

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

Question No. 112

Senator Humphries asked the following questions via written submission.

- a) In the 2012-13 Budget \$6 million was cut from the illegal foreign fishing program, can you explain the rationale behind these cuts and where the cuts will be going?
- b) Has there been an increase or decrease in illegal foreign fishermen in Australian waters?
- c) Have resources been diverted from illegal foreign fishing to intercepting unauthorised maritime arrivals?

The answers to the Honourable Senator's questions are as follows:

- a) The Northern Illegal Foreign Fishing “immediate transfer model” is an integrated approach that has been operating since 2006. This comprehensive response has had a positive effect demonstrated by the decreasing number of apprehensions. An assessment of variable costs associated with the onshore response component was conducted and savings were identified in the areas associated with vessel towing and destruction; inshore coastal patrols and flights to transport illegal foreign fishers from the reception ports at Broome, Weipa, Gove and Horn Island to the Darwin Detention Centre.
- b) Sightings of illegal foreign fishing vessel (FFV) activity south of the Provisional Fisheries Surveillance and Enforcement Line within the Australian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) continue to be low. In 2011-12 there was a small drop in FFV sightings in this area.
- c) Australia's national interests within the maritime environment will continue to be at risk by multiple threats at any one time. Border Protection Command (BPC) employs an intelligence-led, risk-based approach to operations. BPC postures assets and undertakes surveillance based on the assessed risk level for all eight maritime threats for which BPC has responsibility, including:
 - 1. Illegal activity in protected areas
 - 2. Marine pollution
 - 3. Prohibited imports and exports
 - 4. Illegal exploitation of natural resources
 - 5. Unauthorised maritime arrivals
 - 6. Compromises to bio-security
 - 7. Piracy, robbery and violence at sea
 - 8. Maritime terrorism.

BPC conducts regular aerial surveillance and surface patrols to monitor the Australian maritime domain for illegal activity. This surveillance is not directed against a singular maritime threat. For example, multiple contacts of interest relevant to the full range of maritime threats (including FFVs and Suspected Irregular Entry Vessels) can be detected and reported in one aerial surveillance flight.

Managing the threat of illegal foreign fishing continues to be a priority. BPC participates in joint activities targeting illegal fishing with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) and Indonesia's maritime security coordinating agency (BAKORKAMLA). Joint enforcement activity through coordinated patrols and the close relationship with MMAF and BAKORKAMLA is a strong element in Customs and Border Protection's strategy to deter and combat illegal foreign fishing.

In the 2011/12 Budget, the Government committed \$15.3 million in funding over two years which provides an additional 4430 hours of surveillance flights over the two year period.