

## Customs in the media



Asian Arowana fish found concealed in an airline crewmember's baggage at Melbourne Airport

### PROHIBITED ITEMS SEIZED

Dangerous weapons, cruel dog collars, animal parts and live animals are among recent seizures by Customs around Australia.

Officers in Adelaide seized a 19cm triple-bladed push knife in an air express parcel from the United States when it showed up in an x-ray - all international mail is x-rayed before being distributed by Australia Post.

The knife was declared as a collector's item but knives and other weapons are restricted imports under Australian law and a permit is required to import. It must be sought before importation.

Stun guns were seized in Sydney and Melbourne - 40 disguised as torches and four disguised as mobile phones. Capsicum sprays were also seized. One was in air cargo and the other in an international mail item. Both were destroyed.

The dog collars, incorporating protrusions designed to puncture or bruise an animal's skin, were in two packages mailed from the US to addresses in South Australia. They were destroyed.

Sixteen live Asian fish in plastic water bags, concealed in the baggage of an airline crewmember, were discovered and seized in Melbourne.

The fish could have posed serious quarantine, environmental and health risks in Australia, and are listed as being highly endangered under international treaties. Unfortunately, they had to be destroyed because they could not be returned to origin.

In Sydney, four live North-American loggerhead musk turtles were discovered in a passenger's baggage, wrapped tightly in socks.

There is a maximum penalty for smuggling wildlife of up to AUD\$110 000 and/or imprisonment for up to 10 years.

In Brisbane, during an examination of unaccompanied personal effects arriving from New Zealand, an elephant's foot was discovered. It had been made into a footstool. The elephant's foot was declared by the importer but did not have a permit so it was seized.

### TWO CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CASES EXPOSED

Garry Raymond Gent, 44, who holds dual Australian and British citizenship, was jailed for 18 months in Downing Centre District Court in Sydney in March after pleading guilty to the importation of child pornography.

Two CDs containing child pornographic images were found when Customs officers at Sydney Airport searched his luggage in July 2004.

Gent was returning to Australia from the Middle East where he had been working.

Another case is pending after Customs officers at Terrigal, on the NSW Central Coast, charged a 33-year-old Thai man with the alleged importation of child pornography.

Investigators arrested the man after executing a search warrant on a house.

Inquiries began on 10 December when a package containing CDs of allegedly offensive material was intercepted by Customs officers at the International Mail Handling Centre in Sydney.

Convictions for these kinds of offences can result in a maximum sentence of 10 years in jail and/or a AUD\$275 000 fine.



## HEAVY PENALTIES FOR CIGARETTE SMUGGLING

A father and his son were ordered to pay AUD\$4.6 million by the Supreme Court in Sydney in March for cigarette smuggling offences.

The case was brought to court by Customs after it uncovered two separate large-scale smuggling attempts in April 2001.

Abdul Wahid Afiouny was found to have smuggled almost 2 million cigarettes and to have attempted to evade customs duty on the cigarettes amounting to more than AUD\$404 000.

He and his son, Bilal Afiouny, were also found to have smuggled a further 3.5 million cigarettes and attempting to evade customs duty on those cigarettes amounting to more than AUD\$698 000.

Both men were convicted of offences against Section 233 (1) (a) of the *Customs Act of 1901*.

Abdul Wahid Afiouny was ordered to pay 2 fi times the duty payable on the two quantities of smuggled cigarettes amounting to more than AUD\$2 757 000 plus costs of AUD\$80,000.

Bilal Afiouny was ordered to pay 2 fi times the duty payable on the second quantity of smuggled cigarettes amounting to more than AUD\$1 747 000 plus costs of AUD\$40 000.

In addition, the cigarettes were forfeited and have been destroyed.

Three other recent court cases were successful also.

- Ms Giovanna Aryafara, sole director of Queensland furniture importer Samsara Furniture and Homewares Pty Ltd, was fined nearly AUD\$250,000 after being convicted of misrepresenting the value of furniture and homewares discovered during a compliance audit.
- Ian Anthony Clarke, a customs broker of Adelaide, was fined AUD\$3 100 and ordered to pay AUD\$35 000 in costs because he misled a car importer into presenting false documents to Customs to evade duty. He was discovered by an alert Customs officer who was undertaking routine checks on cargo movements.
- A man was fined more than AUD\$6 600 by a Mackay court for illegally importing a replica handgun and tear gas canisters through Brisbane Airport and making false statements to a Customs officer. The items showed up in a routine x-ray of his baggage.

## AUSTRALIANS ON ALERT FOR FOREIGN VESSELS

Alert crews of two Australian vessels led to the arrest of an Indonesian boat fishing illegally off northern Australia.

Cargo vessel *Frances Bay* and fishing boat *Tepania* sighted the Indonesian vessel north of Port Bremer on the Coburg Peninsula and contacted the 24-hour Customs Hotline **1800 06 1800**, which passed on the details to Customs Coastwatch.

A Coastwatch electronic surveillance aircraft patrolling north-east of the area was redirected and remained overhead until Customs patrol boat *Botany Bay* could intercept.

The *Botany Bay* towed the fishing boat to Darwin where it was handed over to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority.

Another report, by an Australian fisherman, shows that not all contact between Customs and Indonesia fishing boats is hostile.

An Indonesian fishing boat beached on Cape York Peninsula because of engine problems and cyclonic weather in the mouth of the Kendall River, south of Weipa. They were rescued by a Customs patrol boat, *Dame Roma Mitchell*, which provided the crew with food and water.



Customs, Quarantine and Qld Police officers on board the Indonesian fishing boat which beached south of Weipa