



In bags of trouble

DIANA PLATER finds flying with extra luggage can cost you plenty

HERE are some frightening statistics for people travelling by air.

Two billion passengers flew worldwide last year and Melbourne International Airport moved about 4.3 million of them. On an average day between 6am and 9am, 3320 passengers arrive at the airport.

Based on the industry average figures, each day one bag is stolen or lost at the international terminal, six are tampered with and 37 are delayed.

Internationally, 30 million bags are mishandled every year.

Tampering and problems with baggage are an increasing issue for airlines, according to James Garrod, the marketing director of Personal Porter, a new baggage delivery service.

The media was recently given a tour of the Oceania hub quality control centre for transport company DHL at Sydney Airport, offering a rare insight into how our parcels are handled.

The company was named the 2005 and 2006 International

Express Operator of the Year.

Lachlan Powell, gateway facility manager at the transport company DHL, says about 35,000 parcels or luggage items go through DHL's operations every day.

About 180 security cameras are trained on the handling area and every bit of cargo is examined in X-ray machines, with any one item going through 17 to 20 scans during the whole delivery cycle.

With barcodes on every parcel it's easier to identify packages. And there's a section where staff work to identify the correct addresses for poorly addressed parcels.

While losses are minimal, Mr Powell says the bigger problems are the delays with Customs, flights and weather.

Costs for excess baggage are also a growing thorn in the side for travellers.

British Airways has become the latest airline to introduce stricter luggage controls, meaning fewer bags and more excess luggage fees. More airlines are expected to follow in the near future.

Australians travelling to the UK with British Airways can now

check-in only 23kg in economy class. Any excess costs \$300 a bag (discounted if excess fees are paid online before travel).

According to Personal Porter, a new baggage delivery service, if you fly with a major Australian airline with a 32kg bag in economy, where luggage restriction is now a mandated 20kg, you could be up for \$576 in excess fees.

The service offers an alternative for people willing to pay to have their luggage sent on separately from their flights.

It picks up your luggage at your home or office and delivers it directly to the destination of your choice, be it a hotel, office or residence.

If you use the service you may be away from your luggage for three to four days, but passengers have the option to get through airports without dragging their luggage and without the need to worry about potentially having their bags misplaced.

Details: visit www.personalporter.com.

Details of Qantas excess baggage fees: visit www.qantas.com.au/info/flying/beforeYouTravel/baggageAddCollection

