

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

Question No. 8

Senator Humphries asked the following question at the hearing on 18 October 2011:

Senator HUMPHRIES: Fraud is usually quite a complicated area of investigation for bringing forward a prosecution. How many people work in the area of fraud investigation at the moment inside the national operations of the AFP?

Mr Colvin: I do have those figures, if you can just give me a moment. But the AFP operate a fluid model, so the figure that we would give at any given time can be increased or decreased according to what our priorities are. I do not actually have the number of personnel, but I can tell you that an AFP investigation team is generally in the order of five to seven people. I will get an exact figure for you. But within our broad crime operations, which pick up our fraud area, we have three teams in Canberra, two teams in Adelaide, three teams in Brisbane, a team in Cairns, a team in Darwin, a team in Hobart, six teams in Melbourne, one team in Perth and 13 teams in Sydney. So any work that would flow to us from a carbon pricing mechanism or exploitation of the legislation will be divided up amongst those crime operations personnel. We do not run a model that says, 'You're a fraud investigator.' You are a general investigator. If we have specific skill sets we need we may call on those, but in a more general sense we do not run a specific specialist model.

Senator HUMPHRIES: Can you tell us at this stage what kind of resources you expect to need to throw into that exercise?

Mr Colvin: No, not at this stage.

Senator HUMPHRIES: You say you have had discussions with the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Is there some sort of formal structure, a working party or other mechanism, to describe the role that the AFP are expected to play?

Mr Colvin: There is. The working group commissioned under the heads of law enforcement agencies is yet to meet. I believe the officers are meeting at the lower level this week to start the process and put in place some rules and terms of reference for what the working group will do. Of course, we also have an outposted officer attached to the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency who is able to help us work through some of those issues as well.

Senator HUMPHRIES: I will come back to those issues perhaps at the next estimates and get some more information about how that is unfolding.

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

As at 18 October 2011, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) Crime Operations portfolio comprised a total of 271 sworn members who, dependent on operational priorities, can be called upon to investigate allegations of fraud. This figure does not include sworn members within Crime Operations who are dedicated to investigating people smuggling related offences.

The focus of Crime Operations strategy is the deployment of resources and skills to where they will have the greatest preventative impact and disruptive effect on criminal networks. As part of this strategy, Crime Operations employs a flexible staffing approach, and staffing levels and tenure fluctuate dependent on operational priorities within the Crime Operations portfolio.