

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 102

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 17 February 2006:

- a) What exactly is the functionality of the national computer forensic capability (as indicated on page 37 of the annual report)?
- b) Could you indicate what sort of forensics are stored on the NCFC?
- c) What other agencies have access to the national computer forensic capability?
- d) What was the original budget designated to developing this capability?
- e) What was the cost of developing this capability?
- f) Is the capability now fully operational?
 - i) If not, to what extent is it operational and when is it expected to be operational?

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

- a) Customs Computer Forensics is integral to the investigation of Customs offences, providing for the collection and analysis of electronic evidence from a range of devices such as personal computers, business networks, mobile phones and other portable electronic storage devices. It involves the forensic imaging, analysis and reconstruction of electronic information for the purpose of identifying material with potential evidentiary value, in accordance with legislative requirements.
- b) Customs stores digital information acquired from the forensic imaging of suspect computer systems and peripherals. This includes but is not limited to electronic documents and photographs.
- c) Information held by the Customs computer forensics capability may be exchanged with other federal and state law enforcement agencies in accordance with s16 of the Customs Administration Act. This may include material related to narcotics, terrorism, child pornography, credit card and identity fraud.
- d) Existing staff were trained to meet the required computer forensic standards and in 2004-05, \$300,000 of capital funds was allocated to purchase the necessary equipment to support the new capability.
- e) As outlined in answer in (d).
- f) Customs computer forensics is fully operational within its current scope, i.e. to support Customs investigations activities.