

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 215

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

- a) In the light of recent announcements on increased funding to deter illegal fishing can you outline what additional funding is being made available to Customs and how this money will be expended?
- b) Are the new measures designed primarily to deal with illegal fishermen once they are apprehended rather than deterring the activity from taking place in the first instance?
- c) Can you explain what the role of the six additional Customs staff in Broome will be?
- d) Can you tell the Committee what the operational capability of the new 4 tactical boats to be stationed at Broome, Darwin, Gove and Thursday Island will be?
- e) How far from the coast can these boats operate?
- f) Are there any limitations in respect of range etc?
- g) Can Customs provide an estimate of the average catch per year of illegal foreign fishing vessels in the AFZ?
- h) Can the Commonwealth Government explain why the number of automatic forfeitures continues to increase in the face of increasing illegal activity?
- i) Instead of 200 arrests and 242 automatic forfeitures why was there not 442 arrests?
- j) Can Customs detail the degree of recidivism among apprehended fishermen?

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

- a) \$57.5 million has been made available to Customs over the financial year 2005-06 to 2008-09. It will be expended on employee expenses for 34 staff, property operating costs, supplier costs to meet the new responsibilities and the purchase of four tactical response vessels.
- b) Yes.
- c) The additional staff will receive the illegal fisherman on arrival in port, process them according to the requirements of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and ensure they are fit to be flown to an Immigration Detention Facility.
- d) Specifications for each vessel are being determined to take into account the different operating conditions in the waters of each of the four ports.
- e) See d) above.
- f) See d) above.
- g) This should be directed to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority for a response.
- h) This should be directed to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority for a response.
- i) This should be referred to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority for a response.
- j) This should be referred to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority for a response.