

Pseudoephedrine uncovered in children's books

By Wendy McFadyen

Joint operations by Customs and South Australian Police led to the seizure of a significant quantity of methamphetamine and precursor chemicals.

South Australian Police received information that a large quantity of pseudoephedrine was being imported into Australia from Malaysia concealed within the covers of children's books. Seven separate parcels containing a total of 98 children's books were intercepted by Customs officers at Melbourne International Mail Centre during August and September 2005.

A deconstruction of the books revealed a quantity of white powder concealed within each of the covers. Forensic testing allegedly revealed the powder to be pseudoephedrine with 70% purity. Pseudoephedrine is a precursor chemical used in the manufacture of methamphetamine, commonly known as speed.

The books were alleged to contain a total of 12.5kg of pseudoephedrine. This could have been used to manufacture more than 200,000 'street-ready' tablets.

Investigation by Customs led to six Customs warrants being executed across Adelaide, and one in Sydney. South Australia Police also executed a further 12 warrants, uncovering a large amount of pseudoephedrine and methamphetamine and nine clandestine laboratories.

This operation highlighted the value of advanced screening technology and highly skilled officers, supported by excellent cooperation with the South Australian Police.

Customs Regional Director South Australia Virginia Lynch said the seizure once again demonstrated the benefits of inter-agency cooperation and intelligence sharing. "Working together with South Australian Police, we have prevented a large quantity of precursor chemicals being imported, manufactured into drugs and hitting the streets of South Australia," Ms Lynch said.

Detective Inspector Graham Goodwin, South Australian Police, said, "This operation is an excellent example of working together with other government agencies to achieve a holistic approach to ensuring successful investigation into organised crime."

