



Reply to Director General Coastwatch

Customs House  
5 Constitution Avenue  
Canberra ACT 2601

Quote: C00/05644

Dr J Carter  
Inquiry Secretary  
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Carter,

Thank you for your letter of 31 January 2001 seeking further information on the Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) that Coastwatch either has in place, or is in the process of negotiating with various client agencies.

At the Annex I have provided a status report on the program of reviewing existing and negotiating new MOUs/SLAs. This report expands upon the information I provided at the JCPAA hearing on 30 January.

With regard to the wider distribution of MOUs/SLAs, I hold some reservations with both of the propositions put forward in your letter.

First, whilst the agreements themselves are not, strictly speaking, CONFIDENTIAL, most of them do contain sensitive information about the business interests of client agencies and the work that Coastwatch contracts to undertake on their behalf. For example, I would not wish to see the arrangements we have in place for support to the AFP's counter-narcotics role available in the public domain. Against this, it is my view that Coastwatch MOUs/SLAs should be considered "PROTECTED".

Consistency between agreements is achieved through Coastwatch itself being the common thread and the fact that the service that we provide across our various clients is, essentially, homogeneous. That said, it needs to be recognised that there will be differences between agencies in the frequency and intensity of their maritime surveillance and response needs. These are reflected in individual client agency agreements and in the specification of their taskings contained in the Coastwatch Monthly Surveillance Plan (CMSP).

Transparency of Coastwatch's activities at the strategic level is provided across client agencies through the planning and reporting processes that underpin the procedures of the Operations and Program Advisory Committee (OPAC). At each meeting, clients are provided with details of the CMSP and are given the opportunity to comment on or raise concerns about its content.

By necessity, information relating to tactical operations undertaken on behalf of clients is given limited distribution on a "need to know" basis. However, information on the extent of Coastwatch support for tactical operations is, for the most part, provided ex poste to clients at the next OPAC meeting.

The second proposition that MOUs/SLAs be released into the public domain is not supported. As previously noted, each agreement contains sensitive information specific to the business interests of the client agency. Any move to release this information to a wider audience would need to be cleared with each client agency.

I believe that there is a range of more effective means of promoting public awareness of Coastwatch and its roles and responsibilities than through the release of its agreements with clients. I have recently initiated a project to develop a professional and orchestrated public information campaign for Coastwatch and expect to be able to commit staffing and other resources to this initiative in the near future.

I trust that these responses will be of assistance to the Committee. I can confirm that I have no objection to this letter being released to the JCPAA web-site.

Yours sincerely

R E Shalders  
Rear Admiral, RAN  
Director General  
Coastwatch

6 February 2001

Annex:

A. Status of Coastwatch MOUs/SLAs

**Status of Coastwatch MOUs/SLAs**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Final</b>	<b>% complete</b>
Dept. Immigration & Multicultural Affairs	SLA	27 Nov 00	100%
Qld Dept. of Transport (data exchange)	SLA		50%
Environment Australia	SLA		85%
Australian Customs Service	SLA		40%
Australian Federal Police	SLA	29 Jan 01	100%
Dept. of Foreign Affairs & Trade	SLA		80%
Australian Fisheries Management Authority	MOU	1 Jun 92	100%
Australian Quarantine Inspection Service	SLA	27 Sep 91	100%
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority	SLA	15 Jan 91	100%
Australian Maritime Safety Authority	SLA	21 Dec 99	100%

**Note:** In addition to staffing action in train to develop MOU/SLA with Agencies listed, review action is also being undertaken to update agreements with AFMA, AQIS and GBRMPA