

From the CEO



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This issue of *Manifest* contains articles that reflect the very wide range of Customs duties and responsibilities around Australia and overseas.

One of Customs most important functions is border protection and the Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, recently officially opened Australia's new Coastwatch National Surveillance Centre located in Customs in Canberra.

As the Prime Minister noted in his opening address, no coastal surveillance system will ever be foolproof, particularly on a continent as vast as ours. However, Australia's new Coastwatch National Surveillance Centre, and other recent improvements, represent a sound investment in Australia's capacity to detect and deter illegal immigration, drug smugglers and illegal foreign fishing.

Collection by Government agencies, including Customs, of the new Goods and Services Tax (GST) begins on 1 July 2000, and this issue contains details on the GST Tourist Refund Scheme. A scheme to provide for the deferral of GST on certain imported goods also begins on 1 July. Details of the GST Deferral Scheme are outlined in this issue.

Customs is constantly seeking ways to 're-engineer' both its management systems and its computer operating systems so as to better serve Australia over the longer term. This issue of *Manifest* outlines the latest Customs progress towards implementing 'Cargo Management Re-engineering' and it reports on a recent review of Customs performance by Customs and the Department of Finance and Administration.

This issue also contains several articles that recount how 'high-tech' equipment is assisting Customs to detect and deter criminals who try to import illicit drugs. On the other hand, an article *Diversion of Underbond Cigarettes* provides an account of how some good 'old-fashioned' sleuthing enabled Customs auditors to lay the groundwork for another successful prosecution for tax evasion – this time in Melbourne.

The Sydney Olympic and Paralympic Games are now only weeks away—and a story from our Sydney office tells of a successful and timely interception, by Customs Sydney staff, of some counterfeit imported 'Olympic Games' items.

An article from Her Majesty's Customs & Excise in the UK underscores how important international cooperation among the various Customs services can be. HM Customs & Excise recently relied on some information from Australian Customs to uncover yet another of the ploys that international criminals may use to try to conceal illicit drug imports.

Concerning international cooperation, I was also very pleased to learn that the Australian Customs Service had been selected by several major US Government agencies to supply them with Australian 'detector dog' breeding stock and technology—now widely recognised as 'world class'.

Finally, I was delighted to read that Customs new *Bay Class* patrol boats have been ranked by the influential *Work Boat World* magazine as being 'the most impressive commercially available patrol boat seen for quite some time'.