



Australian Government

Immigration and Border Protection Portfolio

Submission to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit on Australian National Audit Report No. 42 (2013-14) *Screening of International Mail*

The Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (ACBPS) make this submission in response to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit's resolve to review the Auditor General's Report No. 42 (2013-14) *Screening of International Mail*.

On 4 June 2014, the ACBPS wrote to the Group Executive Director of the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) responding to the proposed audit report indicating ACBPS agreement to the ANAO's three recommendations, which were:

1. for ACBPS to improve the targeting in international mail to support informed and consistent decision making
2. for ACBPS to improve the screening and examination processes, including control and accountability for seized prohibited imports, and
3. for ACBPS to improve the measurement and reporting of effectiveness of the intervention strategies for the international mail program.

The ACBPS has commenced work to action all three recommendations, however it has identified that actioning Recommendation 1 will be the catalyst to driving significant change and improvements covered by Recommendation 2 and 3.

In relation to Recommendation 1, since the commencement of the ACBPS Strategic Border Command on 3 July 2014, which includes all operational resources involved in international mail, ACBPS sets clear priorities and operational direction through central oversight and command and control arrangements. The ACBPS Strategic Command Group chaired by the Chief Executive Officer has identified six operational priorities. Control strategies and Intelligence Disruption and Enforcement plans against these operational priorities are in place to support and focus operational planning and performance.

The ACBPS has mapped nationally risk assessment and targeting procedures to identify and understand areas of alignment and variation across the ACBPS international mail operations. In particular, this has included more thoroughly documenting and mapping the targeting model and risk assessment framework for international mail to identify areas of improvement and refinement. The ACBPS is currently work shopping identified risk assessment improvement opportunities to ensure a robust risk assessment and targeting model is in place for the mail environment.

The ACBPS has also considered the application of a sampling methodology appropriate to the international mail operating environment. Following internal consultation as well as engagement with the Department of Agriculture (Agriculture), the ACBPS has decided to pursue a joint sampling approach with Agriculture. This decision is in line with the ANAO's findings, which noted that the design and methodology of Agriculture's sampling program was sound and that there may be an opportunity for enhanced collaboration between agencies through the conduct of joint sampling activities and sharing of sampling data.

Agriculture's sampling program in mail is currently undergoing a formal review, which the ACBPS will be participating in to ensure the resulting methodology aligns with the ACBPS' sampling program requirements. ACBPS expects the release of review outcomes in early 2015 with implementation of any changes to the Agriculture sampling methodology in first half of 2015. Given this timeframe, the ACBPS will implement an interim sampling program under Agriculture's current sampling approach. The ACBPS anticipates implementation of a comprehensive joint sampling program by mid-2015.

International mail intervention strategies for each gateway are due for review. This is likely to occur in the first half of 2015 and the ACBPS will complete these reviews in parallel with the implementation of the joint sampling methodology.

In relation to Recommendation 2, drafting of revised policy guidance and procedures has commenced, consistent with the ACBPS established Practice Statement Framework. These will promote greater consistency across the international mail gateways and provide officers with more detailed guidance on the treatment of seized prohibited imports. These will also capture new tools, methodologies and reporting mechanisms that the ACBPS is developing to better support and record international mail targeting decisions.

In addition, the ACBPS has scheduled a systems change for the Detained Goods Management System for the first half of 2015. The changes identified will improve the quality of data being recorded allowing for greater analysis of seizure information. The ACBPS expects that this change will enhance the capabilities of the Intelligence Division in lead and target development through data analytics.

In relation to Recommendation 3, the ACBPS has engaged a consultant to develop performance measures across all operational domains including the international mail environment.

The ACBPS is continuing to work closely with Australia Post (AP) in relation to volumetric data. The ACBPS has also recently adopted an improved methodology for collection and reporting of screening statistics by gateway facilities. AP gateway and headquarter figures will be reported centrally to ensure a consistent set of volume and inspection data can be identified and maintained. The computational approach meets the ANAO requirements in that the production of these statistics are now auditable, repeatable and most importantly adhere to nationally consistent rules across gateways.

The ACBPS international mail gateway staff will no longer calculate volume and inspection figures, freeing up resources to focus on accurately recording additional intervention activity such as the joint agency sampling program.

The ACBPS will continue to progress the recommendations of the ANAO audit report on the *Screening of International Mail* and to seek improvements in targeting, screening and reporting of international mail intervention.