

# Like the athletes, we trained hard for the Melbourne Games

The Commonwealth Games period was always going to be a busy time for Customs. With more than 40,000 visitors, competitors and Games family members, including 2000 VIPs arriving in Australia for the Games, Customs was focused on facilitating the influx of people, luggage and cargo while maintaining its high level of border security.

Just like the preparations needed by top athletes, Customs planning for the Games began four years before the event, and a Commonwealth Games steering committee was formed.

A project team was the lynchpin that coordinated and synchronised our involvement in the Games.

Working closely with State and Federal Government agencies and non-government bodies such as the Commonwealth Games Corporation, Customs developed systems, procedures and protocols to facilitate the Games.

Officers at airports around Australia either shared the increase in passenger numbers or accepted short-term postings to Melbourne Airport - the key destination for athletes and Games family members.



Officers greeted hundreds of athletes at Melbourne Airport.

Each day, 99 per cent of passengers arriving at Melbourne International Airport were processed into Australia within 30 minutes of their aircraft arriving at the terminal. New digital signage welcomed and informed passengers of Customs requirements.

On the cargo side, officers worked around the clock at air and sea ports, as well as at off-site venues, to process Games-related goods such as competitor equipment, team medical kits, giveaways, and media and broadcasting equipment. Most required clearance under special concessional provisions.

But behind the scenes much more was happening.

A significant achievement was the development of a refined system for exporting firearms.

With competitors in the shooting events arriving and departing from different States at different times, a streamlined process was needed to simplify compliance for the competitors while still enforcing Australia's firearm controls.

Customs, in conjunction with the Department Defence, developed a procedure that enabled all firearms to be cleared out of Australia using one export permit per team. A database kept track of the information to ensure that all firearms entering Australia were accounted for after the Games.

And to minimise delays at the airport, firearms had serial numbers verified, were wrapped and Customs sealed at shooting venues and the Games village.

Revised protocols for handling performance and image-enhancing drugs were developed, and a temporary Tourist Refund Scheme office was set up at the Games village. The office refunded more than \$17,000 during the Games.

The availability of these facilities, as well as Customs requirements, was conveyed to all team officials with information packs, coordinated by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, written specifically for each country.

Intellectual property rights were also an important issue for consideration. Inevitably, major events bring with them a risk of copies and fakes.

Customs developed and enforced the official legal framework, the *Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games (Indicia and Images) Protection Act 2005*, to help prevent the importation of counterfeit merchandise bearing official Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games logos, words and markings.

This task also involved training Customs, Victoria Police and Australian Federal Police staff in identifying counterfeit products.

Finally, security issues were not sidelined. Customs was a key player in a joint intelligence team, the Commonwealth Games Maritime Group, which included Defence, Victoria Police and other law-enforcement agencies.

To heighten border control, Customs ran a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week maritime operations room, deployed an additional 12 highly trained interstate staff to the Games maritime force, and boosted the visible presence of armed Customs officers on the water and waterfront.

Increased boarding of vessels at port and sea, ship searches, and roadblock and chokepoint activities were complemented by a Customs patrol vessel, a jet-powered pursuit tender, and a new tactical response vessel.

