

# We don't just stamp passports

By Stephanie Sammut



top: Andrew Redman - Air Cargo and Post - Melbourne

middle: Randip Jassal - Cargo Management Re-engineering - Canberra

bottom: Julie Columbus - Human Resource Development - Darwin

When people think of Customs officers, they often think of the people in blue who stamp passports on the way in and out of Australia, or of the uniformed official at the wharf who conducts some sort of checks on cargo.

But Customs is not just about working at these more well known places.

In fact, there are hundreds of different jobs in Customs, in remote places around Australia to capital cities around the world.

"I realised that working in Customs meant that I could change jobs without the hassle of changing employers," Customs officer Jenny Anderson said in a profile of her in the Customs annual report 2001-02. The report features articles on a range of Customs people, drawing attention to the diversity of jobs in the organisation.

Jenny joined Customs in Brisbane in 1989 and is now manager of Coastwatch operations in Darwin. She had planned to stay in Customs for about two years, but soon realised that Customs offered such a variety of work.

Jenny has also worked for three years as a port intelligence officer in the Torres Strait. "I particularly enjoyed the high level of interaction and cooperation between the various agencies and communities in the Torres Strait," she said.

Randip Jassal has worked on Customs project to reengineer cargo management since 2000 and manages the information technology technical analysis and related issues for the exports team.

"I joined Customs in 1996 as an Assistant Customs Officer in Sydney and worked in baggage, duty collection and cargo clearance," Randip said.

"I then moved to Canberra in 1999 to work as an analyst in the border statistics, cargo targeting area and enhanced the area's database-reporting capability," he said.

It was not long after that Randip began working on cargo-management processes.

Julie Columbus works in the Human Resources Development area in Darwin.

"My job involves the management and training of Customs trainees and the promotion of the Customs Development Program in the Northern Territory," Julie said.

"Since joining Customs in 1985 in Brisbane, I have worked in several areas including Border Operations, Passengers and Staffing Branches," she said.

During the past 10 years, Julie has developed and delivered behavioural analysis training for screening staff at various airports whose jobs involve assessing and interviewing travellers in Customs-controlled areas, Customs trainees and staff from other organisations such as the Department of Correctional Services, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and State police services.

In 1992, Julie's career took her on secondment to the US to observe screening operations at Los Angeles and Honolulu airports and the John F Kennedy airport in New York.

Robin Anderson manages the Service Providers Compliance Group in Sydney which aims to maximise

compliance with legislation and government policy.

Robin joined Customs in 1982 and began working at Sydney airport. "Since then I have worked in border protection and commercial roles gaining a wide variety of skills," Robin said.

"One of the highlights of my career was initiating a process which controlled the export of high-risk tobacco shipments," he said. "The results were almost immediate and very positive."

Nicola Smith is the only dog handler in the Detector Dog Unit in Tasmania and began working for Customs in 1986. She and her yellow Labrador named Yang are based in Hobart and search for drugs in cargo, baggage and mail and on vessels.

"Yang and I work with agencies such as the Tasmanian Police, Australian Federal Police and the Department of Correctional Services," Nicola said.

"We search properties including houses, farms and prison facilities for prohibited items," she said.

Having previously worked in both commercial and other border areas of Customs, Nicola considers herself fortunate to have found her niche in the dog unit.

"I have worked with seven dogs over the past 12 years and am looking forward to working with a multi-purpose response dog," she said. (These dogs are trained to detect drugs on people as well as in goods such as freight and mail.)

Andrew Redman is Manager of Air Cargo and Post in Melbourne and joined Customs in 1983.

"I am involved in major change initiatives as the project manager for increased air cargo screening in Victoria and as Regional Coordinator for the Cargo Management Re-engineering project," Andrew said.

"My best friend from school joined Customs and it was his encouragement and positive comments about the organisation that were responsible for me joining," he said. "I still find the job rewarding and challenging."

Highlights of Andrew's diverse career in Customs include development and

implementation of initiatives at Postal Operations to address increased quarantine intervention policy, management of large numbers of staff at the airport and promoting partnerships with other agencies as a Customs liaison officer for the Australian Federal Police, Victoria Police and the National Crime Authority.

Andrew represented Customs at a three-month management course with the FBI in the US and enjoyed placements with US and Canada Customs.

Marion Grant, National Manager Border Operations, has had a diverse and fascinating career with Customs, too.

"I began working for Customs 18 years ago after working in financial management in several other agencies," Marion said.

In her current position she has worked closely with the Cargo Management Re-engineering project in relation to border controls, coordinated the increased quarantine initiative for postal operations and high-volume/low-value air cargo and has ongoing responsibility in relation to people smuggling.

One highlight from Marion's current position was accompanying the Minister on a trip focused on people smuggling to Derby, Port Hedland (including a tour of the detention centre), Cocos and Christmas Islands.

As Customs National Manager Industry Branch, Marion managed a range of industry schemes and spent many hours in factories and refineries, seeing everything from computer boards, bath towels, car parts, photographic film, books and cars being manufactured. She oversaw the transfer of these functions to the then Department of Industry, Science and Resources in 1999 from her current position.

The Customs Annual Report for 2001-2002 is available on line at [www.customs.gov.au](http://www.customs.gov.au)



top: Marion Grant - Border Operations - Canberra

middle top: Jenny Anderson - Coastwatch Operations - Darwin

middle bottom: Robin Anderson - Service Providers Compliance Group - Sydney

bottom: Nicola Smith - Dog Handler - Hobart