

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE  
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

**Question No. 218**

**Senator Webber asked the following question at the hearing on 31 October 2005:**

- a) If the States/Territory were to commit resources to assist the Commonwealth in foreign fishing vessel compliance, will the Commonwealth provide normal Commonwealth support in the prosecution and repatriation of any foreign fishing vessel crews apprehended by State/Territory officers, whether apprehended in Commonwealth or State waters?
- b) To what degree has Customs cooperated with the States/Territory in relation to the resources that the States/Territory may be able to provide to assist in the provision of coastal surveillance?

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

- a) This should be directed to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority for a response.

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs advises in relation to repatriation.

- b) During recent foreign fishing vessel incursions, the Western Australian Police vessel *Walcott* and the Queensland Boating and Fisheries vessel *Wilson*, have apprehended foreign fishing vessels. Customs National Marine Unit provided officers to assist the *Wilson* to conduct some of these apprehensions. On occasions, the Australian Customs Vessels have taken possession of the foreign fishing vessels from the *Wilson* after the initial apprehension.

Customs officers in Broome and Thursday Island have assumed responsibility for on-shore processing of illegal foreign fishers brought to port by state police/fisheries vessels.

Customs and Western Australian Fisheries have cooperated to detain large fishing crews poaching Trochus in Broome who were subject to state fisheries offences.

Customs and State/Territory Health Services are negotiating to improve health screening of illegal foreign fishers brought to port.