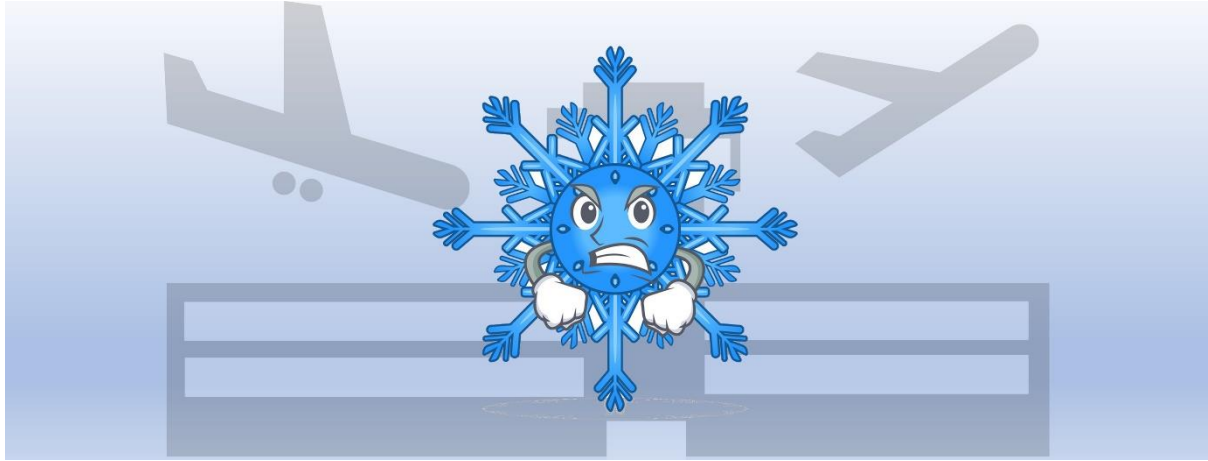


How I Got Nearly Arrested for Threatening a Snowflake

Shôn Ellerton, March 9, 2024

Never did I realise that I could be threatening someone simply by looking at a name badge.



I had the misfortune earlier last year of dealing with a snowflake, one of those fragile individuals who need so-called ‘safe spaces’ and deem anything they don’t like as threatening.

Here’s the story when my wife and son travelled overseas for a family visit.

I drove them to the airport and assisted them at the check-out counter but before leaving the house, we checked how much luggage they were allowed to carry. The ticket clearly stated 30 kilos per person, but we packed about 24 kilos in one bag and possibly, 25 kilos in the other.

We arrived at the airport nice and early and thankfully, did not have to wait long to get to the check-in counter. Case in point. I’m one of those paranoid guys who always arrives at the airport with plenty of time to spare. I could never see the point in hanging around the house with lingering thoughts of being caught in traffic knowing that the queue at the check-in counter and security gates will be building up. Once I’m airside and checked in, I’m in a state of chillness. I can browse the airside shops, have a bite to eat, and read a book. Enjoying the journey, so to speak.

Anyhow, as the bags were getting weighed, there was a little problem. It turns out that they were only allowed to take 23 kilos in each bag. Why? Because the first portion of the flight is domestic using Qantas and in very small print, it said that Qantas domestic baggage limits apply between Adelaide and Melbourne, which happens to be 23 kilos per bag. I had to put my glasses on to read this. Imagine

buying a ticket online and when printing out the ticket, it says clearly, 30 kilos, but finding out that it only applies to the international portion of the flight. The first thought that came to my head was the sheer uselessness of being allowed to carry 30 kilos but not for the much shorter domestic leg of the journey. Yes, they were different airlines, but somehow or another, this didn't seem right considering the journey was purchased online in one transaction.

I found that most of my experiences engaging with airport check-in staff to be amenable, friendly, courteous and helpful. Today was not one of those days. The woman behind the counter was not particularly friendly for a start. That happens. We all get bad days and I'm sure all of check-in staff have come across some pretty horrific people from time to time.

Anyway, she said that the bags were overweight. At this juncture, I was not aware of the small print on the ticket and was fully confident knowing that each bag was well under 30 kilos, as boldly printed on the ticket. I was taken aback and showed her the ticket with the allowed baggage weights. She took it, gave it a quick eye-over, and handed it back to me, pointing to the clause at the bottom of the ticket.

I was not happy but keeping as much composure as I could muster, I asked if there was any flexibility in the matter. She said that Qantas has a strict policy on weights and that there was nothing she could do. After a little more pleading. The answer was the same but it was supplemented with a voice hinting of authority. There was no way this woman was going to budge on this and make an exception. I pointed out the ticket and explained how misleading it was, but no, there was no compassion, nor empathy, and absolutely no moving in granting us an exception. She said we could move some of the items as hand luggage. My wife and son did not have too much hand luggage and was well below the allotted 7 kilos each.

So, I put my logical hat on, which seldom works with inflexible, and often not particularly intelligent, people purely obsessed with enforcing policy regardless of the situation at hand. It is almost as if these kind of people take delight in being this way to others. I explained, as calm as I can, that it would be messy and inconvenient to open the bags on the floor by the check-in stand and transfer three kilos of items to hand luggage. Especially when others are waiting patiently to be checked in. Perhaps I went too far when I said that the total weight of luggage on the plane will be exactly the same because those extra three kilos will be in the hand luggage, and added as well that it would be more of a struggle to have my

wife and eight-year-old son tote the extra hand luggage throughout the entire journey which involves several hours of stopovers. I then thought that this was not a great tactic to play out because sparring with someone like this with logic and reason simply doesn't fly. And the way this was carrying on, it looked like neither my wife or son will be flying at all!

Maybe, perhaps, she didn't like the look of us. I don't know. I don't want to play the race card, but, my wife being Chinese, I have seen, from time to time, that ever so subtle condescending, disapproving look from white women when Asian women are around. I could be very wrong in my assessment in this case, but I have seen this look before. But maybe, perhaps she didn't like me. Who knows?

During this time, the crowds were building up and I could sense that frustration from others waiting in the queue. What was once a quiet and near-empty room had been turned into a noisy and busy space, and I was getting hot and clammy.

Rather than turning out the suitcases to transfer stuff into hand luggage, I asked if I could see the manager. She gave me a beady look, and she walked over to the customer service booth. She came back and told me he couldn't do anything either.

I repeated if I could see the manager in person and then she said, 'Feel free to do so'. I walked to the customer service desk, behind of which, had two people manning it. A man and a woman. The man asked if he could be of assistance. If I could stereotype, he must have been one of the campest men alive. Thin and scrawny, with a little moustache, he had that camp swagger with an effeminate voice to match. He wasn't smiling and kept averting his eyes to seemingly more important things. If you've seen that classic 80s movie, Ferris Bueller's Day Off, there is that scene in the fancy restaurant with that 'snooty' waiter. He looked just like that!

I presented him the ticket and explained the situation. He shoved the ticket back into my hands scarcely looking at me and curtly said that there are no exceptions to the policy. That it can't be done.

I was not happy with this but I kept my cool. I thought that the best thing I could do is to contact Qantas directly and inform them of the situation. I noted the time and cast my eye on the names on the badges of the man and the woman behind the counter. As soon as I looked at his name badge, he quickly covered it with his hands. I asked him why he was hiding his name badge.

This is when it got quite weird. He suddenly recoiled back and said that he felt threatened by me. I said that I was only looking at his name on the badge as a record to prove that I was there talking to him. I tried to console him that I wanted to inform Qantas of how inflexible the policy is and further, to state that Qantas didn't give any power to him as a service manager to make any exceptions.

This didn't console him in the slightest. He continued on a tirade how rude, aggressive, and threatening I was, which was all very surreal for me. I just stood there like a statue. Then, bizarrely, the woman said she would get the police. I thought the best thing now was to just walk away and start unpacking the suitcases with my wife and help transfer the items to the hand luggage.

By now, my wife said the best thing for me to do was to stand over there away from it all. I moved away and stood next to one of those self-service check-in machines in the middle of the room. I watched her fumbling around with the luggage. Clearly, she was quite frustrated at it all. Frustrated at the check-in people and now frustrated with me for making an issue of it.

Then, unbelievably, a couple of federal police approached me and started to take down my particulars. Were they going to arrest me for threatening behaviour? I was thinking, if taking down someone's name is considered threatening behaviour, we really have a big problem with society. Imagine this guy walking down some backstreet at night and coming across a bunch of hoodlums threatening to beat nine levels of crap out of him if he didn't cough up some money. The guy would probably cower, quiver and cry literally melting away like a snowflake.

After the police spoke to the staff, my wife, and, eventually me, one of them pulled me away from the others and quietly assured me that I wasn't in trouble and this will be forgotten and not on record. Assurance or otherwise, any such encounter with authority is enough to rattle most people, and it visibly shook me for a bit. Things could have gone badly south if the police were woke themselves and wanted to make an example of me. Thankfully, they were composed and normal people with far more important things to do, unlike that looney and brittle snowflake behind the counter.

I wasn't intending to make a formal complaint to Qantas. I had forgotten about it in a few hours' time. In the end, I wasn't really upset about that the 'snooty' manager but rather, I felt sorry for him. I felt sorry that society is veering towards

being in a state of weakness in which stoicism and resilience has no place anymore.