

Australia shows risk management leadership in the APEC region

With assistance from the Australian Customs Service and international Customs organisations, an increasing number of countries in the Asia-Pacific are embracing risk management to help regulate trade and travel.

Australian Customs and the United States Customs Service jointly manage an APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation group) program to implement risk management with the assistance of Customs administrations from Canada, Japan and New Zealand. The program has been operating for four years and has provided extensive assistance to 15 participating economies in implementing a risk management regime. The economies that have benefited from this program range from Chile to Papua New Guinea to Vietnam.

The aim of the program is to implement a risk-based approach to Customs work so that attention is concentrated on only those transactions that pose a high risk. This allows the increased facilitation of legitimate trade and travel and ensures that costs to the private sector are reduced. Risk management allows Customs to focus its resources on those transactions which represent a high risk and provides a more effective and efficient use of resources.

As part of this program, the Planning and International Branch of Australian Customs recently organised an operational risk management workshop

in Bangkok, Thailand. The workshop, co-hosted by Thai Customs Department, was regarded overall as a success by participants and experts.

Karen Mahony, from Australia, led the workshop with assistance from Andy Cousineau of Canada and Peter Nash of New Zealand. Participants from 13 economies travelled to Bangkok to attend.

Ms Mahony said, "The workshop was conducted in a 'train-the-trainer' format and covered topics such as risk management, basic operational intelligence, targeting and profiling and change management. The workshop was interactive and the participants particularly enjoyed the activities and syndicate group exercises because it gave them practical reinforcement of the theory.

"A highlight of the workshop was having risk management practitioners from 16 economies sharing experiences and forming closer networks with neighbouring economies."

Delegates discussed the challenges involved in changing systems from a high level of physical examination to a risk management based approach and demonstrated commitment to implementing the new skills on their return.

Participants who attended the workshop are currently delivering the training package in their own economy and this will increase their confidence in applying risk management principles in these economies.



from left: Jiang Cheng, China; Fang Bin, China; Andy Cousineau, Canada; Karen Mahony, Australia; Peter Nash, New Zealand; Jesse Yam Woon-ling, Hong Kong; Rosanna Wang, Chinese Taipei and Tran Tuan Anh, Vietnam.