

Mr. John Carter
Inquiry Secretary
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2000

Coastwatch Inquiry

I have no corrections to the transcript however, after reading through the proof I am very concerned that the Resources Section of Coastwatch has been overlooked in the Inquiry. The Resources Section is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Coastwatch Contract, the training of all Coastwatch personnel, the training and evaluation of the Contractors aircrew and the overall evaluation of the Contractors performance. This section is also charged with the responsibility of researching technology and assessing national risks so that the formation and implementation of the next Coastwatch Contract can be effective. Unbelievably, the section has been neglected and systematically dismantled over the last 3 years.

Initially the aviation qualified Director (Graharn Giles) was seconded to the Marine area. The Director position was left vacant for long periods and part time directors were rotated through culminating in the position now being filled by a career Customs Officer with no aviation, contracting or surveillance expertise. I was the Assistant Director during this period but unfortunately I am more of a 'mechanic' and lacked 'political acumen' and was judged as unsuitable for promotion. The lack of understanding and support from senior management caused my resignation from Coastwatch. Two further resignations (Peter White and Mark Craig) followed. Once again out of frustration caused by management. This meant 3 of the 4 aviation qualified officers resigned in a 12-month period. An attached table shows the situation.

The shortage of qualified staff and the lack of understanding and support from management has serious repercussions on the responsibilities of the section. The training of aircrew has suffered. The monitoring of the Contract is now a sham. The annual assessment and categorisation of aircrew by the section has been abandoned.

After spending 18 years with Coastwatch I am quite distressed to see the support section in such disarray. I strongly suggest the committee look behind the 'smoke and mirrors' of operations. The dismantled state of the support section requires drastic surgery, which Customs does not seem capable of understanding or administering.

Further examples of how the senior management has frustrated and thwarted Coastwatch over the years are as follows.

- In the region of three-quarters of a million extra dollars was spent to set up a Night Vision Compatible helicopter. The use of the NV system was vetoed because the CEO feared a political backlash if there was an accident.

- Officers with no training are moved in and out of positions in the Regions Operations Room apparently at the whim of the Customs Regional Managers. These positions are rarely advertised or interviews held.
- Positions previously designated as specialist have been downgraded so Customs Officers, with no aviation qualifications, can fill these positions.
- The new helicopter was equipped with an expensive winch without consideration of client needs nor the complexity or expense of winch operations. The system remains unused.
- The new helicopter is not 'night **surveillance**' capable. The addition of a simple surveillance radar would achieve this requirement.

I trust the above shows why I am of the firm belief that Coastwatch cannot function effectively as a sub program of Customs.

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Attachment to Lofty Masons letter on 'Coastwatch Inquiry.

The following table compares the aviation skills of 3 positions in the support area of Coastwatch

Pre '96

Present

Director

Experience as an Air Electronics Officer
AEO Instructor
SAR Trained
Contract Trained

Career Customs Officer
No Aviation Expertise

Chief Inspector

Experience as a RAAF Navigator
Navigation Instructor
Commercial Pilot
Flying Instructor
Pilot Ground Instructor
SAR Mission Coordinator (Aust)
SAR Mission Coordinator (US Coast Guard)
Contract Trained
Bushfire Brigade Captain and Trainer
Workplace Assessor (Certificate iv Trainer)

Helicopter Pilot
Helo Ops Manager
No Surveillance expertise

Senior Inspector (Electronics)

Experience as a RAAF Air Electronics Officer
Experience as a RAF Air Electronics Officer
Experience as a RNZAF Air Electronics Officer
AEO Instructor
Electronic Warfare Training
ASW Trained
SAR Trained
Diploma in applied Science (Electronic Systems)
Workplace Assessor (Certificate iv Trainer)

Unfilled since Feb

Inspector (Visual Training)

Experienced RAN Observer
Helicopter Crewman
Workplace Assessor (Certificate iv Trainer)
Air Ops Base Manager
SAR Trained
Experienced Observer Instructor

Unfilled since July