

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

Question No. 225

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

In *Evaluation of Australian drug anti-trafficking law enforcement*, Adam Sutton and Steve James commented that “our evaluation demonstrates that to date there has been little capacity in the law enforcement sector to reliably and validly relate its activities to changes in drug markets. In part, this is a function of the traditional performance indicators adopted by drug enforcement agencies: the number, volume, and type of illegal drug seizures, and the number and type of drug-related arrests and convictions. These measures are well recognised as basically flawed indicators of effectiveness. They reflect more upon levels of law enforcement *activity* than they do ratios of interdiction and reduction, and therefore cannot be used as indicators of the effectiveness of agencies in reducing the total supply of illegal drugs.”¹ Would the AFP agree with this statement?

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

The above report was published almost a decade ago and prior to the publication of the joint Australian National University/AFP study (a report of which is due to be published in an upcoming edition of the international journal *Addiction*), and so did not have the opportunity to reflect on the significance of that study.

¹ Adam Sutton & Steve James, *Evaluation of Australian drug anti-trafficking law enforcement*, Australasian Centre for Policing Research report series no. 128 (National Police Research Unit, Payneham SA, 1996) p. 107 at <http://www.acpr.gov.au/pdf/ACPR128.pdf>.