



## PHONEY TRADING CARD SEIZURES

Customs prevented another huge shipment of phoney trading cards from flooding the Australian market by seizing more than 380,000 counterfeit cards in Melbourne.

It followed an earlier Customs seizure of nearly one million Yu-Gi-Oh cards, worth an estimated \$500,000, in Sydney.

In the latest find, Customs officers in Victoria detected a consignment containing 26,568 packs of bogus *Duel Master* and 360 packs of fake Yu-Gi-Oh cards in sea containers imported from China.

Both trading card games are extremely popular with children and teenagers, originating from cartoons.

"The fake cards trade on the good name and financial investment that business have invested over a long period of time to establish their brand name and product in the market place," Gerard Rodrigues, acting Director Compliance Assurance, said.

"Counterfeit goods may be sub-standard and hazardous," he said. "Consumers are entitled to receive safe and reliable goods and services and are not to be misled as to the origin or quality of the product.

"This seizure is another example of the growing trend in the counterfeit goods market. The importation and sale of these fakes is making a lot of money for unscrupulous dealers who

are trading on the good name and financial investment of legitimate trade mark holders.

"Importantly, they cheat consumers and a lot of young kids who may end up paying a lot of money for sub-standard and poor quality fakes, in the belief they are getting the real thing. Customs seized the latest shipment, which had a potential retail value of up to \$250,000, under the provisions of the *Trade Marks Act 1995*."

Customs Regional Director Victoria Jenny Peachey said the quality of the cards and their country of origin led Customs to believe they were counterfeit.

"These cards were printed in China; genuine cards are printed in the USA," she said.

Customs considers the import of commercial quantities of counterfeit or fake goods as serious.

"The current popularity of these goods among Australian school students may tempt some to think about illegally profiting from the craze by importing and selling fake cards," she said.

"People should be aware that maximum penalties under the *Trade Marks Act* can include a fine of up to \$55,000 and/or two years imprisonment."

In the previous detection, Customs officers in NSW found a consignment of 135 boxes containing 52,080 packs of fake Yu-Gi-Oh cards in containerised sea freight from China.

The goods, printed in China, were seized under the *Commerce (Trade Descriptions) Act 1905*, which protects the misrepresentation of goods carrying a false trade description.

The consignment contained a combination of Yu-Gi-Oh starter packs, booster packs, colour packs as well as "rare" cards and had a potential retail value of up to \$500 000. Yu-Gi-Oh cards, which originate from a television series, are one of the current crazes in trading and collectors cards, and printed only in the United States.

Customs vigilance in protecting industry and consumers has seen the seizure of fake brand-name items such as sunglasses, clothing, luggage, CDs, DVDs, children's toys, and watches. In 2002-2003 Customs made some 1300 separate seizures.