

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit Screening of International Mail

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION SERVICE

Senator McKENZIE asked:

What operational changes were brought in after the ANAO report?

Answer:

The Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (ACBPS) has undertaken a number of reform measures to strengthen capability at the border. These include:

- Provided for the clearer identification of targets through the stand-up of the Strategic Border Command (SBC) and operational prioritisation by ACBPS Strategic Command Group.
- Undertaking thorough documentation and mapping of the targeting model and risk assessment framework to identify areas of inconsistency across the four gateways and to identify areas for improvement.
- Revised relevant governance materials to ensure consistency of operational practice across all four gateways and that ACBPS officers have detailed guidance on the treatment of seized imports. This includes the implementation of practices to ensure transparent, consistent recording and support for targeting decisions.
- Scheduled changes for the first half of 2015 to the Detained Goods Management System directed to improving data quality, to support improved analysis.
- Engaged a consultant to work with SBC and other divisions in the development of performance measures across all operational domains including the international mail environment. That work is now well advanced.
- Adopted an improved methodology for collection and reporting of screening statistics by gateway facilities, and has worked closely with Australia Post in relation to volumetric data to ensure that a nationally consistent set of volume and inspection data can be identified and reported centrally.
- Pursuing a joint sampling approach with the Department of Agriculture (DOA), including the sharing of data and joint sampling exercises. DOA's sampling program in international mail is currently undergoing a formal review which the ACBPS will be participating in to ensure the resulting methodology aligns with our sampling program requirements. The ACBPS anticipates that a comprehensive, joint sampling program will be in place by mid-2015.

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT – REVIEW OF AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORTS 42-43, 48, 50 AND 52:

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION SERVICE

Senator (Written) asked:

Ms Mellor: They are consistent with the jurisdiction that Customs is under as well.

Mr CONROY: Could I ask Customs to talk to this?

Mrs Harfield: Certainly. Certainly in the Senate estimates environment, the instances of corruption in Australian Customs and Border Protection and the response to that by the organisation have been well documented and recorded. We are subject to the requirements of the Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity as well, and any instances of corruption that meet the requirements and thresholds are reported to them. Within the organisation itself we have a professional standards and integrity division who run activity around the understanding of the current risk and threat environment as well as conduct investigations, sometimes in concert with ACLEI, in order to uncover and deal with any instances of corruption. I do not have the specific details on the ones that the then CEO, who is now the secretary of the department, has previously reported upon, but we could provide those separately if you wish.

We have drug and alcohol testing within the organisation. We also have a requirement for mandatory reporting of any activity that officers may come across in the line of their duty. We also have a requirement to complete an operational security assessment on joining the organisation, and that is renewed and changes its requirements as you move within the organisation in terms of the required security levels. In addition to that, if there is a security requirement because of the level of information that you are able to access, there are additional requirements from the Australian government which we would need to comply with.

Mr CONROY: I note that you will provide on notice those examples that have been identified, but are any of those examples in the mail-screening domain?

Mrs Harfield: Not to my knowledge, but I will go back and check whether that is the case.

Answer:

The Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (ACBPS) can only comment on matters pertaining to its officers.

Since August 2012, three separate operations (Operations Heritage / Marca, Joint Taskforce POLARIS/Galantin and Operation Pentax) have resulted in eight ACBPS Officers being arrested or charged and Code of Conduct (CoC) inquiries have been instigated in relation to six ACBPS Officers.

None of the Officers identified above have been charged and/or prosecuted with offences originating from their duties within the international mail stream. All of the Officers worked at the Sydney International Airport.

It is noted however, that whilst one of the Officers awaiting trial has been charged with offences relating to postal importations, these offences are unrelated to their official duties. This Officer has not been charged with abuse of public office offences.