

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

Question No. 97

Senator Humphries asked the following question at the hearing on 12 February 2013:

In relation to staffing:

1. Please detail the circumstances for each reduction, were these voluntary redundancies, forced redundancies, etc?
2. What effect on the operational capacity of regional offices has this reduction of (43) employees had?
3. Are these reductions a consequence of federal government budget pressures?
4. What is the total number of staff reductions in regional offices to date?
5. How many staff are stationed in the following regional offices – Bowen, Broome, Bunbury, Cairns, Dampier, Gladstone, Geraldton, Launceston, Mackay, Newcastle, Port Hedland, Port Lincoln, Thursday Island and Townsville?
6. Have there been any expressions of concern or representations made regarding the reduction in staff in regional offices? Please detail from whom and on what date/s?

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

1. There were no forced redundancies. There were 11 positions vacant before the reductions occurred. In addition:
 - 18 officers returned to their home port (this included two (2) requests to go to other major centres for personal reasons);
 - 10 officers transferred to vacancies within other District Offices; and
 - Four (4) officers received voluntary redundancies.
2. District office staff continue to intervene on all high risk vessels in all ports, maintain inshore and onshore patrol activity and undertake information gathering. Sufficient resources have been maintained to conduct immediate response to any threats as they arise. In addition, Customs and Border Protection maintains a critical mass of trained officers in major centres who can be deployed at short notice to undertake major operations, activity within joint task forces and other activity such as responding to arrivals in remote areas.
3. Over the past four (4) years, Customs and Border Protection has been reviewing its business model and implementing an intelligence led, risk based approach. These staff adjustments were a result of reviewing our business model and assessing risks and workloads in various locations.
4. All 43 planned reductions were completed by January 2013.
5. The staffing levels are:
 - Bowen 2
 - Broome 6
 - Bunbury 2

Cairns 23
Dampier 19
Geraldton 2
Gladstone 6
Launceston 2
Mackay 6
Newcastle 8
Port Hedland 12
Port Lincoln 2
Thursday Island 8
Townsville 13

6. Customs and Border Protection consulted with staff and the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU). The consultation period was from 7 June until 2 July 2012 with a final decision announced on 12 July. Feedback was received from staff during this period. The CPSU corresponded with Customs and Border Protection on 13 June 2012, 13 July, 18 July and 23 August 2012.

After consultation with staff and the CPSU, the initial proposal was changed and included:

- an agreement to amend the Dampier reductions from six (6) to five (5);
- changes to the structures within Mackay and Gladstone in terms of composition of Customs Level 1 and Level 2 officers; and
- an increase in staffing in the Burnie office (Tasmania) from one (1) to two (2) officers.