

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION SERVICE

Question No. 170

Senator Colbeck asked the following question at the hearing on 24 May 2012:

- a) What is the status of investigations regarding corruption and organised crime in Customs and Border Protection officials?
- b) Is there any intention to hold a Royal Commission?
- c) What are the potential biosecurity risks associated with the investigations into Customs and Border Protection officials?
- d) What resources is the government putting towards this aspect of the sustainability of Australia's biosecurity system – given in March 2012 Mr Keenan, Shadow Minister for Justice, Customs and Border Protection, was concerned about the government budget cuts having taken 340 customs staff and nearly \$60 million from the agency since 2010 actions have been taken to protect Australia's biosecurity?
- e) What further budget cuts have been made for 2012-13 and beyond?

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

- a) The more serious cases of misconduct or corruption are referred to The Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI) for investigation. As at 01 July 2012, 48 cases have been referred to ACLEI for consideration with 38 under active assessment or investigation.

As these cases are under assessment or active investigation it is inappropriate to comment on their status.

- b) Customs and Border Protection came under the jurisdiction of ACLEI on 01 January 2011. Allegations of corruption are appropriately investigated by ACLEI.
- c) Customs and Border Protection is not aware of any biosecurity risks associated with the investigations into Customs and Border Protection officials.
- d) The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has primary responsibility for managing Australia's biosecurity system. Questions on this subject should be directed to DAFF.
- e) Customs and Border Protection provided three savings measures as part of the 2012-13 Budget process, totalling \$4.4 m in 2012-13 and \$37.387 m over four years. These measures include:
 - i. Ongoing savings of \$1.5m per year from 2012-13 for Illegal Foreign Fishing in Northern Waters – efficiencies.
 - ii. Savings of \$3.3m in 2012-13 and \$19.787m over four years for the measure *Increased use of SmartGate capability*. This savings measure was offset by an increase in capital funding for SmartGate of \$5.2m in 2012-13 and \$2.7m in 2013-14.
 - iii. A saving in the Departmental capital Budget of \$4.8m in 2012-13 and \$19.8m over four years to 2015-16 from the measure – *redirection of capital spending*.

In addition to these savings measures, further efficiencies were identified as part of the Mid Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) process including:

- \$17.1m will be delivered in 2012-13 as an outcome of the implementation of the one-off 2.5% increase to the Efficiency Dividend, with ongoing savings of around \$16.0m per year; and
- \$16.2m per year will be achieved from the Departmental Capital Budget (DCB) as part of the government's decision to reduce the DCB by 20% per year from 2012-13. This efficiency will deliver savings of around \$16.5m per year from 2013-14.