



CUSTOMS

launches new awareness campaign

Customs has launched a campaign to inform the community, trading industry and other key stakeholders of the crucial role it plays in protecting Australia's borders.

The public awareness campaign is a major communication initiative for the organisation and has been developed in response to questions about the organisation's role, abilities and activities.

Customs has traditionally had a high profile as a key border agency. However, the current international security environment has heightened the focus Customs finds itself under.

Increasingly, the community wants to know how Customs is doing its job of managing the security and integrity of the Australian border while allowing legitimate people and cargo to move in and out of the country. With this aim in mind, the new campaign focuses on the border protection activities carried out by Customs and the resources and

technology officers use to carry out these important tasks.

The first stage of the campaign was launched by the Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator Chris Ellison, at the opening of the new Broome Customs House in the remote north-west of Australia in May. The location was fitting as Customs carries out extensive border protection activities in such regions but these activities do not generally have a high profile in other areas.

As part of the public information campaign, Customs is bringing a renewed focus to its successful community participation programs. These programs have been rebranded and relaunched, encouraging further community and industry support for the work of Customs.

New video programs portray the important work carried out by Customs officers around the country in a diverse range of environments and demonstrate how the community can assist in the border protection task.

While Customs primary function is not that of a security agency, it is one of several federal and state agencies with a role in countering terrorism and this is a focus of the information campaign.

The campaign also tells people how Customs is acting to meet its vision of being a world-leader in customs administration, delivering high-quality service to the community, industry and commerce.

It features information on the tools used by Customs to risk-assess the large volume of people and goods that cross Australia's borders daily, and how the organisation has responded to the heightened world security situation.

It also highlights resources used by Customs to patrol Australia's borders to deter and detect attempts to conduct illegal activity.

Resources profiled include Customs Coastwatch, which provides Australia's civil maritime surveillance and response capability, and vessels of the Customs National Marine Unit, which maintain a strategic presence around the coastline.

The new campaign also highlights Customs extensive use of existing and emerging technologies, including:

- detector dogs
- closed circuit television surveillance of key ports
- radio and high speed satellite communication links
- container examination and x-ray facilities
- radiological detection devices
- next generation radar
- trace particle detectors.

Customs highly trained and professional officers remain the most important link in the agency's ability to protect Australia's borders, but the organisation recognises the community can also play a valuable role.

The Customs Hotline is a regional awareness program that encourages communities and travellers in remote areas to report suspicious border activities to a national free-call hotline.

Senator Ellison said communities in remote and regional areas of Australia played a vital role in keeping an eye out



for suspicious border activities. The Hotline allows them to pass on information which could help Customs foil attempts to conduct illegal activities across our border," he said.

Calls to the Customs Hotline - 1800 06 1800 - are free and callers can remain anonymous if they wish. The Hotline operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

It will be the subject of an extensive targeted advertising and promotional campaign in regional areas during 2003-04.

Customs will continue to supplement the Hotline with the Frontline program, a cooperative program with industry groups involved in international trade and transport.

Companies in these fields are given training in how to use their commercial expertise to identify suspicious behaviour. Frontline members also have the opportunity to review their security arrangements and minimise the opportunity for their business to become an unwitting participant in any illegal trade.

This multi-faceted awareness campaign delivers a strong message to key stakeholders: Customs continually reviews its procedures and methods, and develops new systems and technologies, to meet the challenges of the modern border protection environment.

Australian Customs is setting new benchmarks for other Customs and border administrations throughout the world.

For more information on this awareness campaign, Customs Hotline or Frontline, go to www.customs.gov.au and select 'protecting Australia' from the navigation bar.