

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

Question No. 33

Senator Cash asked the following question at the hearing on 14 February 2012:

Senator CASH: Could I just confirm your evidence. You said, 'When you receive calls from people,' and I said to you, 'Do you mean people on the [SIEV] boat?' and you said, 'Yes,' but you said that you also meant people on land who had a sighting of them.

Ms Grant: Senator, could I just say not a sighting. Sometimes we have had phone calls from people in other locations—one as far away as London one time—who have rung in so then it has been relayed to us through another party.

Senator CASH: When you say, 'People from the boat,' do you mean the boats coming to Australia will actually call up and say, 'These are our coordinates'?

Ms Grant: We have had instances where people will ring to say, 'I am on a boat. We are in trouble. We are close. Help.'

Senator CASH: How often does that happen?

Ms Grant: I would have to take that on notice to give you a precise answer. It comes in a bit of a pattern and then abates and then we get a little bit of a pattern of it happening again.

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

Since January 2010, Customs and Border Protection is aware of 16 occasions on which people claiming to be aboard suspected irregular entry vessels have phoned Australian authorities indicating distress.