

Integrity

a winner for Customs

The World Customs Organization (WCO) has publicly recognised Australian Customs work and focus on integrity.

On 25 January 2002, WCO celebrated International Customs Day. The occasion marked the start of the organisation's 50th anniversary celebrations in 2002. In recognition of the efforts made by members in the area of integrity, the WCO designated the day as Customs Integrity Day.

At a ceremony in Brussels on Customs Integrity Day, Australian

highlighted the WCO's achievements over the past 50 years and the work of its members within the area of integrity.

Mr Danet said the Customs family took great pride in the professional conscience and qualities of all its members, both women and men.

"You are a symbol of the values of these men and women in their daily work," he said. "Customs officers from throughout the world make a significant contribution to the implementation of inter-governmental political decisions and the protection of society. Through you, Clay, I would like to pay tribute to these men and women on behalf of the WCO and its members."

In accepting the award, Mr Kerswell acknowledged the contribution by many others, both from within Australian Customs and from the member administrations of the Asia-Pacific region. He particularly noted the contribution the Asia-Pacific region made through the development of the *Integrity Self-Assessment Guide*.

Mr Kerswell encouraged all Customs administrations to maintain their efforts and commitment to integrity-improvement strategies and to make them an integral element of their customs reform and modernisation agendas.

Mr Kerswell's nomination for the award, endorsed by the Chief Executive Officer of Australian Customs, Lionel Woodward, stated that he had made a significant contribution to the progress of integrity issues at both an organisational



WCO Secretary-General Michael Danet (right) presents Clay Kerswell with a WCO award for integrity.

Customs nominee Clay Kerswell was presented with the WCO award for having made a particular contribution to strengthening integrity and fighting corruption.

Mr Kerswell received the award from Secretary-General Michel Danet, who

and regional level. He had displayed leadership, hard work and perseverance and, in doing so, had provided the blueprint for many of the integrity initiatives established or being developed in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

The work done by Mr Kerswell is now being reflected in multilateral and regional forums. He contributed and, when appropriate, led the implementation of integrity strategies and programs in the Asia-Pacific region. He was instrumental in raising the profile of, and the importance placed on, integrity by many Customs administrations. Mr Kerswell's leadership, hard work and perseverance made a real and lasting impact on the development of integrity within the Asia-Pacific region.

Customs in Australia is undertaking an integrity self-assessment process based on a model developed by the WCO. The WCO has placed a high priority in developing integrity standards among its members and has developed a mechanism to monitor national integrity approaches via a system of self-assessment, sharing of best practice and, eventually, a process of peer review.

Australian Customs has been active in the promotion of integrity initiatives internationally, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, providing resources to assist other countries. These efforts have raised the profile of, and the importance placed on, integrity by members of the WCO, the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) and the APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP). Some major achievements are:

- development and subsequent updating of the WCO *Self Assessment Guide*;
- elevating integrity to the APEC SCCP Collective Action Plan;
- co-chairing three regional Integrity Facilitator Workshops (Brisbane - July 99 and April 01, and Chinese Taipei - July 2001);



Australian Customs Internal Affairs Unit staff received certificates from the WCO for its contribution to the enhancement of integrity standards. They are (from left) Peter Wilton, Geoff Lanham, Geoff Schneider, Jacqueline Walton, Derek Wilson, Bill Jowett, Ray Filby, Barry Shrouder (rear) and John Snook.

- drafting the integrity work plans for the OCO and the APEC SCCP;
- redesigning and updating the training material and format of the WCO workshop;
- assisting Tongan Customs with self-assessment and drafting of its subsequent integrity action plan (June 2001); and
- drafting a paper called *Developing a Consistent Approach in Regional Integrity Activities by Customs Administrations*. The paper proposes how the regional forums can develop a consistent approach to their integrity initiatives, and is awaiting endorsement.

Certificates

In light of the importance placed on integrity, and as a part of its 50th anniversary celebrations, the WCO also issued certificates to Customs officials who had made a contribution to the enhancement of integrity standards during their professional life. Australian Customs nominated the staff of its Internal Affairs Unit.

The Unit investigates allegations of serious misconduct and suspected criminality against Customs employees.

It maintains a framework of systems and procedures that removes opportunities for corruption and where staff are more willing to come forward in confidence to report their concerns.

Internal Affairs staff are drawn from within the ranks of the organisation and must possess the investigative skills and competencies, corporate knowledge, common sense and attitudes that are necessary to effectively carry out this type of function. Feedback from both within and outside the organisation would suggest that the current Internal Affairs staff possess these skills and attitudes.

The certificates were awarded in recognition of all the staff within Internal Affairs who, in their daily activities, strive to uphold the image of Australian Customs through successful deterrence, prevention and educational activities.