

Nothing to sniff at: WA detector dogs mark 25 years

By Ric Cole

The Detector Dog Unit has scratched up 25 years of service in Western Australia, 51 dogs and 22 handlers sniffing out illegal narcotics since 1979.

It has been years of hard work and perseverance to achieve the level of success Customs dogs enjoy today.

It started with two dogs recruited from animal shelters. Western Australia now has six operational dogs that form a vital part of Customs border management strategy.

Every dog and handler, past and present, was invited to celebrate the milestone.

The day began with four detector dog demonstrations, a step back in time for many of the ex-handlers present. Anthony Karpanos and Detector Dog Taipan searched a row of parcels to simulate the work environment of the first 'active' dogs.



Customs dog handler Damon Boorman (far right) conducts a demonstration at the event

Anthony Marks put firearms and explosives detector dog Omega through his paces on Anthony Karpanos's four-wheel-drive, sniffing out and sitting next to a concealment of explosive material, much to the delight of the crowd.

The next two demonstrations came from Damon Boorman and detector dog Venom showing multi-purpose response training.

Regional Director Western Australia, Paul O'Connor, presented all past and present handlers with a commemorative mug while Australia's longest-serving dog handler, Rod Scantlebury, who joined the unit in 1980, received a service award from Robert Webb of the Detector Dog Training Centre.

The celebrations concluded with a tour for family and friends of Customs purpose-built kennels - some of Australia's most modern facilities - and photographic displays of drug hits made by past detector dogs.

Tough Australian anti-bribery regime

If your company sends employees overseas, you need to be aware of Australia's high standards for integrity in international business transactions. Supporting these standards are tough laws which make it a crime for Australians to attempt to bribe foreign public officials. Penalties can include hefty fines and imprisonment.

Australia is not alone in enacting laws in this area. There has been a big international push in recent years to eliminate corruption in the public and private sectors. This drive led to the development of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions, which went into force in 1999.

Thirty five countries, including Australia, have signed up to the Convention. The OECD Convention provides a broad definition of bribery, and requires signatories to impose criminal sanctions and provide mutual legal assistance. In response to signing up to the Convention, Australia amended the Criminal

Code Act 1995 to provide a penalty of 10 years imprisonment (or severe financial penalty) for those found guilty of providing or causing to be provided a benefit to a public official in another country in order to obtain or retain business or a business advantage.

For Australians, it means that you can be prosecuted, convicted and imprisoned in Australia for bribing a foreign public official, even if you do it in another country.

The Australian business community should be proud of its international reputation for playing by the rules and yet still punching above its weight in global trade. It is important to remember, however, that this culture of high integrity is not optional, but is mandated by the full force of Australia's laws.

For more information on this issue, you can visit a new foreign bribery website set up by the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department at: <http://www.ag.gov.au/foreignbribery>