten ‘felt relief’, just over two in ten ‘felt confident’, and two in ten ‘felt happy’.

Figure 10: Positive airport security check effects



Respondents who felt they had experienced a positive airport security check were provided with an opportunity to comment on such encounters, with almost five in ten respondents revealing details occurrences. When assessed the comments could be categorised into three key areas: a necessity in order to protect national and passenger security; appreciated being listened to and acknowledged by airport security staff; and, pleased when adequately trained and informed staff conduct the screening.

While it is pleasing to hear that many respondents felt their airport experiences were positive it is troublesome that some indicated this is not always the case, suggesting that practices which conform with national guidelines are not harmonised and/or consistently employed across all domestic airports.

5.2.2.1 Necessary in order to protect national and passenger security

Some respondents expressed an understanding that security checks are a vital means of protecting the travelling community and required to meet national airport security regulations. It was understood that staff are merely fulfilling their duty and helping to ensure that passengers, and visitors, are safe. However, there was some recognition that the security checks can seem invasive, but acceptable when conducted in a swift and respectful manner.

*"I can see why the extra precautions. How do I know you are not some type of radical idiot."*

*"It's part of going to the airport for me so I appreciate when it's over and done with promptly."*

*"Security have always been very helpful. I understand their job is to keep us safe. So, any checks they've required I'm happy to do. They have always been respectful, as some of the pat down checks can be a little invasive, but they explain what they need to do well and have always called a female to do the checks."*

*"It ensures all person's safety."*

*"Usual security protocol"*

*"If I need to comply to ensure a safe flight, I will. Don't take it personally they are just doing their job."*

*"It doesn't bother me as I'd rather have strict security in this day and age."*

#### 5.2.2.2 *Appreciated being listened to and acknowledged by airport security staff*

Several respondents felt that their airport security check experience was a positive because of attentive and respectful staff who understood the needs and rights of travelling amputees. However, it is of concern that some respondents highlighted that positive approaches and methods were not consistently applied and could be contrasted against far less favourable occurrences.

*"Getting 'processed' quickly and easily makes such a difference to the rest of your trip."*

*"Once only at XXX airport they listened to my concerns and grabbed my valuables and bought them closer to me."*

*"All other security screening visits were good, but the one conducted at XXX airport was very comforting, personable and compassionate. Done by the supervisor."*

*"I was asked to take my shoes off but when I explained that I had a prosthetic I was told it was fine and I didn't have to remove my shoes I just had the wand scanned over my leg and shoes."*

*"The best experience was when I was at XXX airport. As soon as I went through the metal detector a woman was already there waiting for me. I recognised her, from a previous flight, and she said that's why she came straight over - she recognised me too!"*

*"Minimum of fuss, always asked if I wanted private room (I always say no because I just want to pass through as quick as possible)."*

*"I think security staff do their best while working under incomplete direction."*

*"At XXX airport they said thank you for being patient and they walked me to my flight."*

*"They've always made me feel comfortable during the security checks."*

*"They were all very decent and understanding."*

*"I have always had airport assistance so this may make a difference."*

*"The security was very understanding. Offered a private room to be scanned."*

### 5.2.2.3 *Pleased when adequately trained and informed staff conduct the screening*

Several respondents noted that the use of adequately trained and informed airport security staff enabled the screening process to be efficient and reduce stress. Furthermore, such experiences were often associated with staff who were more 'amputee aware' and confident in their role which made the traveller feel respected. However, it is of concern that some respondents felt that encountering informed and respectful staff is not always the case, making some respondents question whether nationally consistent training and professional development occurs.

*"I have had staff who knew exactly what they were meant to do and proceed to doing it as swiftly as possible and not being overly intrusive."*

*"The staff were very apologetic and nice during the search."*

*"XXX airport staff knew the amputee requirement."*

*"Some security personnel are very polite and courteous."*

*"Everything went through smooth and like clockwork. I was wanded and patted down. Asked several questions and I allowed through."*

*"Mostly staff are pleasant and considerate during the obligatory swabbing and pat down."*

*"XXX airport is generally very good, people manning the scanners are very efficient, chairs are often provided for taking shoes off and then on again just past the explosive swipe station."*

*"XXX airport have always been very understanding of my needs. The secondary screening is straight forward with no problems and always completed in a very short time frame."*

*"My home airport, XXX, and a few others that I regularly visit are very used to me as they see me a couple of times a week. The security staff are very respectful, quite friendly and jokey and usually waved me through with a minimum of fuss."*

*"I travel through XXX airport and YYY airport a lot and most of the staff remember me by name and are very accommodating and fast with their search."*

*"The person acknowledged that I was an amputee and knew what they were doing."*

*"Security staff generally make polite conversation whilst performing their duties and always offer to conduct the check in a private room if I prefer."*

*"Some staff members knew exactly what they needed to do, asked if I was okay to be patted down or if I would like to go into a private space, got a female staff member to do the check, made sure my items were safe. Made me feel comfortable even though it's quite embarrassing to be pulled aside everytime for no reason but being an amputee."*

*"Was easy as I was in wheelchair and told them I could not stand."*

*"Mostly I find them friendly enough I know they have a job to do, I think they have improved. Going back maybe 5 or 6 years I have had some slight altercations, one which resulted in me removing my leg and throwing it on the belt. Cue some very embarrassed and red-faced security people and slightly stunned passengers."*

*“Some airports are better prepared for amputees and people with mobility aids. I wouldn’t say these are positive experiences because they still require someone to pay you down in front of everyone, but they’re at least not bad and it’s good when they can get it done quickly.”*

*“XXX airport has full body scanner - quicker and easier.”*

*“It was good not to feel embarrassed and be treated as normal (what is normal? I look pretty normal!).”*

*“XXX airport security is great now my son just gets a quick wand put over his leg and off we go quick and easy.”*

#### *5.2.2.4 Airports where positive experiences have occurred*

Some respondents advised of the domestic airports where positive experiences had taken place. All capital city airports were amongst these, coupled with some larger regional ones also. The noted airports mirrored those also identified as ones where negative experiences had occurred. This again points to national inconsistency in terms of methods and staff training and suggests that harmonisation across these areas is vital.

## 6. Suggested Improvements in Airport Security Screening Approaches

When asked the question *“If you could suggest one improvement for airport security processes used in relation to amputees, what would it be?”* almost eight in ten respondents provided recommendations. This significant response rate suggests that amputees, and those who care for children, are interested in contributing to any new methods or practices aimed at improving acquisition and transfer, service delivery and harmonised approaches.

When assessed the comments could be categorised into eight key areas. These included: provide consistent education and training to airport security staff; increase airport security staff awareness of amputees; educate and upskill amputees as to their rights and responsibilities; ensure consistency of amputee screening approach in all domestic airports; listen to amputees, understand their unique needs and show respect; protect amputee’s valuables; ensure airport security screening is conducted safely and appropriately; and, consider use of full-body scans.

### 6.1 Provide consistent education and training to airport security staff

*“Staff need to learn the rights of amputees.”*

*“Training on the terminology that we use. There are really only 2 words they need to know - amputee and prosthesis. If they knew what these words mean it would save a lot of confusion.”*

*“Just to maintain their composure and to show respect towards the amputee. That also reflects the type of person and training that they have had.”*

*“The screening process needs to be much less confrontational.”*

*“All workers should learn about different disabilities, amputees especially so that we are all treated fairly wherever we go.”*

*“More education and understanding from security staff as to what prosthetics are and how they work. Generally staff are a bit taken aback when I tell them I am wearing a prosthesis and often times it is clear that they do not understand what they are inspecting. This may result in changes such as lower limb amputees not being required to remove footwear, which can be troublesome, as it would be part of the inspection process.”*

*“Training - if all staff members were informed of the respectful and appropriate methods the process would be a lot more positive.”*

*“More education for security staff to treat us with respect and be pleasant.”*

*“Security staff need to know about all types of prosthetics and be well informed during their training.”*

*“Just hope that staff are trained sufficiently to understand the difficulties of amputees and disabled people.”*

6.2 Increase airport security staff awareness of amputees (and disability more generally)

*“To have someone doing the scans or wandong sympathetic to the needs of someone with a disability.”*

*“Perhaps training highlighting the different types of amputees and prosthetics, so they at least understand how this may affect the person and the implications and sensitivities of what they might be asking from the passenger.”*

*“A little more objectivity and friendliness. We don't need them to feel sorry for us, but understand our situation. Maybe 'Limbs 4 Life' could do some instruction?”*

6.3 Educate and upskill amputees as to their rights and responsibilities

*“Perhaps a card with information about what is and isn't allowed when going through screening?”*

*“I didn't know they can't take our shoes off until recently – amputees need information so they know what they must do and what they don't have to do.”*

6.4 Ensure consistency of amputee screening approach in all domestic airports

*“All checks need to be done the same way in all airports - then it will always be a positive experience.”*

*“Standardisation of screening procedure across the board - airlines and airports.”*

*“A standard, across the board way of dealing with us.”*

*“They need to have consistent procedures in place for amputees and people with mobility aids. Whatever their process is, they need to be prepared and be able to action it quickly to minimise disruption and embarrassment to the traveller.”*

6.5 Listen to amputees, understand their unique needs and show respect

*“More respect and mindfulness, not quick to judge and realise that we're like everyone else and not to single us out.”*

*“To be treated kindly and with respect by the security staff. My experiences when travelling overseas and passing through other airport security is far less confronting and more considerate and the security staff seem better trained and are better mannered.”*

*“Be more sympathetic to amputees.”*

*“Listen to us - we know what we can and can't do.”*

*“To not single us out so publicly.”*

*“Being allowed to use the priority security check lane which is usually to one side rather than being right in the middle. That way it's still public but it's not as obvious and there is less people gathered around your personal items left on the conveyor while you get scanned.”*

*“Treat us with respect and like a normal person.”*

## 6.6 Protect amputee's valuables

*"Better care of my valuables while undergoing wand scan and pat-down."*

*"If children are involved let the parent be totally screened first and belongings then do the child."*

*"A recognition that being without our personal items for an extended period causes extra stress, on top of an already stressful situation. They could offer to retrieve them for you, or allow you to collect them first before doing the 'wanding'."*

*"Have a Liaison Officer to assist (i.e hold your personal items) while being wanded"*

## 6.7 Ensure airport security screening conducted safely and appropriately

*"Have a chair readily available whilst inspections take place."*

*"Don't touch me or other amputees inappropriately."*

*"Don't ask person to remove prosthetic limb – it's not allowed."*

## 6.8 Consider use of full-body scans

*"I don't have any issue with body scanners as used in US and many European countries and think they are a much better option for treating everyone equally."*

*"Body scan for everyone (prosthetics would show up) so people with disabilities aren't being singled out in the middle of often crowded spaces."*



## 7. Recommendations and Considerations

The results of this survey provide a snapshot of amputees' security screening experiences when travelling through or visiting domestic Australian airports. Through respondents sharing insights and encounters a number of recommendations and considerations have been identified as ones which may improve current practices and policies. The following ones, which offer opportunities for positive change, have been made with Limbs 4 Life as well as key companies, institutions and governing bodies in mind.

### 7.1 Limbs 4 Life

#### **Upskill and inform amputees about Australian airport security screening processes and national guidelines.**

Feedback from respondents' points to some amputees lacking knowledge about their airport security screening rights and responsibilities. That many respondents were not aware of the national guideline which does not require them to remove their prosthesis or footwear is particularly alarming. While many respondents understood the necessity of airport security screening and the process involved some were unaware; impacting on how they felt, prepared for and participated in this vital security check. Some responses also pointed to amputees lacking confidence to challenge an airport staff member's request or process that contravened national guidelines.

It is recommended that Limbs 4 Life educate and upskill amputees about domestic airport security screening processes, and their rights and responsibilities. This could be delivered through provision of empowering information on a Limbs 4 Life fact sheet, website, webinars, *Amplified* magazine and/or conference presentations. Limbs 4 Life should also aim to work collaboratively with the appropriate organisation or governing body to ensure accuracy and currency of any information developed.

#### **Disseminate *The Impact of Australian Domestic Airport Security Screening Process on Amputees Report* to key airport operation companies, airport security organisations, training providers and governing agencies, and seek opportunities to meet with these bodies to discuss the issues raised.**

This report has the capacity to open up conversations and raise awareness of issues faced by amputees with an array of key organisations, institutions and governing bodies associated with overseeing and providing security in domestic Australian airports.

It is recommended that Limbs 4 Life disseminate this report to all key airport operation authorities, airport security organisations, training providers and governing agencies in Australia to discuss matters raised and positively influence structural change.

### 7.2 Government Departments and Agencies

#### **Understand the issues which amputees face when travelling through Australian airports and ensure that national airport screening processes are harmonised and compliant with disability discrimination and human rights conventions.**

It is recommended that key government departments and agencies meet with Limbs 4 Life to discuss the matters raised within *The Impact of Australian Domestic Airport Security Screening Process on*

*Amputees Report.* Discussions will enable Limbs 4 Life to advocate for the human rights of amputees, outline problems in amputee security screening practices, and seek support in ensuring that practices in the industry are harmonised and compliant with Australian discrimination and human rights conventions.

Key departments and agencies include (but are not limited to):

- Department of Home Affairs, Aviation and Maritime Security Division
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development
- Australian Skills Quality Authority
- Australian Human Rights Commission
- Disability Ombudsmen and Commissioners.

### 7.3 Airport Operations Companies and Professional Bodies

**Ensure that the airport security screening of amputees is conducted in accordance with national guidelines, disability discrimination acts and human rights conventions.**

Airport Operations Companies are responsible for managing airports and contracting organisations to deliver airport security screening processes within these. It is an imperative that all Airport Operations Companies, and the professional bodies of which they are members (e.g. Australian Airports Association), are made aware of the issues which amputees face when passing through airport security screening. It is particularly important that these companies ensure practices are delivered in line with national guidelines, disability discrimination acts and human rights conventions.

It is recommended that representatives from Airport Operations Companies meet with Limbs 4 Life to learn about issues raised in this report and collaboratively seek solutions to security screening difficulties experienced by the limb loss community.

### 7.4 Airport Security Organisations

**Co-design amputee-specific information resources for domestic airport security staff with Limbs 4 Life.**

A variety of airport security organisations are contracted to deliver screening in domestic airports across Australia. These businesses employ airport security officers and, as such, are responsible for ensuring their staff are abreast of new practices and guidelines. They are also responsible for the ongoing professional development of airport security officers.

It is recommended that airport security organisations collaborate with Limbs 4 Life to co-design staff information which specifically address the requirements and needs of amputees. This would assist in ensuring that airport security officers are well informed about amputees, prosthetic and other mobility devices, and the most appropriate ways of screening amputees and supporting them while the process takes place. Such information would reinforce knowledge acquired during studies with training

provider institutions, complement other professional development activities, and also assist in disability awareness understanding amongst staff.

Possible means of achieving this include: provision of co-designed static amputee awareness information, such as fact sheets and case studies, for staff; inviting Limbs 4 Life to professional development sessions; having staff participate in a Limbs 4 Life delivered webinar; and/or, developing co-designed video providing general amputee information and demonstrating correct and incorrect amputee security scanning processes.

## 7.5 Registered Training Providers

### **Co-design training resources and information for airport security students with Limbs 4 Life.**

A number of education institutions provide nationally recognised airport security training across Australia. While their curriculum is thorough and in line with national guidelines the feedback provided by survey respondents suggests that either there is an absence of or only limited training provided in regards to the appropriate screening of amputees. It is recommended that registered training providers collaborate with Limbs 4 Life to co-design information and/or training resources which specifically address the requirements and needs of amputees. This would assist in ensuring that future airport security officers are well informed about amputees, prosthetics and other mobility devices, and understand the most appropriate ways of screening this cohort. Such training would also assist in disability awareness understanding amongst students seeking airport security officer employment in the future.

Possible means of achieving this include: embedding amputee awareness information in relevant training module/s; provision of co-designed static amputee awareness information, such as fact sheets and case studies; and/or developing co-designed video providing general amputee information and demonstrating correct and incorrect amputee security scanning processes.

### **Ensure that disability awareness training is a component of airport security training programs.**

While this airport security survey and resulting report is specifically related to amputees, the feedback also suggests that some airport security staff lack general disability awareness. While such training may be embedded in the curriculum, the results of this survey suggests that students may require further education about the needs of Australians who live with disability and pass through domestic airports.

## 8. Conclusion

This report highlights that airport security screening of amputees in Australia is inconsistent and some people are subjected to approaches which contravene the national guidelines established by the Australian Government. As a consequence, some members of this disability community are experiencing risks to their physical safety and mental health and wellbeing. Limbs 4 Life intends using this report to trigger discussion with relevant government departments and agencies, airport operations companies, professional bodies, airport security organisations and registered training providers to collaboratively identify solutions to the problems and concerns this report raises.

Limbs 4 Life is committed to ensuring that all relevant bodies are conversant with the issues and concerns raised in this report, and will advocate for the rights of the Australian limb loss community.

Limbs 4 Life is enormously grateful to the amputees and parents/carers of children with limb deficiencies who gave of their time to take part in the survey, share their airport security experiences and suggest ways that airport security screening could be improved in the future. In doing so, these Australia-wide individuals who live with different types of limb loss and use differing prosthetic and mobility devices have greatly assisted Limbs 4 Life to better understand what is occurring in relation to airport security screening which in turn will assist us to advocate for positive changes to current practices.

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<sup>i</sup> Australian National Audit Office. (2016). *Passenger Security Screening at Domestic Airports*. Retrieved <<https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/passenger-security-screening-domestic-airports#8-1-aviationsecurityregulatoryframework>>, accessed 15 August 2019.

<sup>ii</sup> Department of Home Affairs. (2018). TravelSECURE, Travellers with specific needs. Retrieved <<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/what-we-do/travelsecure/travellers-with-specific-needs>>, accessed 15 August 2019.