

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

Question No. 65

Senator Barnett asked the following question at the hearing on 26 May 2011:

Senator BARNETT: Can you advise also the protocols in place for a Customs spokesperson to comment on government policy or incidents within your portfolio. We would like a copy of the protocol.

Mr Pezzullo: I am happy to provide relevant documents on notice, but as a general matter of principle of course we do not comment on government policy. It is not our role to.

Senator BARNETT: If there is a protocol in terms of what you can comment on and what you cannot comment on, that would be appreciated. Are you happy to take that on notice?

Mr Pezzullo: I will indeed. There are obviously APS-wide guidance documents that we make available to our staff, but I will see if there are any particular documents that are specifically designed for our agency.

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

Customs and Border Protection protocols regarding handling of media enquiries, preparation and clearance of material for media distribution are contained within the internal Instructions and Guidelines (I&G) *Media Procedures October 2007*.

In addition, Customs and Border Protection has regard to the Australian Public Service Commission's (APSC) 2006 publication *Supporting Ministers, Upholding the Values*, in particular Section 2.2.9 'Assistance with media issues and public presentations by public servants', which states:

- Public servants should respond to (*media*) requests, but should, as always, avoid any contribution of a party political nature.
- Public servants should explain the reasons for and implications of government policy, but should avoid advocacy which is the role of the Minister.