

# Search centre

## implementing world's best practice

A constant upgrading of skills, courses and resources are the essential ingredients that are maintaining a successful and effective Australian Customs Service Border Search Training Centre. The centre emphasises a professional approach in all search activities.

The centre at Neutral Bay in Sydney, which aims to maintain world's best practices in its provision of search training, opened in 1999 as an initiative resulting from the Government's *Tough on Drugs* strategy.

Since that time, the centre has developed a reputation for supplying quality training in ship and aircraft search techniques. Courses include training in ship search, pleasure craft

search, confined space entry, fumigated container examination, aircraft search and a marine environment awareness course. Courses range from three to 10 days and have a pre-course study component ranging from eight to 24 hours.

The centre also offers its training to other agencies. Course participants have included people from State police forces. Staff at the centre are currently delivering a new course, developed in cooperation with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, to train quarantine and other personnel in ship board safety, confined space awareness and heights management.

Courses run at the centre are developed by the training staff, who themselves have attended courses held overseas. These courses have further developed the skill levels of the trainers. The trainers at the centre are chosen because of their Customs border, investigation and training experience. Training is ongoing, staff from Customs regional offices selected to be developed as assistant trainers for each course.

Content for the courses is developed from information gathered from past and current Customs officers, industry experts and overseas border administrations. The courses and the information contained are constantly reviewed to ensure currency and relevance to Customs border operation



Looking through a ship search tool kit are Chris Holzheimer, Customs Thursday Island, and Tony Wheatley, Border Search Training Centre course coordinator and instructor.

priorities. The centre aims to return course participants to their workplaces with the knowledge, confidence and ability to conduct search activities professionally and safely.

Training in search techniques has provided Customs with a consistent, highly skilled and professional search approach. The use of technology and equipment, as well as the procurement and supply of suitable equipment for operational use, has also benefited from work on developing the various courses. Staff at the centre are in constant contact with suppliers, manufacturers and industry experts, maintaining a knowledge of the most recent advances in all relevant fields.

The aim to maintain world's best practices in provision of search training is given impetus through ongoing assessment and validation by industry experts and external consultants.



Learning together at the Border Search Training Centre are Blair Talbot, NSW Water Police, and Keith Howard, Customs Sydney.



The search centre crew. They are: (back, from left) Lee Major (instructor), Alex O'Brien (assistant instructor), Frank Malkoun (centre manager); (front, from left) John Barnard (assistant instructor), Tony Wheatley (course-coordinator and instructor) Terry Russo (centre staff) and Nathan Phillips (instructor).