

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 141

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

Do Customs perform any risk assessment on:

- a) Imported loaded containers?
- b) Imported unloaded containers?
- c) If so can the Department please provide details?

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

- a) Yes. Customs applies a wide range of assessment techniques to all imported cargo.
- b) Yes. Customs applies a wide range of assessment techniques to all imported cargo
- c) Customs uses a combination of risk indicators and system profiles to assess whether cargo requires further consideration. It could prejudice Customs ability to undertake its border protection role if details were to be provided publicly.

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 142

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

Do Customs employ any method of screening or inspection of unloaded containers? If so can the Department please provide details?

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

Containers are imported or exported as either loaded or empty. Both kinds are fully risk assessed by Customs (see answer to Question No. 141).

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 143

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

Can the Department detail which illicit drugs had lower detection rates in 2003 than 2002 by:

a) number of detections; b) by mass of drug detected; c) by estimated street value of drug detected.

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

a)

Number of detections	2002	2003
Amphetamine Type Stimulants	263	142
Cannabis	805	661
Cocaine	136	833
Heroin	75	92
MDMA (Ecstasy)	325	303

In 2003 there were fewer detections of amphetamine type stimulants, cannabis and MDMA. However, as the following table shows, the amount detected increased significantly for all three categories of drug:

b)

Weight (kg)	2002	2003
Amphetamine Type Stimulants	18.3	237.3
Cannabis	20.2	64.3
Cocaine	19.9	116.1
Heroin	426.9	346.0
MDMA (Ecstasy)	172.6	868.4

The amount of heroin detected at the border fell in 2003, but there was an increase in the number of detections.

c) Any calculation of the "street value" of border detections of illicit drugs over time is problematic due to the large number and broad range of factors that influence the value of an individual transaction – including the degree of adulteration of the commodity between import and retail, the relationship between individual buyers and sellers along the supply chain, and the area where the transaction takes place. In addition, a number of transactions involve the provision of services or other non-cash payments for illicit drugs. The following table provides a very broad idea of possible "street values" based on figures from the *Illicit Drug Data Report 2002-2003* produced by the Australian Crime Commission:

"Street Value" (A\$ million)	2002	2003
Amphetamine Type Stimulants	21.3	275.3
Cannabis	n/a	n/a
Cocaine	9.1	52.9
Heroin	198.3	160.8
MDMA (Ecstasy)	35.7	179.7

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 144

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

- a) Can you specify in percentage terms those commercial vessels that are boarded but not at the first port?
- b) Of those commercial vessels that are boarded at the first or subsequent port can you advise in each case whether a passport to face check is done?
- c) Can you inform the committee if the above check is done and reveals a discrepancy what action is taken?
- d) Can you advise in the last year how many times these checks revealed passport discrepancies or other document problems in the last year?

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

- a) During 2003-04, 49.7 per cent of all vessels that arrived in Australia were boarded other than at their first port.
- b) No. In 2003/4 it was normal practice to conduct a check in cases where crew members had not previously had their bonafides confirmed or where specific Intelligence warranted such a check be undertaken.
- c) If any discrepancies are detected during the immigration clearance of crew, the crew member is restricted on board the vessel, officers from the Department of Immigration Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs are notified and then assume responsibility for appropriate detention or deportation action.
- d) There have been no passport discrepancies identified involving sea crew during the past year.

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 145

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

Could you detail all the locations of the current container examination facilities? Are all the container examination facilities operational?

a) If not, which ones are and which ones are not operational?

b) If not, when will they become operational?

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

Customs Container Examination Facilities are located at:

- Melbourne, Victoria;
- Sydney, New South Wales;
- Brisbane, Queensland;
- Fremantle, Western Australia; and
- Adelaide, South Australia.

(a) All facilities are operational except Adelaide, which is still being constructed.

(b) It is expected that Adelaide facility will be operational in early March 2005.

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 146

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

Can you detail whether each of these container examination facilities has one shift, two shifts or three shifts in operation?

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

- Melbourne works two shifts Monday to Friday and one shift on Saturday.
- Sydney works two shifts Monday to Friday and one shift on Saturday.
- Brisbane works one shift Monday to Saturday. Brisbane will be commencing two shifts Monday to Friday and one shift on Saturday in April 2005.
- Fremantle works two shifts Monday to Friday and one shift on Saturday

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 147

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

Can you advise whether they operate on a Monday to Friday or Monday to Saturday or Monday to Sunday shift?

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

- Melbourne works: 0600 - 2230 Monday - Thursday
0600 - 2130 Friday
0600 - 1430 Saturday
- Sydney works: 0600 - 2130 Monday - Friday
0600 - 1430 Saturday
- Brisbane works: 0700 - 1730 Monday - Friday
0600 - 1430 Saturday
- Fremantle works: 0600 - 2200 Monday - Friday
0600 - 1400 Saturday

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 148

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

Can you advise of the number of containers, which are processed per day and per shift for each facility in the last 12 months?

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

The following table summarises the number of containers x-rayed each day at the container examination facilities for the period 1 December 2003 to 30 November 2004. Customs does not maintain records that provide a breakdown of throughput by shift.

It should be noted that the:

- Fremantle facility commenced operations in November 2003 and was in ramp-up mode for 13 weeks; and
- facilities commenced working one shift on Saturdays from July/August 2004.

Location	Number of Containers X-rayed	Daily Average
Melbourne	24,384	90.3
Sydney	23,681	87.7
Brisbane	15,090	55.9
Fremantle	10,861	40.2

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 149

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

In respect of each container that is x-rayed can you advise whether each container is selected as part of a risk assessment process or by a random process that is not part of the risk assessment process?

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

All imported cargo is risk assessed against profiles. Detail about the risk assessment process is provided in the answer to Question on Notice No. 141.

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 150

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

Are any containers x-rayed in order to make up a target number of containers outside the usual risk assessment process?

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

All imported cargo is risk assessed against profiles. Decisions may be taken by local intelligence staff to target other containers for a range of reasons. Detail about the risk assessment process is provided in the answer to Question on Notice No. 141.

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 151

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

Can you advise of how many empty containers are shipped to Australia in the last 12 months or transhipped through our Ports?

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

There were 245,293 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units) or approximately 183,970 containers imported empty from July 2003 to June 2004. Customs is unable to advise the number of empty containers transhipped through Australian ports during this period.

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 152

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

Are empty containers x-rayed? If so, what is the number and percentage of the whole number of empty containers?

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

Customs response to 2004 Budget Estimates Question on Notice No 135(g) indicated that:

From November 2002 to early June 2004, at least 160 empty containers had been inspected at Customs container examination facilities.

Inspections of empty containers may also be undertaken by other Customs staff as part of their responsibilities on the waterfront. Customs does not maintain records on the number of such containers inspected.

As indicated in the answer to Question on Notice No 141, empty containers are reported to Customs and electronically profiled. The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) examine all containers externally as they leave the port. Empty containers are inspected and cleaned at container parks under an arrangement with AQIS. Post arrival audits are also conducted by AQIS to account for all empty containers. Customs has arrangements in place with AQIS and industry members to ensure that any instances of breaches involving empty containers are reported promptly. Reports of minor breaches show these arrangements to be effective.

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 153

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

Has any contraband been found in empty containers in the last 12 months? If so, can you detail the find?

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

On 3 June 2004, 640 kilograms of cannabis were found in an empty container in Fremantle. An employee of a container repair facility had reason to believe the container might have contained a false floor. Customs was notified and the container was transported to the Fremantle Container Examination Facility. X-ray images of the container revealed anomalies in the floor, consistent with a concealed substance. The container was then physically examined and approximately three bags of cannabis leaf were found hidden beneath the flooring.

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 154

Senator Ludwig asked the following question on 2 December 2004:

In respect of the CEF the annual report found that 96% of the containers selected for examination are inspected and returned to the wharf with free storage of those remaining, with “81% of containers having 2 or more days of free storage remaining”? Can these figures be provided in number format and can they be updated to November 30?

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

The stevedores administer and maintain storage information and figures in their computer systems. Customs does not have direct access to this information. In March 2004, as part of a post implementation review of the CEFs, the stevedores provided Customs with details of the percentage of containers returned with free storage remaining, and the percentage returned with 2 or more days free storage remaining. The details were not provided in number format.

Customs has recently advised the stevedores that as part of their contractual reporting requirements, they will need to provide periodic information on the number of containers provided to the container examination facilities with less than 24 hours free storage remaining and the incidence of targeted containers incurring storage charges. The stevedores are finalising computer reports to meet Customs requirements, and it is anticipated that Customs will receive this information regularly from early 2005.