

Customs in the media

Targetting drug imports

In Sydney, there were five significant drug detections a one week period. At least 18 people were arrested for unrelated drug-importation offences. Methods of concealment included inside shoes and shoe moulds, inside shorts, and internally.

An attempt to import through air cargo almost 3kg of cocaine in bar stools from Hollywood, California, was discovered, resulting in the arrests of two men.

In Perth, a British national was arrested for allegedly attempting to import heroin concealed in his stomach. In hospital, the man passed 100 pellets allegedly containing heroin.

In Brisbane, four people were arrested over their alleged involvement in an importation of approximately 80,000 MDMA (ecstasy) tablets into Australia in toy boxes. One man was also arrested and charged with attempting to possess a commercial quantity of a border-controlled drug. The MDMA is alleged to have an approximate street value of \$3.2 million.

Also in Brisbane, two men from Britain were charged over their alleged involvement in importing approximately 6kg of MDMA tablets, inside a DVD player in their luggage.

Precursors and steroids

In Cairns, an Australian man, 34, was charged with importing pseudoephedrine, the precursor drug for methamphetamines. Two tablets were allegedly found in his underwear. Ephedrine is a prohibited precursor chemical which can be converted to produce illegal amphetamine-type substances, such as methamphetamine.

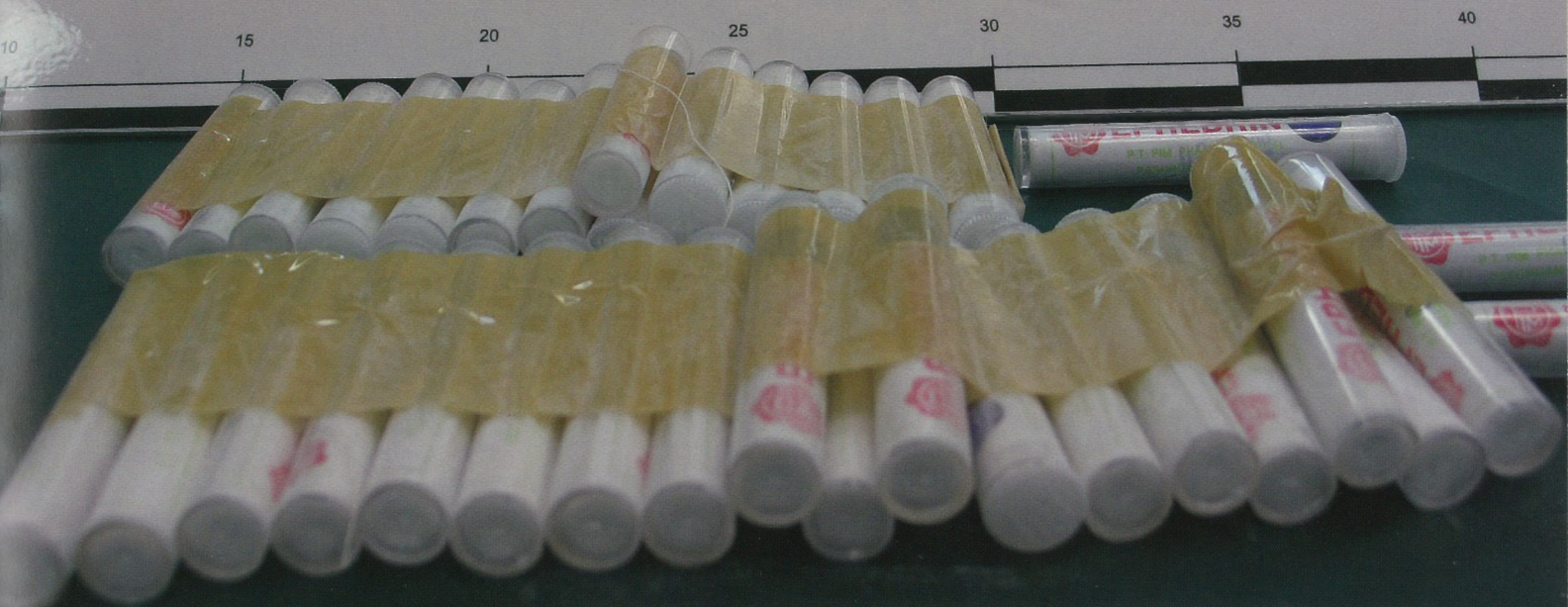
A foiled steroid-importation attempt resulted in a \$12,500 fine for a Queensland man. Customs officers in Sydney seized more than 3000 tablets when they intercepted six envelopes and a parcel. Customs investigators then executed search warrants on a Southport residence where a further 500 tablets were seized. At Melbourne International Mail Centre, we intercepted an additional three envelopes containing testosterone, a controlled substance.

In Adelaide, a woman, 28, faced charges in relation to a major operation by Customs and partner agencies targeting the importation of up to 1.5kg of pseudoephedrine inside the base of a cardboard box.

In Cairns, a man was charged with attempting to import precursor chemicals. During a search of his baggage, officers found 1.5 litres of a yellowish liquid in a bottle. The substance allegedly tested positive for piperonal, a precursor that can be diverted for use in the manufacture of MDMA.



Australian CUSTOMS Service



Above: An Australian man was arrested for importing ephedrine.

Drugs, precursors and steroids seizures by Customs have made headlines in the media over the summer months.

Other significant cases include child pornography offences, dangerous weapons and illegal cigarettes and tobacco.



Above: Cocaine in bar stools.



Above: Customs officers at Container Examination Facilities detected tobacco in containers.

Customs in Brisbane identified a steroid-distribution racket, with links to three States, after raiding five premises—testosterone, other illegal performance and image enhancing drugs and \$150,000 cash, to be proceeds of crime, were allegedly found. The investigation began when Customs officers in Sydney detected parcels containing liquid testosterone and what is believed to be human growth hormone (HGH).

Another case in Brisbane saw an Australian man arrested for importing a marketable quantity of ephedrine—41 vials and a quantity tablets and capsules.

In Sydney, a man, 21, was convicted for illegally importing performance-enhancing drugs and fined a total of \$4,067 including costs. Customs began an investigation after intercepting a parcel containing four vials of anabolic steroids, seven vials of HGH and a syringe marked as containing EPO (erythropoietin). These are all prohibited imports.

Illicit cigarettes and tobacco

A Victorian man was sentenced to two years imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine for his role in smuggling a large amount of tobacco. Customs officers at the Melbourne Container Examination Facility detected nine tonnes of tobacco leaf in a container load declared as tyres and accessories. The tobacco represented a potential loss of revenue to the Commonwealth of \$2.4 million.



Above: A man was fined for illegally importing performance-enhancing drugs.

Customs officers at the Sydney Container Examination Facility identified a cigarette and tobacco smuggling racket, resulting in the arrests of nine men. Five sea cargo containers were found to contain more than two million cigarettes and about 12 tonnes of tobacco. The amount of duty and tax evaded amounted to more than \$5 million.

In Queensland, there was a long running multi-agency investigation into an alleged tobacco excise and duty evasion scheme estimated to have cost the Commonwealth Government more than \$10 million in lost revenue. Three foreigners and one Australian were sentenced in relation to this investigation and another five were charged.

Child pornography

There were three significant cases involving child pornography-related offences in recent months. Customs investigators in Western Australia charged a man with the importation of child pornography following a baggage search at Perth International Airport.

In Adelaide, Customs investigators executed warrants

on a house as part of a major investigation that followed a Sydney interception of an airmail parcel. A man was arrested.

In Victoria, an Australian man, 36, was charged with importing child pornography after Customs officers intercepted his mail. Customs investigators seized a computer and other evidence during a search of the man's premises.

Dangerous weapons

A range of prohibited imports, including a 500,000 volt stun gun, capsicum spray, nunchukus, extendable batons and knuckledusters, were found by Customs in international mail entering Sydney, Cairns and Melbourne. One case resulted in a Townsville man, 23, being ordered to pay more than \$12,000 for attempting to import a range of prohibited items.

In Sydney, Customs intercepted two packages destined for the same address. One of which contained a timer fuse and the other a land mine. Both were inert. A warrant was executed on a townhouse where a significant collection of munitions was found. A man in his 40s was charged.