

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE  
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

**Question No. 120**

**Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 17 February 2006:**

- a) Which illicit drugs had lower detection rates in 2005 than 2004 by:
- i) Number of detections
  - ii) Mass of drug detected
  - iii) Estimated street value of drug detected

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

Illicit drug detections in the calendar year 2005, as compared to 2004, were:

- i) by number of detections:

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Amphetamine-type stimulants	194	228
Cocaine	543	256
Heroin	159	94
MDMA (ecstasy)	228	140
Chemical precursors	459	411

Changes in numbers are largely due to changes in the method of importation, and in particular changes from post to air cargo or vice versa. For instance, 1320 of the 1,580 detections in 2004 were in the post – often very small amounts in letter class articles imported by a small number of groups. The change in detections in 2005 reflects a move by these groups to sending larger single amounts in air cargo. Customs detected larger amounts of cocaine and heroin in air cargo in 2005 than in 2004, rising from 24 kg to 46 kg.

- ii) by mass of drugs detected (kg):

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Amphetamine-type substances	131.9	46.7
Cocaine	203.8	109.2
Heroin	61.5	136.9
MDMA (ecstasy)	1492.8	1429.9
Chemical precursors	1081.6	2456.1

Comparisons of weight of drugs detected over any two years reflects the timing of the small number of very large detections Customs makes each year. In the table above, the increase in heroin detected is due to one detection of 105kg of heroin in sea cargo in April 2005. Likewise, the drop in weight of cocaine is due to a single detection of 101 kg in 2004.

iii) by estimated street value:

Customs is not in a position to accurately estimate the street value of the drugs it detects, because it does not hold data on the final determined purity or pure net amount. Without purity data, any estimate of the street value of drugs is directly proportional to the mass of drugs detected. Relative increases or reductions in the street value of the detected drugs will follow the same changes as the mass of drugs detected [*please refer to table ii) above*].