



**STATEMENT BY ROMAN QUAEDVLIEG APM**

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**AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION SERVICE**

**Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee**

**23 February 2015**

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**ACBPS-focused - Opening Statement**

Chair, Senators, my colleague Mr Pezzullo has given you a broad overview of work under way across the Immigration and Border Protection Portfolio since we last appeared before the Committee.

To complement his remarks, I would now like to update the committee on our operational priorities, on integrity matters and on some operational outcomes.

The Committee will be aware of the Government's announcement of \$154 million in additional funding to boost our counter-terrorism capacity.

The measures will assist us to identify and stop Australians who seek to travel overseas to participate in terrorist activities, and assist authorities manage those seeking to return to Australia from foreign conflicts.

The Immigration and Border Protection Portfolio plays a key role in counter-terrorism, and is committed to maintaining the security of our nation.

New and strengthened measures are being employed to assist front-line officers undertake critical work to protect our border, and we continue to work closely with domestic and overseas intelligence and law enforcement agencies to identify possible travellers of interest prior to and at the border.

On 22 August 2014, the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service started deploying Counter-Terrorism Unit teams at international airports to combat the threat of home-grown terrorism. These teams are now operational at the eight major airports

Once fully implemented, we will have 80 Border Force officers and secure infrastructure and communication equipment at these airports.

Already, our CTU teams have successfully intercepted a number of people of national security concern. The CTU teams have found evidence of movements or attempted movements of large sums of cash, and images and material of an extremist nature. Some cases have resulted in the imposition of infringement notices, while others are the subject of ongoing investigations. Since August the CTU teams have undertaken over 64 000 assessments of travellers resulting in hundreds of enforcement actions and referrals to security and enforcement agencies.

Late last year, our CTU officers became exempt under the *Aviation Transport Security Act 2004* (ATSA) from airport security screening, and permitted to carry personal defensive equipment, including firearms in the airport environment. This will enable us to continue meeting border protection objectives, with a workforce that is trained and equipped to deal with a range of new and emerging threats. The CTU in Melbourne was the first to deploy armed officers on 31 December.

This armed capability expands the number of ACBPS officers whom are armed and have been armed for some years such as our marine unit, our investigators and our enforcement operations officers.

All officers issued with personal defence equipment including restraints have been certified in appropriate use of force training, which is aligned with AFP curriculum, and can be used only for defence from physical attack or to manage people who are physically non-compliant.

### **Creation of a new Investigations Division**

We have appointed Australian Federal Police (AFP) Assistant Commissioner Steve Lancaster to lead the new Investigations Division, within the Border Operations Group.

The Investigations Division will provide the Portfolio with a specialist investigation and enforcement capability that is deployed against individuals, organisations or networks that seek to harm the Australian community or economy through threats, crime and abuse of border law and systems.

The Division comprises of:

1. National Security Branch
2. Organised Crime Branch
3. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Branch
4. Specialist Support Branch

A major priority for me, working with Secretary Pezzullo, is the integration of border protection services within the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, and the establishment of the Australian Border Force as announced by the Government earlier this year in May.

We are already seeing the more integrated, effective and efficient border protection operations as we move away from the traditional divide between immigration and customs roles and functions.

### **Update on integrity matters**

When I last appeared before the Committee, I advised in relation to prosecution action against corrupt Customs and Border Protection Officers, that eight former officers had been arrested or charged.

At that time three former officers had been convicted. Now, a total of six of the eight former officers have been convicted.

Of the three more recent convictions:

- one officer was sentenced to 21 months' imprisonment with a non-parole period of 12 months
- one was sentenced to 14 months' imprisonment with a non-parole period of six months
- one was sentenced to a term of imprisonment for nine years with a non-parole period of six years.

Another officer remains suspended without pay pending his prosecution which is listed for trial in March 2015.

As the Secretary advised you, we are working with our staff to develop a comprehensive professional integrity framework for our new Department that will help protect both the organisation and our staff from corruption and infiltration by organised crime.

There will be no let-up in our approach to ensuring we have the systems, processes and policies in place to deter, detect and respond to corruption and serious misconduct.

We continue in the firm belief that the majority of officers across the Portfolio are passionate about the work they do to protect Australia through managing the movement of people and goods across our border, and are honest and hard-working in under-taking their duties.

### **Operational matters**

I'd also like to take this opportunity to highlight some operational work in drug detections undertaken by our officers.

A Customs and Border Protection investigation that began in 2013 has resulted in the sentencing of a Sydney man to over five years in jail for recruiting students and children to act as drug couriers. He had imported a number of precursor chemicals used in the manufacture of methamphetamines such as 'ice' into Australia from Hong Kong and China between 2012 and 2013.

On 29 November last year, six men (Australian residents) were charged by the Joint Organised Crime Group for their involvement in the attempted importation of almost three tonnes of MDMA and crystal methamphetamine into Sydney which was detected in a sea cargo container by customs officers.

The seizure was estimated to have a street value of up to \$1.5 billion and is the second largest seizure of illicit drugs in Australian history.

This financial year to 31 December, Customs Officers have made over 8,000 individual detections of major drugs for a combined weight of 5.2 tonnes, these half year results are already eclipsing the total annual numbers of any of the last five years of performance.

Thank you for the opportunity of making a statement.