

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION SERVICE

Question No. 111

Senator Humphries asked the following question at the hearing on 24 May 2012:

- a) Have there been any changes, decreases or increases, in vessel inspections for those vessels entering Australia?
- b) Are there Customs and immigration processing at all cruise ship terminals in Australia?
- c) Can you confirm on the 24th February why approximately 600 passengers onboard the Aurora cruise ship were unable to depart the boat once it has docked at the Yorkey's Knob port in Cairns, resulting in all previously booked day trips being cancelled?
- d) How many Customs and Immigration officers are stationed at Yorkey's Port in Cairns and are they stationed there at all times?
- e) If there are no officers stationed at Yorkey's Port in Cairns, why? Is this due to funding and personnel cuts to Customs?
- f) How many cruise ships have been refused disembarkation due to a lack of Customs/Immigration officers at Australian ports in the last 5 years?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

- a) All vessels arriving in Australia are risk assessed. Since 2009-10, the target for vessel boarding has been 6,450 vessels per year. In 2009-10 8,918 vessels were boarded, in 2010-11 7,130 vessels were boarded and in 2011-12 (to end May) 6,532 vessels were boarded.
- b) Customs and Border Protection deploys staff at cruise ship terminals throughout Australia when required. Customs and Border Protection conducts immigration processing on behalf of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.
- c) The cruise ship Aurora did not dock at Yorkey's Knob Marina, Cairns, on 24 February 2012. The ship's passengers were due to be cleared through the cruise ship terminal at Trinity Inlet in Cairns, which has the necessary facilities for this number of passengers. Customs and Border Protection understands the ship was unable to secure a close anchorage at Trinity Inlet and because of the increased time it would take to transfer passengers to shore, the Master, in consultation with the cruise line, decided that the Aurora would not stop at Cairns and the vessel continued to Darwin.
- d) Yorkey's Knob Marina does not have a permanent Customs and Border Protection or Department of Immigration and Citizenship presence and is serviced by Customs and Border Protection officers from Cairns District Office.
- e) There has never been, nor are there currently, officers permanently stationed at Yorkey's Knob - Yorkey's Knob is serviced by staff based in the Cairns District Office.
- f) In the last five years, when a cruise ship has docked at a port or place in Australia, there have been no instances of passengers refused permission to disembark.