

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

**Question No. 87**

**Senator Barnett asked the following question at the hearing on 8 February 2010:**

What communications did ACBPS have with the Government and what communications did the Government have with ACBPS with respect to the passengers aboard the *Oceanic Viking*? Please provide the dates and the nature of the communications.

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

Customs and Border Protection was responsible for the safety and care of the rescued people when on board the *ACV Oceanic Viking*. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship was the lead for other matters relating to communications to the rescued people.

Within this context, Customs and Border Protection was in regular communication with the Office for the Minister for Home Affairs during the time that the rescued people were on board the *ACV Oceanic Viking*, from 18 October until 18 November 2009. The nature of communications varied, but included emails, phone calls and meetings to discuss status.

Communications were about Customs and Border Protection's overall management of the situation on board the vessel, rather than specifically about the rescued people.

Where it has been identified that the communications did include specific reference to the rescued people, the nature of the communications covered the following issues:

- the number of rescued people on board the *ACV Oceanic Viking* and their welfare, specifically the welfare of a young child who was in need of medical attention;
- the destination of the *ACV Oceanic Viking*;
- correspondence drafted by the rescued people to the Australian Government;
- several of the males among the rescued people engaging in a hunger strike and the end of the hunger strike;
- laws applying to the *ACV Oceanic Viking* and people on board while in Indonesia; and
- arrangements for the disembarkation of the people from the vessel and progress of disembarkation.

In addition on 12 May 2009, the Government announced the establishment of the Border Protection Committee of Cabinet chaired by Senator Chris Evans. It is longstanding practice not to reveal details on the timing of and attendance at Cabinet Committee meetings.