



**Above:** Former Australian Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator David Johnston, gives the keynote address at the 2007 ACBD.



**Above:** Experts discuss opportunities for tracking and facilitating cross-border shipments at the 2007 ACBD.

# Australian Customs hosts APEC dialogue



**For Australian Customs, the highlight of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) year in Australia was the APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) and the annual APEC Customs-Business Dialogue (ACBD).**

Cairns played host to the second meeting of the SCCP for 2007, which was attended by more than 50 delegates from 19 of the 21 APEC economies.

The main outcome from this meeting was the presentation and endorsement of the Single Window Development Report and Strategic Plan. These reports were produced by the SCCP's single window working group, led by Australian Customs.

All 21 APEC member economies completed a survey of their single window initiatives and the analysis of these surveys was presented in the Single Window Development Report. The Report

provides a snapshot of members' progress in single window initiatives and establishes a platform for a common understanding of single window issues.

The Single Window Strategic Plan provides a pathway for the future in the development of single window systems by APEC members for paperless trading targets and seamless data sharing. The plan has six recommendations, endorsed by SCCP, including agreement to form a new working group to undertake the next phase of collaborative work.

Another topical matter for Customs administrations concerns intellectual property



**Above:** Australian Customs Deputy CEO Neil Mann opens the 2007 APEC Customs-Business Dialogue (ACBD).

rights enforcement. The SCCP agreed to hold a joint session with the APEC Intellectual Property Experts' Group in 2008 to strengthen regional cooperation in Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) enforcement. A 'best practices paper' on innovative techniques for IPR border enforcement was also endorsed.

Following the SCCP meeting, delegates travelled to Sydney for the 2007 APEC Customs-Business Dialogue on 29 June. Around 140 people participated in the dialogue, mostly from the business sector.

The theme of this year's dialogue was "identifying future trade facilitation opportunities". The dialogue was chaired by Neil Mann, Deputy CEO of Australian Customs, and featured addresses from the former Australian Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator David Johnston, and Mark Johnson, Deputy Chairman of Macquarie Bank and member of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC).

It was pleasing that ABAC strongly supports the work of the SCCP, particularly the single window initiative building stronger coalitions between APEC customs administrations and business sectors, and development and harmonisation of standards throughout APEC economies. The dialogue confirmed that trade facilitation is an important driver for trade liberalisation



**Above:** Yumiko Tanabe of the Japan Customs and Tariff Bureau shares Japan's experience with conducting time-release surveys to identify impediments to trade.

and economic growth. Participants also demonstrated concern that the focus on security should not jeopardise progress on trade facilitation.

Establishing partnerships with business makes it easier to align Customs requirements with end-to-end business operational models. Discussions focused on how customs administrations and business sectors could work together to enable the twin goals of greater security and enhanced trade facilitation to be achieved.

A significant outcome of the dialogue was support for a new APEC initiative to assess the feasibility



**Above:** Checking containers on the wharf.

of implementing mechanisms for tracking cross border shipments to improve understanding of the supply chain process. Two known mechanisms that will be explored are unique consignment reference and radio frequency identification devices. Australian Customs will work with New Zealand Customs to progress this project as a pilot, in cooperation with a number of interested companies.

Dialogue participants also considered methods of measuring the time taken for the release of goods to identify and remove impediments to trade. Representatives from the Japan Customs and Tariff Bureau and Japan Customs Brokers Association shared their experiences with conducting time-release surveys over the last 16 years, highlighting benefits that have resulted for both Customs and business in identifying bottlenecks and implementing structural reform measures.

Australian Customs outlined its plans to conduct a time-release survey during 2007 and invited

participation in an industry and other government agency reference group in preparation for Australia's first survey.

Preparations to compile the data required for the survey are now underway. All of the required data will be available from the Integrated Cargo System (ICS) and the survey will be conducted as a snapshot to measure the average times taken to release all cargo arriving over a selected week. To gain additional value from the snapshot data, the sample will be stratified to distinguish average times for air and sea cargo; and within those modes to further distinguish average times by type of cargo, such as containerised, bulk and others.

Supply chain partners from industry, other government agencies and other Customs administrations are being engaged selectively to review and validate our planning and to provide supplementary data for quality assurance.

Justin Wickes