

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 118

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2004:

Has Singapore now implemented a high-volume X-ray inspection at particular terminals?

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

Advice from Singapore Customs is that they have acquired and use two container X-ray systems, one relocatable and one mobile. They advise that both units have a through-put capacity of 20-30 containers per hour.

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
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Question No. 119

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2004:

There are different contractors at different ports that do cartage or the logistics transport. Can you provide the contractor at Brisbane Port?

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

Sea Cargo Logistics Pty Ltd is the contracted Customs transport provider for the Port of Brisbane.

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
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Question No. 120

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2004:

Referring to the \$190.3 million budgeted over four years – is that depreciation to zero over the four years or is it a depreciation of a fixed percentage over the four years? What is the residual that would be carried forward?

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

The \$190.3 million includes a budget of \$16.68 million for depreciation. The X-ray machines in question are depreciated over 7 years on a straight-line basis and are consequently depreciated at the rate of 14.29% per year. The capital budget provided for the purchase of the x-ray machines was \$29.2 million (\$24.8 million for container x-ray machines and \$4.4 million for pallet x-ray machines). The budget for depreciation for the machines is therefore \$4.17 million per year, or \$16.68 million over the four years. At the conclusion of these four years the residual value of the machines to be carried forward would be \$12.52 million.

Further funding was recently provided to increase the hours of use of X-ray machines and does not involve any additional X-ray equipment purchases. Customs does not anticipate that the increased hours of use will affect the useful life of the equipment.

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
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Question No. 121

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2004:

What are the outcomes, if any, that you are currently canvassing to resolve some of those outstanding issues with stevedoring companies?

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

Customs has had detailed discussions with the stevedoring companies about the possibility of additional free storage days for containers that are inspected by Customs. The stevedores have noted that: only a small percentage of containers inspected by Customs incur storage charges; a significant proportion of these containers are late reported; access to vehicle booking slots to collect cargo are available on most days; and it appears that importers or their brokers are not always prepared to collect their cargo out of normal business hours. The stevedores have indicated they operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and do not believe they should be providing additional free storage days in situations where importers or brokers make a decision to collect cargo to fit in with their own commercial arrangements.

The container terminal operators provide publicly available advice on the storage charges that are payable where cargo is not collected within the free storage period. This information was provided to the Committee in response to Question No. 76, which Senator Bishop asked at the Senate Estimates Hearing on 16 February 2004

Customs analysis of Container Examination Facilities (CEF) operations shows that 96 per cent of containers were inspected and returned to the wharf with free storage days remaining, with 81 per cent of containers examined at the CEFs being returned to the wharf with two or more days of the "free storage" period remaining. Only a small number of containers (4 per cent) were returned with no storage remaining. This number represents 0.2 per cent of the total loaded imports into Australia and overlaps to some extent with the proportion of containers that are the subject of late reporting.

On 20 July 2004, as part of its enhancements of maritime security, the government provided additional funding for the CEFs, including funding to extend the hours of operation to include one shift on Saturdays at all CEFs. These Saturday operations, along with Customs continuing to improve the efficiency of CEFs, will reduce the impact of storage charges on containers examined at the CEFs.

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Question No. 122

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2004

What statistics do you have on the incidence of discrepancy between crew lists and those people present?

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

Customs does not record these statistics. If irregularities or discrepancies are identified in the crew lists received in advance, Customs will reconcile these when it boards the vessel. The Master may report a deserter before Customs reaches the vessel. Figures for deserters are provided in the answer to Question on Notice 123.

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Question No. 123

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2004

Do you have what might be called absconder rates? How many people do not return to their ship?

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

DIMIA advises that 115 crew deserted their ship during the period 1 July 2001 to 30 April 2004. 38 per cent have since departed Australia, 41 per cent have visas to remain or await decisions on their visa applications and 21 per cent remain unlawfully in Australia.

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Question No. 124

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2004

What about the discrepancies in those having a passport – do all of them have passports? How many, on those 70 per cent vessels you have inspected, do not?

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

Customs has not been required to keep statistics on how many crew have not held a passport since DIMIA requirements for both a passport and another document identifying the holder as member of crew came into force on 1 November 2003. DIMIA introduced a transition period to 30 June 2004 to allow crew to obtain the correct documentation. DIMIA will maintain records on the numbers of crew without the requisite travel documents after 1 July 2004.

From 1 May 2004 Customs has notified DIMIA of every occurrence where a crewmember is not in possession of a passport or an identity document. DIMIA advises that there have been fewer than 60 reports of inadequately documented crew to 17 June 2004.

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Question No. 125

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2004:

- a) Is there a maximum load capacity for simultaneous users of the system? If so, what is it? What about response times?
- b) If the current number of users exceeds the limit, what happens? Does the system crash out or does their response time become very long and then they get frustrated and lose their data and get annoyed with you – those general issues?

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

- a) With regard to the maximum load capacity for simultaneous users of the system, there are two distinct parts of the system that need to be considered, online Customs Interactive (CI) and batch Electronic Data Interchange (EDI).

The online CI web site has been constructed to meet the following maximum load capacity requirements. Up to 27 simultaneous users are able to log on to the system every minute. Up to 41 business transactions can be processed per minute (2400/hr) and up to 2500 users can simultaneously be logged on to the system at any one time. The system will generate responses to CI transactions within 5 seconds up to and including the maximum load capacity.

The batch EDI part of the system does not require users to log on to the system in order to submit a transaction - an entry gateway authenticates each transaction on receipt. The number of transactions sent to the system, rather than the number of simultaneous users of the system determines the maximum load capacity for EDI. Up to 81 EDI Business transactions can be processed per minute (4800/hr). The system will generate responses to EDI transactions within 3 minutes up to and including the maximum load capacity.

- b) With regard to exceeding the maximum load capacity for simultaneous users of the system, there are two distinct parts of the system that need to be considered, Customs Interactive (CI) and Electronic Data interchange (EDI).

If the current number of users exceeds the limit for the online CI, users attempting to logon may be required to wait for longer than 5 seconds for a response. The CI system will not crash out or lose data, however response times may be longer than the 5 seconds if the maximum load capacity is exceeded. The EDI system will not crash out or lose data if the maximum load capacity is exceeded, however the system may take longer than 3 minutes to generate responses.

The maximum load capacity of the system has been developed based on historical information of transaction volumes in previous years. Additional capacity has been added to the new system to cater for additional business areas such as Cargo Terminal Operator transactions. The capacity allowed for in the new system will cater for high demand processing periods while maintaining its responsiveness.

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Question No. 126

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2004:

Provide an update of the costings of the CDs.

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

The cost of producing a CD for CMR purposes is approximately 80 cents.