

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 201

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 24 May 2005:

- a) What were the specific requirements of Queensland and Western Australia that precluded them from using the SCATHING database?
- b) Is Customs still using the SCATHING database?
If so, are all regions using it?
- c) What has been done to ensure that Queensland and WA are now able to use the SCATHING database for their specific needs?
- d) Is it now supported by Customs' IT service provider?
- e) Have any attempts been made to develop documentation for the database?
- f) Has the officer who developed it returned from sick leave yet?
If not...
 - What database are Customs using instead of SCATHING?
 - Was it developed in-house or externally?
 - Standard tender questions.
 - When was it implemented?
 - Please provide the costs of implementing the database, and a breakdown of those costs.
 - Was a cost-benefit analysis of implementing the new database done?
- g) Regarding the inconsistencies identified by the ANAO in how a positive find is recorded, what action has been taken to rectify the issues identified by the ANAO?
- h) How many uncompleted records are there on the EXAMS system?
- i) What are the current performance measures for the CEF?
- j) Have these been updated in light of the ANAO report? If not, are they being updated? If yes, when did the updated performance measures come into place?
- k) What is the status of the PIR-recommended review of the contracts associated with logistics services?
- l) Were its terms of reference altered in light of the ANAO report?

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

- a) There were functional limitations that precluded Queensland and Western Australia from using the SCATHING database in its current format. The database worked on a fixed daily target of 110 containers per day whereas Queensland and Western Australian requirements were for 60 and 50 containers per day respectively.
- b) Customs is still using the SCATHING Database in Victoria and New South Wales. Queensland and Western Australia are not using it for the reason outlined above in a) above.
- c) A replacement application that supports national consistency is being developed by the Australian Customs Service (Customs) Small Systems Development Unit. User requirements have been finalised and technical development of the application is progressing. Queensland and Western Australia's requirements have been reflected in this development, as has the ability to define parameters for managing regional differences. The cost of developing the replacement system is currently estimated at \$68,700, which is almost all in-house staff costs.

- d) The SCATHING database is not supported. The replacement application will be fully supported.
- e) Technical and user documentation will be provided to support the deployment of the new application. The deployment of the application overtakes any requirement to complete documentation for SCATHING.
- f) Yes. See also the answers at c) above.
- g) Business rules have been developed for the processing of these matters and briefing sessions on these new arrangements have been conducted at all Container Examination Facilities (CEFs).
- h) As at mid June 2005 there were 7,540 examinations still open.
- i) The following CEF specific measures have been adopted for Customs higher level reporting.
- number of containers inspected (x-rayed);
 - number of containers physically examined; and
 - number of complaints about CEF operations.
- j) The performance measures outlined in (i) above have been included in Customs Portfolio Budget Statements for 2005-06.
- k) In advance of the next round of contract negotiations, the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and service level standards within the existing CEF logistics contracts have been analysed and some of the KPIs have been revised. The stevedores have agreed to a revised KPI for the delivery of containers to the CEFs, which provides more transparency in measuring their performance and the possibility of containers incurring storage charges.
- l) Recommendation 8 in the ANAO's Report on CEF operations specifically addressed the CEF logistics contracts and Customs has progressed this matter through the implementation of this recommendation. Customs has engaged an external consultant to conduct a detailed review of the matters identified in this recommendation. The review of these matters will be finalised in July 2005.