

# Customs new Minister—an old hand

Senator Chris Ellison, sworn in as Minister for Justice and Customs on 29 January 2001, and has hit the deck running with a busy round of customs meetings and commitments.

The Minister was recently in Darwin to commission the final vessel in Customs new \$58 million marine fleet, the *ACV Arnhem Bay*, on 21 March 2001.

At the commissioning Senator Ellison said the vessel had been so hard at work that it had taken almost eight months to find a date to officially welcome her into the fleet of eight that patrol Australia's maritime borders.

"The *Arnhem Bay* has certainly come through the 'road test' with flying colours. Just before she was built last year, Customs pencilled-in a commissioning ceremony date but when August arrived there was too much work on, and the new vessel was immediately allocated patrol tasks off north-west Australia," Senator Ellison said.

He said the new locally designed and built fleet contained state-of-the-art communications, navigation



Minister Ellison was in Darwin in March to commission the final vessel in the \$58m upgrade of the Customs Marine Unit. The *ACV Arnhem Bay* was commissioned in a ceremony witnessed by representatives of many client agencies of the unit. He is pictured (above) with Commanding Officer Colin McMaster and (right) inspecting the bridge with Scott Pisel.

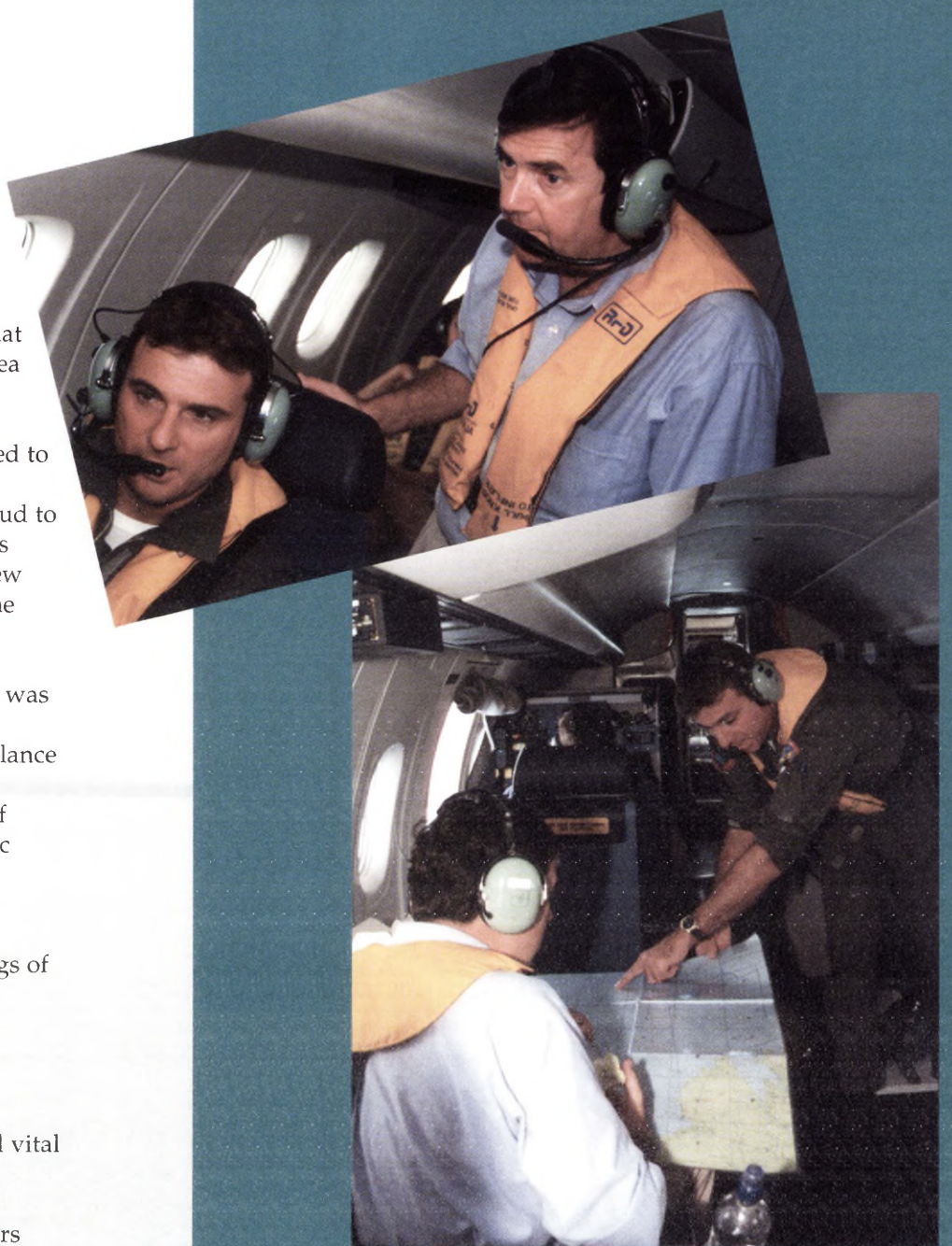


and mechanical equipment that enables vessels to remain at sea up to 28 days at a time.

"The Government is committed to maintaining a strong coastal surveillance network. I'm proud to say that one of the keys to this defence is the fleet of eight new bay class vessels, including the *Arnhem Bay*."

While in Darwin the Minister was also invited to take part in a programmed strategic surveillance flight taking in Bathurst and Melville Islands to the edge of Australia's exclusive economic zone. During the flight the Minister saw first hand Coastwatch's technique in arranging response to sightings of foreign fishing vessels in Australian waters.

Senator Ellison said he was delighted to once again be overseeing such a diverse and vital portfolio. He previously held responsibility as Minister for Customs and Consumer Affairs between July and October 1997.



The Minister was invited to participate in a programmed Coastwatch strategic surveillance flight where he viewed operations on board a Dash-8 flight. The flight, north of Darwin to the boundary of the Australian Exclusive Economic Zone in the vicinity of Evans Shoal, located a number of Indonesian vessels which were reported to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority. He is pictured (above) with Mission Co-ordinator Mike Pivac, who explained the operations of Forward Looking Infrared Radar, and other duties carried out by surveillance crews.