

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

Question No. 5

Senator Humphries asked the following question at the hearing on 29 May 2013:

Senator HUMPHRIES: I want to ask about the arrival on 9 April this year of a boat at Geraldton.

...

Senator HUMPHRIES: I understand that it was two members of the public in dinghy who intercepted the arrival. Is that true?

Mr Pezzullo: I do not think that they intercepted the boat. Some members of the public might have reported. I will have to check.

Senator HUMPHRIES: Can you give us a brief description of exactly what happened?

Mr Pezzullo: Having just been joined by Rear Admiral Johnston, I will make some introductory remarks and then ask the admiral to go into some detail. Specifically on the point asked, on that day at approximately 2.45 pm Australian eastern standard time the Geraldton Port Authority—I do not know how many members of that authority—and a member of the public advised Customs and Border Protection of a possible SIEV inside the harbour limits.

Senator HUMPHRIES: Inside the harbour?

Mr Pezzullo: Yes. At approximately 3.05 pm Australian eastern standard time on the same day, a Customs and Border Protection officer—our officer in Geraldton—who was operating with the assistance of the WA police, and we are grateful for the assistance that they were able to provide, boarded the Geraldton Port Authority vessel, the name of which I am told is *Jorgensen*. They intercepted the vessel within the port. So a combination of the port authority, one of our officers and WA police.

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

At approximately 2.40 pm AEST on Tuesday 9 April 2013, Geraldton Port Authority and a member of the public independently advised Customs and Border Protection Geraldton District Office via phone of a possible SIEV inside Geraldton Harbour limits.

At approximately 2.45 pm AEST on the same day while moving to the Geraldton Port Authority Vessel (GPA), the Customs and Border Protection officer sought the land side assistance of WA Police which commenced planning to assist in the reception, care and custody of the people from the vessel.

At approximately 3.05 pm AEST on the same day the Customs and Border Protection officer embarked on the Geraldton Port Authority crewed vessel '*Jorgensen*' and intercepted the vessel 150 metre from Geraldton foreshore and conducted initial questioning that established the nationality of the persons aboard and confirmed that the vessel was a SIEV.

By approximately 3.50 pm AEST the vessel had been brought alongside the Pilot jetty of the Geraldton Port Authority wharf where, with support from WA Police, arrangements had been made to transfer the people from the vessel ashore and provide for their care and custody pending a full assessment of their health and migration status.