

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

Question No. 32

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

Senator BRANDIS: Have there been cuts to cargo screening staff in each of those years, from 2008-09 to the current year? How many staff have been cut from the cargo screening staff and at which locality have those cuts been made at?

Mr Carmody: I do not know whether we have those precise figures, but basically we have had the staff needed allocated to that task. We have had the staff needed to meet the volumes that we set as the appropriate risk base intervention. I guess we would have to take that on notice.

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

Customs and Border Protection employs an intelligence-led, risk-based intervention approach for air cargo, supported by appropriate assurance and disruption activities.

This process facilitates the movement of legitimate trade by minimising interventions in low risk cargo.

The approach includes an electronic risk assessment of all imported and exported air cargo to identify the level of risk and determine the appropriate intervention.

As part of the implementation of this intelligence-led, risk-based approach in 2009/10, there was a staffing reduction between 2008/09 and 2009/10.

The change in staffing, by locality, between 2008/09 and 2009/10 was:

- -17.7 FTE in New South Wales;
- -12.7 FTE in Victoria;
- -24.6 FTE in Queensland;
- -9.0 FTE in Western Australia; and
- +0.4 FTE in South Australia.

Since the introduction of an intelligence-led, risk-based approach to cargo screening, the number of detections of illicit items has increased significantly, including:

- More than double the number of detections in the air cargo stream from 870 in 2007-08 to 1,827 in 2011-12; and
- Threefold increase in the weight of drugs and precursors detected in the air cargo stream from 309 kilograms in 2007-08 to 926 kilograms in 2011-12.