

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 22 May 2006

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(179) Output 1.3: Enforcement of Immigration Law

Senator Ludwig (L&C 117) asked:

- (1) With the IDC, was that the first time 18 months ago, or were there meetings prior to that about illegal fishers?
- (2) Was the first response by Customs or AFMA to immigration?
- (3) I would imagine there has been ongoing dialogue over a long period, because you have detained illegal fishers in the past. But more particularly, when it really started to rise from 300 in 2001, did Customs and AFMA start to talk to you at that time about how you were going to detain them, where you were going to detain them, the cost of detention and who pays the cost?

Answer:

- (1) An IDC to develop strategies for the management of illegal foreign fishers was formally convened in 2003. Since the late 1980s, when motorised vessels began fishing illegally in Australian waters, there has been consultation as required between the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), the Australian Customs Service (Customs), the Department of Defence, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and the fisheries portfolio (the now Australian Fisheries Management Authority) (AFMA) on the subject of the management of illegal foreign fishers. Consultation between DIMA, DAFF, Customs, Defence and AFMA increased when the numbers of illegal foreign fishers began to rise significantly from 2001.
- (2) DIMA, DAFF, AFMA, and Customs have worked closely since the late 1980s to identify and respond to emerging issues as they arise, with respect to the apprehension, transfer, detention, prosecution and removal arrangements for illegal foreign fishers.
- (3) Yes, as part of a review of arrangements for dealing with illegal foreign fishers in Australia's Northern waters.