

# CUSTOMS

## MAJOR BOOST FOR AUSTRALIA'S MARITIME SECURITY

Australian Customs is set to become a world leader in container inspection and port-area surveillance with an injection of funding to enhance its maritime security capability.

The Government announced the \$75.4m security initiative to ensure Australia continues to be well protected against illegal activity and the threat of terrorism.

Under the initiative, Customs will increase by 25 per cent the number of containers subjected to x-ray examination around the country.

Increased operating hours at container examination facilities will allow Customs to boost the number of containers x-rayed from 80,000 to 100,000 a year. The resulting inspection rate of seven per cent of sea cargo imports is comparable with the US and ahead of other countries.

The additional funding will also allow the number of Australian ports covered by the Customs national waterfront closed circuit TV (CCTV) network to be almost doubled from 32 to 63.

The CCTV network is a key security and intelligence-gathering tool and is acknowledged as a world leader, with no other country achieving comparable coverage of its international sea ports with a single system.

In addition, Customs will employ additional staff to maintain a first-port boarding rate of up to 80 per cent of ships arriving in Australia.

Extra officers will be posted in some major metropolitan ports and at rapidly growing regional ports in Western Australia (Dampier, Geraldton, Port Hedland, Bunbury), Queensland (Gladstone, Mackay, Weipa, Townsville) and the Northern Territory (Nhulunbuy).

Customs will also work to identify a common set of data that should be collected by border protection agencies about people, goods and ships arriving into Australia, with the aim of a one-off submission of trade information by industry to comply with all import, export and security requirements.

Such a process would streamline the maritime security task for industry, saving it time and money, and deliver enhanced security for the Australian community.

