

Security clamp order on parcels

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National Editor

Australians sending parcels overseas will need to have photo identification from next Monday under new security rules issued yesterday by the Federal Government.

Australia Post and about 800 other cargo agents have been told to enforce the rules on parcels of more than 500 grams.

Parcels deposited by customers without ID will be held for seven days to be screened.

Insiders have questioned the effectiveness of the new rules because Australia Post has no capacity to X-ray outgoing parcels and transit countries do not have similar rules.

They also say greater warning should have been given, so cargo agents could alert customers sending parcels for Christmas to the new ID requirement.

A government spokesman last night conceded it may take time to implement the new rules, but said Christmas mail would not be significantly affected.

The rules will operate from Monday, when Federal Cabinet will consider new security measures following the Bali atrocity, including screening baggage on domestic flights.

Prime Minister John Howard yesterday said baggage screening on domestic flights would most

Labor in \$500m coast guard pledge

Opposition Leader Simon Crean will today commit a future Labor government to spend more than \$500 million to establish a coast guard to strengthen Australia's border protection.

Mr Crean will promise that Labor would deliver a new "maritime protection force" with Australian-built vessels to provide year-round protection.

The spending commitment — to be announced in Brisbane — would be far more substantial than promised at the last election, when Kim Beazley pledged to pay for a coast guard largely by diverting money from other areas.

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likely be introduced in phases. "It will probably start in some of the major ports — Sydney, Melbourne — and then be progressively extended around the country," Mr Howard told reporters in Melbourne.

"And it will take time — you can't do it overnight.

"But we will bring it in as speedily as we possibly can."

Mr Howard recognised that the new measures could inconvenience passengers, but he said:

"I believe that the overwhelming majority of Australians will be willing to put up with that delay and inconvenience because of the broader national interest involved."

Mr Howard yesterday opened the first of four planned shipping container X-ray machines to bolster the war against terror.

The machine in Melbourne would "identify drugs, guns, potentially explosives", he said.

"This is world-class, high-tech, state of the art equipment and it will add enormously to the sense of security that Australians have," Mr Howard said.

Similar facilities are planned for Sydney, Brisbane and Fremantle.

The Prime Minister also said he was hopeful that next week's meeting of federal and state governments would agree to take handguns out of the general community.

"There is no case, in my view, for the ordinary citizens of this country to have access to lethal firearms whether longarms or handguns," he said.

"They should only be available to the police and the security services, the custom services where appropriate and people who are engaging in properly supervised sporting shooting activities."