

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE  
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

**Question No. 97**

**Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2006:**

- a) Has Customs purchased and taken control of any additional vessels so far in 2006?
- b) For the vessels Customs has purchased and taken control of this year, could you indicate:
  - (i) The purchase price of the vessel
  - (ii) Any additional costs to make the vessel operational
  - (iii) The class of the vessel
  - (iv) Where the vessel is stationed
  - (v) The date on which Customs took control of the vessel
  - (vi) The duties for which the vessel was purchased.
- c) Please supply an updated list of all vessels held in Customs command, or operated conjointly by Customs, specifying:
  - (i) vessel type,
  - (ii) length,
  - (iii) number of engines and capacity,
  - (iv) top speed,
  - (v) crew,
  - (vi) armament (if any),
  - (vii) whether it is leased or owned by Customs, or chartered with crew,
  - (viii) length of service,
  - (ix) how long the vessel has spent in maintenance over the last financial year,
  - (x) how many days the vessel has spent in operational service over the last financial year.

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

- a) Yes, one. Three further similar vessels are under construction.
- b) In respect of the above vessel the following information is provided:
  - (i) \$279,930.00
  - (ii) N/A
  - (iii) 2C
  - (iv) Williamstown, Victoria
  - (v) The date on which Customs took control of the vessel - March 2006
  - (vi) The Millman is a Customs response vessel designed to conduct response activity within Melbourne port areas and coastal waters.
- c) Please note that the following refers to all vessels held in Customs command or operated conjointly but does not include Australian Defence Force assets.

**Oceanic Viking**

The Oceanic Viking is a Customs/Fisheries vessel that predominately operates in the Southern Ocean. The vessel is 105metres in length; has two 2960 kilowatt engines; is capable of a crew configuration of up to 75 people. The top speed of the vessel is undisclosed for operational reasons. The vessel is armed with two 0.50 calibre (12.7mm) machine guns. The vessel is leased from P&O Maritime Services including P&O crew and steaming party (if required).

An initial two year contract was signed on 17 November 2004 and renegotiated in September 2005 to extend the lease until 30 June 2010.

### **Bay Class Vessels (ACVs)**

An ACV is a long range patrol vessel designed to operate within the Australian continental Exclusive Economic Zone. Planning is based on each vessel being operationally ready 300 days per year. An operational day is a day when the vessel is adequately crewed and mechanically ready to conduct a patrol or a response activity. This includes all activity such as patrols, transiting to the next area of operation, towing apprehended vessels or being in position alongside a port awaiting direction to respond. The other 65 days are planned for essential scheduled maintenance activity as well as any unplanned maintenance that is required. Individual ACVs can and do exceed the 300 days if the vessel does not encounter breakdowns etc.

Customs operates eight 34.95metre ACVs. Each ACV has two 1050 kilowatt engines; top speed of 22 knots; and accommodates 10 crew. Each ACV is armed with two 7.62mm FN Herstal MAG 58 general support machine guns. The ACVs are owned by Customs and have been in service for between 6 – 7.5 years. The ACVs delivered 2372 operational days service during the last financial year and underwent maintenance on 548 days for the same period.

### **Rapid Response Vessels (RRVs) and Tactical Response Vessels (TRVs)**

RRVs and TRVs are small open vessels that are designed to be used within 15 nautical miles of a designated port. They cannot operate outside this restriction. They are primarily used to transport officers between coastal islands to board yachts anchored in harbours or to visit marinas and other vessels at anchor. They can be used in a limited tactical operation close to a port or safe anchorage however they are not designed for vessel apprehension and do not carry a boarding party in normal circumstances. They have no overnight accommodation capacity.

Customs owns and operates seven 5.8 metre Cairns Customs Class 6000 RRVs. Each RRV has two 60 hp engines; top speed of 35 knots; operates with two crew and can carry 3-4 additional passengers. The RRVs are not armed. The RRVs are approximately eight years old. In the previous financial year the RRVs underwent maintenance on 276 days, but were otherwise available for operational activity.

Customs owns and operates twelve 5.5 metre Gemini Rigid hull inflatable TRVs. Each of these TRVs has two 50 hp engines; top speed of 35 knots; operates with two crew and can carry up to 4 additional passengers. These TRVs are not armed. These TRVs range in age from 4 – 7.5 years old. In the previous financial year these TRVs underwent maintenance on 127 days, but were otherwise available for operational activity.

Customs owns and operates one 6.1 metre Scorpion TRV. This TRV has two 75 hp engines; top speed of 30 knots; operates with two crew and can carry 3-4 additional passengers. This TRV is not armed. This TRV is approximately 2.5 years old. In the previous financial year this TRV underwent maintenance on 4 days, and was otherwise available for operational activity.

Customs owns and operates one 8 metre Millman TRV (see answer to (b) above). This TRV has two 175 hp engines; top speed of 50 knots; operates with two crew and can carry up to six additional passengers. This TRV is not armed. This TRV was delivered in March 2006.

During the financial year there were no maintenance days required however the vessel was involved in sea trials for five days.