

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### BUDGET ESTIMATES – 26 – 27 MAY 2014

#### IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

#### **(BE14/203) PROGRAMME – Australian Customs and Border Protection Service**

Senator Carr (Written) asked:

In an address to the 15th World Customs Organization Asia-Pacific Regional Heads of Customs Administrations Conference, Port Douglas, on 30 April 2014 Minister Morrison stated that ‘there is a need for additional, highly mobile maritime assets to patrol what is our nation's most porous maritime border’.

- a. What are the ‘additional, highly mobile maritime assets’ that will be used to patrol the 6km stretch between Australia and PNG?
- b. What type of vessel are they? How many personnel will be posted on these vessels?
- c. Where will they be based?
- d. What support vessels and/or resources need to accompany these vessels?
- e. Have these vessels already been deployed? Are they currently operating in the 6km stretch between Australia and PNG?
- f. If not, what is being done to combat transnational crime in that area currently? How long until the additional maritime assets will be deployed?
- g. Who will be in charge of these vessels? The Australian Navy or will this operation fall under the command of the Commissioner of the yet to be established Australian Border Force?
- h. What portable technologies will be provided to these additional, highly mobile maritime assets?
- i. How much will these portable technologies cost to supply and operate? Can you give a breakdown of these costs?

*Answer:*

a-d. The ‘additional, highly mobile maritime assets’ Minister Morrison referred to are part of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (ACBPS) reform package in the 2014-15 Budget. The ACBPS is refining the nature and extent of the capability requirements. Details including the type of vessel, number of personnel, their locations, support arrangements, and resource requirements are yet to be finalised.

e. No. Deployment of the assets is expected in 2014-15.

f. The ACBPS deploys a number of assets between Australia and Papua New Guinea, including:

- A number of officers are based on Thursday Island and undertake a range of border related activities in the Torres Strait.

- Locally engaged indigenous officers are also located on Saibai, Mabuiag, Darnley and Coconut Islands, undertaking clearance duties for traditional inhabitants under the Torres Strait Treaty.
- Three cross border patrols are undertaken each year with ACBPS, Australian Federal Police, Queensland Police, Papua New Guinea (PNG) Customs, PNG Constabulary and PNG Immigration. These patrols visit treaty villages based on risk assessments and agency requirements.

Border Protection Command-assigned assets are also deployed to the Torres Strait for patrol and response tasks. However, to preserve operational security, Border Protection Command does not disclose the disposition of its assets.

g. The vessels are being procured by ACBPS. Current ACBPS vessels are under the operational command of National Director Border Force Division on behalf of CEO ACBPS; it is anticipated that command of all ACBPS vessels will transfer to the equivalent officer in the new structure of the Australian Border Force when this is stood up on 1 July 2015. As with existing vessels, the assets will be tasked and controlled through Strategic Border Command and Border Protection Command processes.

h-i. Details including the technology requirements are yet to be finalised.