

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 221

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

- a) Has the formal charter recommended in Recommendation 3 of the 2001 Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit Review of Coastwatch been promulgated? If yes, when was it, and please provide a copy?
 - i) If not...
Why not?
Is any work being doing on it?
- b) Regarding recommendation 13:
I note the answer 'Customs has investigated the feasibility of requiring the deployment of transponders on non-commercial aircraft'.
 - i) What was the outcome of that investigation?
 - ii) What action has Customs taken in relation to this issue subsequent to the end of the investigation?
 - iii) When did Customs complete this investigation?
 - iv) Please provide any reports, reviews, papers, etc. if available.
- c) What subsequent work has been done on this issue?

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

- a) While a formal charter has not been promulgated, the Government's expectations of Coastwatch are set out annually in the Attorney-General Portfolio Budget Statements. The information in this document is available publicly, and reviewed biannually to take account of changes in the threats in Australian maritime zones. Emergent initiatives in response to those threats, such as the formation of the Joint Offshore Protection Command, are thus able to be reflected.

This process has inherent accountability as Coastwatch's performance against each of the enunciated expectations is reported back to Government in the Annual Report of the Australian Customs Service.
- b)
 - i) As a result of its investigations, Customs has concluded that the fitting of transponders to non-commercial aircraft is not feasible at this time due to a deficiency in the capability and the lack of legislation, both domestically or internationally, which would mandate the fitting of the transponders to these aircraft. Until such time as this changes, Customs cannot progress the issue.
 - ii) Customs remains alert for developments in the legislative and international arena and will revisit this issue if it is perceived to be feasible in the future.
 - iii) Customs retains an ongoing interest.
 - iv) There are no reports available.
- c) This matter has not been progressed due to the current difficulties identified by Customs, which include the lack of suitable technology and current legislative requirements situation.