

Home Affairs fails to enforce damaging regs

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TNW has established that immigration officials are selectively enforcing the new regulations governing the movement of minors across SA's borders.

TNW's reporter spoke to several families at OR Tambo who had cleared immigration and claimed they were not asked to present an unabridged birth certificate, when this issue was going to press on June 3. A mother with a child arriving from Zimbabwe was asked for documentation but a Canadian single parent with a daughter told TNW she was neither asked by the airline when she boarded in Canada nor by immigration at OR Tambo.

If you know of travellers with minors crossing SA's land borders, please ask them if they saw the regulations being enforced. Let us know: email natashas@nowmedia.co.za

DHA spokesman, **Thabo Mokgola**, said the reports

were hearsay and the regulations were being enforced across all borders consistently.

Airlines say there were no major incidents during the first few days but warn it is early days. **Stephen Forbes**, spokesperson for British Airways, says most passengers were arriving in SA having commenced travel prior to June 1, and therefore did not yet need to provide additional documentation.

However, whereas the situation was relatively calm at SA airports, incidents have been reported in other countries where passengers are flying to SA. **Carla Da Silva**, Air Mauritius regional manager for Southern Africa and Latin America, says: "We had a South African family who were denied boarding due to confusion regarding the operating procedures."

The real impact of the new immigration regulations will most likely be felt on forward bookings, says **Otto De Vries**, ceo of Asata. He told TNW the association was working with its members to assess

what, if any, impact they were seeing on their forward bookings.

A poll survey of eTNW readers, which received 163 responses, revealed that 61% of agents had not had any cancellations as a result of the new immigration regulations (see poll on this page).

Yvonne Horak of Cape Gulf Travel says there haven't been cancellations as passengers travelling this year lodged their applications with DHA as soon as the new regulations were announced. She says, though, that there may be people who opt to travel locally instead of internationally this year as a result of the regulations.

Joanne Visagie, sales and marketing manager of Beachcomber Tours, says the new regulations have, so far, had very little effect on bookings. "For last-minute bookings for the June/July holidays, there probably has been some impact but it's impossible to measure. Bookings for the past two months for future travel have even been a bit up." ■

