

Container exam facility opens in Darwin

Customs has opened a new specialised container examination building in Darwin.

The new building enables Customs officers to examine high-risk cargo in a safe and secure environment.

Customs Regional Director for the Northern Territory, John Marks, said the building would help to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Customs inspections of sea containers being imported into Darwin.

Customs has leased the building, located in the Port of Darwin, for three years with an additional three-year option.

"Customs risk assesses all goods before they arrive in Australia. Any goods assessed as posing a significant risk are examined.

"Customs officers in Darwin will now be able to inspect approximately 120 sea cargo containers (or about 150 '20 foot equivalent units' or TEUs) each year.

"Previously, all examinations were carried out either on the wharves or at cargo depots, under less than ideal conditions.

"The new building will ensure a higher level of security and also protect the goods and Customs officers from the elements," he said.

The building houses a range of technologies to assist in container examinations, including:

- Smith-Heimann fixed cabinet x-ray unit - this provides colour images of items, aiding the identification of narcotics, firearms, explosives and other prohibited items
- Itemiser trace particle detection technology capable of detecting trace particles of narcotics and explosive substances
- container venting device for quickly exhausting any fumigants present in a container so that examinations can be conducted safely.

A mobile x-ray unit and detector dogs can also be deployed to the building as required.

Mr Marks said: "Officers are trained to look for concealments of drugs and weapons, as well as attempts to evade revenue. The facility will also help to protect local industry through the detection of goods infringing copyright and trademark legislation, and other Customs regulations".

He added that Customs would continue to assess container volumes and risk levels in the Port of Darwin to determine whether more advanced screening technology such as container or pallet x-ray systems would be required in the future.