



**Australian
BORDER FORCE**

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COMMISSIONER AND COMPTROLLER-GENERAL OF CUSTOMS
AUSTRALIAN BORDER FORCE**

Additional Senate Estimates – Opening Statement

Monday 24 February 2025, from 3.30pm

Thank you Chair, and members of the committee.

Since being appointed as Commissioner, I have been inspired by the professionalism and dedication of the people who work in the Australian Border Force.

Since the ABF last appeared before this Committee, our people have continued to deliver on our priorities.

For example, in one week of operational activity this month the ABF prevented 50 million illicit cigarettes and 5 tonnes of loose-leaf tobacco, from entering Australia. That equates to \$79 million in tobacco duty that would have been evaded.

In that same week we seized 43000 vapes.

We also interdicted 346 kilograms of illicit drugs, saving lives and reducing harm to the community by an estimated \$110 million.

Passenger numbers are steadily increasing at our airports with 14 million arrivals this financial year compared to 12.8 million at this time last year. Our Generation 3 SmartGates allow arriving passengers to pass through the contactless gate in 9 seconds.

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Economic factors have seen an increase in illegal foreign fishing in Australia's northern waters. The profitability of trepang (or sea cucumber) procured in our waters is a key driver of illegal fishing.

The success of the ABF-led Operation LUNAR has been effective in dealing with this increase.

Overall, our aerial and maritime surveillance is increasing — with aerial surveillance seeing an 11% increase in the second half of 2024 compared with the previous six months, and sea patrol days increasing 10% in the same period.

For the first seven months of the financial year we have collected \$8.2 billion in revenue on behalf of the Government in duties on goods crossing the border.

This is just a fraction of the work we do. As Commissioner, I am proud of our people who dedicate their careers to the security and prosperity of our nation. This is why cultural reform is a priority, and we are working with the Australian Human Rights Commission to deliver the most positive workplace possible to match our great work on the border.

Thank you.