

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 November 2013

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(SE13/0220) PROGRAMME – 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management

Senator Ludwig (Written) asked:

The coalition committed to sending a Customs vessel to the Southern Ocean, is there a Customs vessel there now? What is that ship doing now? What is that ship designed for? If customs wanted to move it to the Southern ocean to protect against illegal fishing could it do so without the permission of the three star general under Operation Sovereign Borders? Which minister would make such a decision?

Answer:

To preserve operational security, the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service does not comment on the specific on-water activities or location of Border Protection Command (BPC) assets.

Australian Customs Vessel (ACV) *Ocean Protector* is a multi-role ship that can respond to a wide range of maritime security threats. ACV *Ocean Protector* while assigned to BPC can be utilised to respond to a range maritime security threats including:

- illegal activity in protected areas;
- illegal exploitation of national resources;
- marine pollution;
- prohibited imported and exports;
- illegal maritime arrivals;
- compromise to biosecurity; piracy,
- robbery or violence at sea; and
- maritime terrorism.

BPC deploys assets using an intelligence-led, risk based approach. Decisions regarding deployment of assets are made by Commander BPC in conjunction with a broad range of stakeholders.

The Minister responsible for the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service is the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, however operational decisions are made by the Commander of BPC.