

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 173

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 31 October 2005:

- (a) How much of the funding provided for Southern Ocean surveillance has been expended?
- (b) Has all funding been expended?
 - i) If not, how much funding has yet to be expended?
- (c) Was there any variation to the stated budget for this program?
 - i) If so, what was the variation?
 - ii) Was additional funding provided, or did the program lose funding?
 - iii) If the program lost funding, where was the funding transferred, and why?
 - iv) Were any stopgap measures put in place to ensure the continued operation of this program despite the variation?
- (d) What was the stated outcome of the program at the time the funding commenced?
 - i) Did the program meet its stated outcome?
 - ii) If not, in which areas did it not meet its stated outcome?
 - iii) Were any other measures or additional funding required to meet the stated outcome of the program?
- (e) Has a review been conducted of the program?
 - i) If so, could you provide a copy?
 - ii) If not, why not?
 - iii) Is one being conducted, or will one be conducted?
 - iv) Are there any interim reports available?
 - v) Are there any plans to produce any interim reports?

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

- (a) Customs was allocated \$44.3 million for 2004-05 (including \$1.1 million capital funding) and \$38.9 million for 2005-06 to set up the Southern Ocean Maritime Patrol and Response program. As at 30 June 2005, \$35.8 million had either been expended or committed. \$11.9m has been spent as at 21 December for 2005-06.
- (b) No.
 - i) \$8.5 million.
- (c) Yes.
 - i) As part of the 2005-06 Budget process and the Government's consideration of options for a permanent Southern Ocean patrol program, Customs offered up savings of \$8.5 million for 2004-05 and \$5.5 million in 2005-06, because of anticipated reductions in vessel lease charges and steaming party costs.
 - ii) Additional resourcing totalling \$170.4 million was provided over four years, commencing in 2006-07.
 - iii) The program has been extended until 30 June 2010.
 - iv) No.
- (d) The stated outcome of the program at the time funding commenced was to conduct armed patrols of the Heard and McDonald Islands' exclusive economic zone (EEZ). These patrols are aimed at suppressing the activities of vessels engaged in illegal fishing, as well as protecting Australia's sovereign interests in, and the environmental values of, the Southern Ocean.

- i) Yes – As of 1 July 2004, Customs was in a position to respond to any breaches of Australia’s EEZ in the Southern Ocean. Since November 2004, the 105 metres *Oceanic Viking* has been the full-time contracted Customs and Fisheries Southern Ocean patrol vessel. The dedicated vessel capability includes a full civilian crew and “Steaming Party” (additional sailors capable of crewing an apprehended vessel), deck mounted 0.50 calibre machine guns and a team of specialist trained and armed Customs Boarding Party officers. It is able to conduct year-round patrols in virtually all weather conditions.
 - ii) Not applicable.
 - iii) No.
- (e) Yes the program has been reviewed and expanded as part of the Government’s 2005-06 Budget process.
- i) No.
 - ii) Documents are classified “Cabinet-in-Confidence”.
 - iii) N/A.
 - iv) N/A.
 - v) N/A.