

# Trans-Tasman talks

Australian and New Zealand Customs organisations have agreed to further develop their strong working relationship to enhance border security in their respective countries and in the Pacific Region.

This was the result of Trans-Tasman talks held in Sydney recently between Customs Minister Senator Chris Ellison, and his New Zealand counterpart, the Hon Rick Barker.

Also present at the meeting were Australian Customs Service CEO Lionel Woodward and New Zealand Customs Service Comptroller Robin Dare.

The discussions were held to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Australia-New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Agreement.

There was agreement that the two Customs organisations would continue to cooperate and exchange information about smuggling - especially drugs - fraud and money laundering, particularly in the Pacific; further enhance air and sea cargo security; explore areas of providing further technical assistance and capacity building assistance to developing countries in the area of trade facilitation; and keep each other informed of policy and operational approaches to counter-terrorism, SARS and border protection matters generally.

Senator Ellison said there had been consensus that Australian and New Zealand Customs would work even closer together to strengthen the ties that already existed between the two organisations.

"I am pleased that the outcome of these talks will prove mutually beneficial - not just to our two Customs organisations but for the benefit of both our nations in matters of border security, fighting crime and in international trade," Senator Ellison said.