

Customs meeting new border challenges

New Customs CEO Michael Carmody has outlined the strategic challenges facing the agency in the medium term.

“As reinforced in this year’s Budget, Customs is Australia’s primary border-protection agency,” Mr Carmody said in his Strategic Statement for 2006-07.

“In performing our role we work closely with a range of agencies, often exercising powers on their behalf, at other times working with them to complement capabilities and powers. Together we are called on to provide a sense of security to the community, supporting the continuation of the Australian lifestyle.”

Mr Carmody said Australia’s security, environment or lifestyle would be compromised by a failure by Customs to meet border-protection responsibilities or to properly facilitate trade or meet revenue collection responsibilities.

“We also are present at the border because of our community protection role,” he said.

“It is important to note however that the community has reasonable expectations about ease of travel and doing business. If our approaches to border security unreasonably compromise those expectations we will lose the community’s support and, as a result, our ability to perform our role. Facilitating the movement of legitimate travellers and goods is therefore essential.

“In addressing this tension we will:

- work with industry to embed as far as possible our border-protection approaches within their business models
- enhance our intelligence and targeting capabilities to better focus on high risk travellers and cargo



- focus on achieving efficiency improvements that would allow us to direct increased effort into our community protection role (after meeting the Government’s efficiency dividend and funding appropriate pay rises).”

Mr Carmody pointed out that Customs operated in a complex and dynamic environment, and had adopted certain priorities.

“These include maintaining the community’s confidence and delivering on border protection, facilitation and revenue commitments. Customs priorities where we need to improve are to :

- work with other law-enforcement agencies to deal with threats from illicit drugs
- enhance intelligence and targeting capabilities
- provide leadership in enhanced whole-of-government response to illegal foreign fishing
- work with industry to deliver material benefits to industry and government from the Integrated Cargo System
- focus on improving the consistency and efficiency of operations.”