

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 31

Senator Abetz asked the following question at the hearing on 18 February 2008:

- a) Please explain why the mission to conduct the surveillance on whaling operations is still an operational matter?

- b) Please explain why the Committee cannot find out whether the photos taken during the mission to conduct the surveillance on whaling operations were actually taken in Australian waters.

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

- a) While the Customs patrol vessel *Ocean Viking* effectively finished its mission in direct relation to the surveillance of Japanese whaling activity on 15 February 2008, the overall surveillance task had not yet ended at the time of the hearing on 18 February 2008. As such, further surveillance activities may have been conducted. These surveillance activities are planned using information originating from a variety of sources. The success of these surveillance activities is, in part, dependant on not releasing operational details into the public domain.

- b) The mission to conduct surveillance of Japanese whaling activity covered areas both outside and inside Australian waters. The material gathered by *Oceanic Viking* and the A319 Airbus aircraft is being analysed.