

## AUSTRALIAN CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE COMMISSION

### PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Joint Committee on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity  
Inquiry into the Integrity of Australia's border arrangements

11 September 2020

**Subject: Drug Seizures since 2015**

**Asked by:** Catryna Bilyk

**Question:**

**Senator BILYK:** I think it was ACIC that were talking about seizures that had happened offshore. Is that correct?

**Mr Phelan:** We've had a number of seizures over the years, and certainly I did mention that. Within the Pacific area, there have certainly been a number of large seizures. As Assistant Commissioner Giles said, they go way back to 20 years ago, but even more recently there have been a number of large seizures across the Pacific that were destined for Australia. Australia is the only market in this region capable of taking 500 kilograms and above.

**Senator BILYK:** When you're talking offshore, you're saying about it's actually on some of the Pacific islands or New Zealand or somewhere like that, are you?

**Mr Phelan:** Yes, and also perhaps in international waters or around the Pacific islands, interdicted by foreign navies. I think the French Navy has taken a couple out, on instructions and working with Australian authorities as well, so it's very much a collaborative effort right across the Pacific.

**Senator BILYK:** You might need to take this on notice, but are you able to give us some numbers about how many significant seizures—I suppose they're all significant, really, aren't they?—that have happened in the past five years, since the 2015 submission was done?

**Mr Phelan:** Certainly; that wouldn't be a problem. Are you talking about just the ones that were offshore—anything outside our 200-nautical-mile limit?

**Senator BILYK:** If it's possible, could we also have the ones in Australian waters, onshore and offshore? Is that possible?

**Mr Phelan:** If it's alright with you, we consider 'significant'—certainly in most of our analysis, 'significant' is around 500 kilograms. If we can keep it above 500 kilograms, that would be alright. Anything less than that and it'll be like an encyclopaedia.

**Answer:**

Data on drug seizures is collected by the Department of Home Affairs, Australian Border Force, the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC).

The ACIC includes its data on drug seizures into its comprehensive and publicly available Illicit Drug Data Reports. Notable detections and significant seizures exceeding 500kg include:

- November 2014: 878.9kg methylamphetamine and 1918.4kg MDMA was detected in Sydney, in a container from Germany.
- December 2017: 1.1 tonnes of Methylamphetamine seized in Western Australia via small craft
- 2016-17: 500kg methylamphetamine detected in Sydney via sea cargo from the United States of America
- August 2020: 1890kg cocaine being transported via small craft, intercepted offshore, New South Wales.
- August 2020: 1000kg methylamphetamine being transported via small craft from New Caledonia/Solomon Islands, intercepted offshore New South Wales.

Between 2015 and August 2020, the Department of Home Affairs (which includes the Australian Border Force) recorded a total of 41 tonnes of illicit drugs intercepted across 29 significant seizures (500kg or more). These seizures occurred onshore at Australian port facilities in the sea cargo, air cargo and international mail streams.

Offshore, the Department of Home Affairs recorded 23 small craft detections of over 500kg of illicit drugs destined for Australia between March 2015 and August 2020 with a total weight of more than 23 tonnes.

The data above may not encompass all seizures recorded by the Australian Federal Police. The Australian Federal Police would be best placed to provide this detail.