

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION SERVICE

Question No. 91

Senator Barnett asked the following question at the hearing on 8 February 2010:

Regarding procedures and notifications after vessels are intercepted:

- a. How long after unauthorised vessels are intercepted does the Minister for Home Affairs report them? Provide figures for the last 12 months.
- b. What is the usual procedure after a vessel has been intercepted? When is the Minister informed and who reports the interception to the Minister?
- c. On 3 December 2009 the Minister for Home Affairs issued a Media release announcing the interception of an unauthorised vessel carrying 53 passengers and 4 crew. How long after the vessel was intercepted was it reported by the Minister for Home Affairs?
- d. Would there be any reason to hold off reporting an interception? What circumstances would call for this?

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

- a. The time taken to report the interception of unauthorised vessels depends on a range of circumstances including when notification occurs and when details are confirmed. Interceptions are usually reported within a 24 hour period.
- b. The Office of the Minister for Home Affairs is informed as soon as possible following confirmation that an unauthorised vessel is intercepted in Australia's waters. This information is usually relayed to the Minister's office by an officer of Border Protection Command.
- c. Suspected Irregular Entry Vessel (SIEV) 80 was reported by the Minister on the same day it was intercepted.
- d. There may be exceptional circumstances that delay the reporting of an interception, however this would be assessed on a case by case basis. For example, if there were concerns for the safety of any persons, either Australian or foreign, at sea or on land. The unavailability of confirmed information may also be a factor.