

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

Question No. 106

Senator Colbeck asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2010:

A saving of \$7.250m related to a reduced number of patrol days to be undertaken by the Southern Oceans Patrol. This is due to a focus on a risk-based approach to patrol activity.

AND

Southern Ocean vessel surveillance (patrol days). Funding reduced from \$280 million in 2009-10 to \$200 million in 2010-11 and then to \$120 million in following forward estimates years.

1. Why is the Government leasing a new patrol vessel at the same time it is also drastically cutting back the budget for Southern Ocean patrols?
2. Can Customs please provide detail on these budget cuts and how they will impact on Southern Ocean patrols?
3. How many Southern Ocean patrol days are budgeted for in each of the forward estimates years?
4. Are you aware of how many northern waters patrol days are to be undertaken by the Southern Ocean patrol boat in the coming financial years?
5. Was industry consulted about these budget cuts prior to their announcement?
6. What feedback has been received since the Budget was announced?

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

1. Customs and Border Protection is leasing a new vessel, the *ACV Ocean Protector*, to replace the current vessel, *ACV Oceanic Viking*, as its lease expires on 30 June 2010.
2. Customs and Border Protection did not receive funding of \$280m in 2009-10 for Southern Ocean patrol days, nor was funding \$200m in 2010-11 or \$120m in the forward years for Southern Ocean patrol days. Customs and Border Protection received funding of \$45.906m in 2009-10, and expects to receive funding of \$56.087m in 2010-11, \$52.332m in 2011-12, \$52.981m in 2012-13 and \$52.981m in 2013-14 for the Southern Ocean vessel.

Since 2005, no fish poachers have been detected fishing illegally in Australia's Southern Ocean Exclusive Economic Zones (Heard and McDonald Islands and Macquarie Island). Successful operations in the Southern Ocean have reduced the risk from illegal fishing, allowing a return of funding of some patrol days as Budget efficiencies.

Given the success of current deterrent measures and through the adoption of a more risk based approach to patrol activity, the 2010-11 Budget has seen a reduction in Southern Ocean patrol days from 200 days to 120 days, delivering potential savings of \$7.3m per annum.

Accordingly, the Portfolio Budget Statement reflects patrol days of 200 for 2010-11 and 120 days from 2011-12 onwards.

To ensure patrol activity continues to be managed effectively, patrols will be planned in conjunction with the French to provide an unpredictable deterrence presence. Support from commercial satellite surveillance will also continue throughout the year. The Treaty with France will continue to allow Customs and Border Protection and AFMA officers to embark on co-operative Southern Ocean patrols with the French navy.

3. Customs and Border Protection is funded for 200 patrol days (120 Southern Ocean and 80 northern waters) in 2010-11, and 120 patrol days in each of the three forward estimate years.
4. Customs and Border Protection is funded to undertake 80 patrol days in the northern waters in 2010-11.
5. Not applicable.
6. No feedback has been received by Customs and Border Protection since the Budget was announced.