

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 68

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 13 February 2007:

- a) With regards to facilitation of the legitimate movement of people across the border and the processing target that requires 95% of incoming air passengers to be processed within 30 minutes of arrival:
- i) Is this figure averaged out?
 - ii) Does Customs keep a record of how long people were waiting beyond the 30 minute limit?
 - iii) Can Customs please explain how the measurement against the 30-minute limit is calculated?
 - iv) Can Customs please provide the breakdown by airport?
- b) With regard to the review of passenger function at international airports assessing current service delivery, has Customs finished the review?
- i) If they have can ACS please provide a copy?
- c) What has Customs done with regards to the air border security officers as appearing on page 39 of the annual report?
- d) Do Customs conduct any similar searches in relation to passenger craft such as crew liners and so on? If not, why not?
- e) What was the reason (per page 42 of the 2005-06 annual report) for the 1.1% drop in the number of passengers assessed in 05/06?
- i) Did that drop occur across both air and sea arrivals?
- f) Is it correct to estimate then judging by the number of international passenger arrivals as per figure 6 page 33, that in fact the number of passengers assessed has fallen by 121,550?

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

- a)
- i) Yes.
 - ii) Customs records the flight arrival time and the time the passenger is processed by Customs. Customs is currently deriving a report on the distribution of wait times for passengers waiting over 30 minutes.
 - iii) The measurement against the 30 minute target is calculated as the time taken between aircraft landing and the time that the passenger is processed through the Customs primary line. An allowance for walk time to join the queue is made which varies from airport to airport.
 - iv) Processing times by airport are:

	SYD	MEL	BNE	PER	CNS	ADL	OOL	DRW
2005/06	94.97%	94.74%	92.87%	97.88%	96.57%	91.81%	99.01%	92.21%

b) The review, undertaken by Rehbein AOS, has been completed.

Due to the number of stakeholders at airports engaged in passenger movement, the Review necessarily makes comment about other Government agencies and private organisations. Customs is currently informing these stakeholders of this request.

c) Customs Air Border Security (ABS) teams comprise 162 ABS officers, providing Customs with 24/7 coverage at Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane airports and targeted 24/7 coverage at Adelaide, Cairns, Darwin and Perth.

As mentioned in the Customs Annual Report 2005-06, ABS officers have border control responsibilities and conduct daily airside operations, including aircraft search, baggage monitoring and containment exercises, intelligence collection, transit passenger and crew checks, airside and perimeter area patrols, and targeted border controls.

d) Operational activities similar to the ABS function within the marine environment with respect to passenger craft include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Risk assessment of all cargo and passenger vessels arriving into Australia;
- Boarding and searching of cargo and passenger vessels on a risk assessed basis;
- Targeted search of selected vessels with deployment of appropriate technologies as required (including detector dogs);
- Mobile patrols of the waterfront environment using highly visible officers and vehicles; and
- Conducting surveillance through a national waterfront closed-circuit television network.

e) The figures represented at page 42 of the 2005-06 Annual Report indicate a 1.1% drop in the number of passengers physically assessed at airports by enforcement staff. Customs adopts a layered approach to the risk-assessment of passengers, incorporating both physical and non-physical assessment methods, and including pre-arrival assessment and analysis, cold targeting in the baggage examination area and physical and baggage examination. Ninety-nine percent of passengers are risk assessed prior to arrival. Some of those, based on the risk assessment, will be targeted for further attention on arrival: this may include physical assessment. The 1.1% drop in physical assessments will have derived from a combination of (a) fewer passengers targeted through pre-arrival risk assessment and (b) fewer passengers presenting with risk indicators identified through cold targeting. There is no fixed target for physical passenger examination.

(i) No, the 1.1% change in the number of passengers physically assessed relates to in air arrivals only.

f) The difference in the number of air passengers physically assessed between 2004-05 and 2005-06 is estimated to be 98,112.