

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 222

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

- a) How is progress on the Business Continuity Plan developing?
- b) Is it the case that functionality equivalent to the Broker Initiated Contingency Report (BICR) through COMPILE will not exist in the ICS?
- c) What consultation is being done with Industry on developing the Business Continuity plan?
- d) If, the system goes down, how is it known that the back-up will work for industry?

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

- a) A draft Business Continuity Plan for exports was agreed prior to the release of the Integrated Cargo System last year, and was later refined in early 2005. The Business Continuity Plan for imports is at an advanced stage.
- b) The Integrated Cargo System does not provide equivalent functionality to what had been previously known as Broker Initiated Contingency Release (BICR). Under the ICS, users will have the option of using diagnostic screens on the Customs ICS Interactive Internet access to verify cargo status. After consultation with industry to address potential risk for border and revenue controls Customs removed BICR functionality from the current computer system (COMPILE) on 1 June 2005. In agreement with industry representatives, Customs implemented a revised user support service that provides brokers or other parties (such as depot operators) who might be experiencing delayed messages in their information technology systems with the ability to ask Customs directly for cargo status information.
- c) Consultation with industry has largely been undertaken through an industry working group originally brought together to develop the exports business continuity plan, and through a series of meetings with industry members. The group represents the Customs industry peak bodies in Australia including the Customs Brokers and Forwarders Council of Australia Inc (CBFCA), the Australian Federation of International Forwarders (AFIF), Air Cargo Terminal Operators (including QANTAS), Shipping Australia Limited and Australia's two major stevedoring companies (Patrick and P&O Ports). Copies of the development drafts of the Business Continuity Plan have also been widely circulated outside of the working group to other industry groups for comment, most notably the software developer's group forum which represents the companies undertaking systems development for the relevant industry groups, the Australian Ship Owners Association and smaller stevedoring companies. Feedback from these groups has played a major role in the refinement of the plan.
- d) In June 2005 Customs and industry commenced a series of Business Readiness Simulation (BRS) Tests for the imports part of the ICS. It is proposed to undertake a Business Continuity simulation exercise once the BRS tests have been completed. The plan will be reviewed if any significant issues are identified as a result of the tests. The exports Business Continuity Plan has been required to be invoked on a small number of occasions following the launch of exports in October 2004. The exports plan has provided successful continuity arrangements to date, and minor issues subsequently identified were reviewed and adjusted in consultation with industry.