



# ASIA/PACIFIC CUSTOMS NEWS

Volume #67



Volume #67  
November 2022  
WCO Asia/Pacific  
Regional Vice-Chair

**MESSAGES** from the  
Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair  
Secretariat for the Vice-Chair  
Office of the Secretariat

**WE CAN!**

Women in Action  
Women in Profile  
Women in Leadership

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## CAPACITY BUILDING

Digital Forensics Workshop

# WOMEN IN CUSTOMS

Growth | Unity | Security | Prosperity



# ASIA/PACIFIC CUSTOMS NEWS

Volume #67 November 2022

## **WOMEN IN CUSTOMS**

### EDITORIAL

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## **Message from the Secretariat for the Office of the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair**

**Ms Kimberlee Stamatis**

**Assistant Secretary, Customs and Trade Policy Branch, Customs Group Australian Border Force**

Dear Asia/Pacific Colleagues,



*Kimberlee Stamatis,  
Assistant Secretary,  
Customs and Trade Policy  
Australian Border Force*

Welcome to the 67th issue of the World Customs Organization Asia Pacific Customs News. This is the first issue that is released after the appointment of Australia as Regional Vice-Chair for the Asia/Pacific region. We are delighted and honoured to be in this role again and take pride in representing the 33 countries of the Asia/Pacific region. This issue will highlight the key events across the region from July to September 2022. We thank all of you - our Asia/Pacific colleagues for sending in your contributions and for using this platform to promote the good work that is being done in our region. On behalf of my team, I also want to extend a special thanks to former Regional Vice-Chair – Indonesia's Directorate General of Customs and Excise for providing an extensive handover and support as we took over this role.

For this issue, we are focusing and celebrating the work of the Women in Customs. This issue highlights their valuable contribution and also tackles the gender equality initiatives around the Asia/Pacific region. Personally, as a woman in leadership, it has been amazing to see female representation throughout the 33 members of the Asia/Pacific region in a range of capacities. I've enjoyed reading through your submissions and feel very proud of the efforts that have been put in place to recognise the hard work that the women of customs do.

I hope that you enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you. For key events in the region that you would like included in the 68th issue of the Asia/Pacific Customs news, please reach out to our office at [apvc-wco@abf.gov.au](mailto:apvc-wco@abf.gov.au).

As we return back to in-person meetings following the many lockdowns we withstood at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am excited and looking forward to meeting all of you at the series of events we have planned during our tenure – starting with the 32nd session of the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Contact Points to be held in Brisbane, in Australia's sunshine state of Queensland.

Keep up to date with Asia/Pacific regional news by checking out our website at [wcoasiapacific.org](http://wcoasiapacific.org) and follow our official Instagram page [@wcoasiapacific](https://www.instagram.com/wcoasiapacific).



## Message from the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair

**Mr Michael Outram APM**

**Australian Border Force (ABF) Commissioner and Comptroller-General of Customs**

Dear WCO Asia/Pacific Colleagues,

It is with great pride that I present to you the latest issue of the Asia/Pacific Customs News, **Volume #67**, the theme of which focuses on 'Women in Customs'.

I would like to once again acknowledge the previous World Customs Organization (WCO) Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair, Director-General (DG) Askolani, and Indonesia's Directorate General of Customs and Excise. I thank DG Askolani and his team for their leadership, commitment and vision in representing the best interests of our region during their tenure. I am honoured to have assumed this role, and look forward to your support over the next two years.

In August of this year via the WCO Asia/Pacific website, I delivered my inaugural address as Regional Vice-Chair for Asia/Pacific. I took this opportunity to highlight the resilience and agility of Customs authorities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This challenge was unprecedented and WCO Asia/Pacific Members played a central role in supporting our individual and collective responses, demonstrating the importance of partnerships, defining and achieving best practice and helping to build our collective capacity.

As your Regional Vice-Chair, I look forward to working collaboratively with members to represent our shared priorities and advocate for the region. I look forward to working closely and meeting in person as we go back to the rhythm of face-to-face meetings.

For this issue of the Asia/Pacific Customs News, we wanted to put a spotlight on the integral work of the Women in Customs. Your engagement and contributions have highlighted the valuable contributions women have made and continue to shape stronger and more resilient Customs agencies in the region. There is a lot of work happening in our region to promote gender equality and this issue showcases some of our best work in achieving this. I thank our women colleagues in customs for your leadership, camaraderie and professionalism.

Finally, I encourage you to continue to engage with my Secretariat Office (via email at [apvc-wco@abf.gov.au](mailto:apvc-wco@abf.gov.au)) so we may continue to reflect your views at the wide range of WCO meetings. To those of you attending in person, I look forward to meeting you in Brisbane at the 32nd session of the Asia/Pacific Regional Contact Points Meeting and trust that you will find the event informative and fruitful.



ABF Commissioner and  
Comptroller-General Customs,  
Michael Outram APM,  
**WCO Asia/Pacific Regional  
Vice-Chair for 2022-2024**

# **WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP**

## **Q&A w/ Vanessa Holben PSM**

We sat down with Vanessa Holben PSM – Deputy Comptroller-General Customs and Manager of Customs Group for the Australian Border Force – and asked her thoughts on leadership, particularly in her senior leadership role.



*Submitted by  
the Australian Border Force  
/ Edited by Marivi Martin  
ABF Assistant Director*

Vanessa Holben PSM is the Deputy Comptroller-General of Customs in the Australian Border Force (ABF). She also leads Customs Group, responsible for ensuring Australia's customs and border policy settings allow for the unimpeded movement of legitimate goods across the border, preventing the movement of prohibited goods and detecting, deterring and disrupting criminal and national security threats at borders.

Vanessa also has responsibility for whole of agency ministerial, governance,

risk and assurance functions to support and facilitate the ABF's high-level governance forums, coordinate ministerial and parliamentary engagement and implement the risk management framework and program across the ABF.

Prior to this, Vanessa was the First Assistant Secretary of the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) within the Department of Home Affairs. The NCM was established to coordinate and facilitate non-health response measures to the COVID-19 pandemic, through strategic and operational engagement with stakeholders across the Commonwealth, states and territories, industry and the private sector.

Vanessa has also held the role of First Assistant Secretary, Aviation and Maritime Security Division, the security regulator for the aviation, maritime and offshore oil and gas sectors. In this role, Vanessa was responsible for providing advice and assurance to Government on transport security policy, regulation, compliance and practice.

Vanessa has held other senior executive roles in the ABF, including as the Assistant Commissioner responsible for offshore regional processing arrangements, including regional capacity building efforts, and the onshore immigration detention network.

In January 2022, Vanessa was awarded a Public Service Medal (PSM) in recognition of her outstanding contributions in support of Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Can you give us an overview of your law enforcement career?*

I started my public service career at the Queensland State Government working as an Administrative Assistant for Queensland Corrective services (QCS). I had finished my degree in criminology and while the normal path was to go into the police force, I felt that it wasn't something I wanted to pursue. I took a placement in the QCS as it was something that always interested me and it fit well with my motivations, morals and values – it was essentially a welfare job; it focused on helping people correct their mistaken paths. It was tough in those early days, but my experience in there set the tone of how I wanted to establish myself as a leader. I worked in corrective services for 17 years, progressing through the ranks in a variety of roles. With the nature of the workplace, it made me stronger and more resilient as a leader.

After 17 years I knew it was time for a change and that's when I applied for a role in the ABF responsible for detention in Brisbane. Although I was in a new environment, it was still something I am familiar with. From there I was promoted to Commander of Detention Operations and then to Assistant Commissioner for Detention and Regional Processing, eventually going on to other senior positions at the Band-2 level and leading the National Coordination Mechanism. All of this experience has led me to where I am today, as the Deputy-Comptroller General of Customs for Australia and Group Manager for Customs in the ABF.

*What's a leadership lesson you've carried through your career?*

As I have progressed through my career, I have realised it is very important to surround yourself with a good team. Build that team around you to be successful in their own ways not for your benefit but for their own careers. Be mindful of how you deliver your message and how the recipient will perceive it. Don't be stagnant, know when it is time to move on. And, lastly, invest in yourself and in your self-development.

*Have you drawn professional inspiration from other women? Tell us about someone who has inspired you.*

I was part of a panel in a Women in Leadership Summit a few years ago and before the panel began, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs spoke and what she said really resonated with me. Her qualities and attributes seemed to really match with mine. I thought that was someone I wanted to get to know better and so I reached out to her and her office. She was very lovely and we still catch up occasionally to this day. I have also been very fortunate to have had conversations with different Secretaries and heads of organisations. This has allowed me to tap into their thinking, look at things with different perspectives and to enhance my leadership capability and all-roundedness.

*What is your biggest challenge and your best achievement?*

I've had many challenges in my career, but leaving Corrective services after 17 years and moving from a state department to a federal agency was my biggest challenge was one of the biggest; and yet it also gave me one of my best achievements. I was able to test myself and reap the rewards in the form of a promotion that demonstrated I had made the right decision. Of course another achievement is when I became a recipient of a Public Service Medal (PSM) in recognition of my contributions to Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To be recognised at that level as a public servant, serving Australia and its people, will always be a highlight of my career.

*What advice would you offer women who are starting out their career in customs or law enforcement?*

Be very deliberate about choosing programs and training to support the role you are doing. Take the opportunities that will give you a well-rounded balance of skillsets, don't just wait for things to land on your lap. Seek mentors that can help you and always believe in yourself and back the decisions you make.

## The New Zealand Customs Northern Women's Network

Mentoring women in New Zealand Customs Service to reach their fullest potential  
– An overview of the New Zealand Customs Northern Women's Network and its creation.

***“We are both very proud of what this work has meant for our participants. The increase in confidence of our mentees from when the Programme was initiated has been undeniable.”***

The New Zealand Customs Northern Women's network was established in 2018 by Chief Customs Officer Joint Border Analytics, Nicola Woon (Nicky), who also chaired the committee throughout its first year. The network's vision is “Women reaching their potential” and the flagship initiative of the Network has been the Mentoring Programme.

The Programme was created to complement existing Customs learning and development and leadership forums. Its focus was to foster female senior leaders, act as a platform for women to better ready themselves for leadership and to develop a pipeline of women leaders.

Nicky and her colleague, Chief Customs Officer Workforce Management and Planning, Samantha Hope created and implemented the Pilot Programme which began in 2021. They created this from scratch designing the Terms of Reference, supporting documents and co-ordinating the programme. This work was undertaken alongside their substantive roles but was a labour of love for both leaders.

“We felt it was something we could manage ourselves and if it could make a difference to someone's career or overall experience at work it would be worth it” said Samantha.

The Pilot Programme consisted of nine pairs of mentees and mentors spread across many ranks from the entry Assistant Customs Officer level to Manager Operations. It was mentee driven and ran for six months, with the pairings meeting at regular intervals throughout and with direct co-ordination and support from Nicky and Samantha.

The Pilot was evaluated by its participants and their People Leaders and the feedback was extremely positive. Every mentee responded they would recommend the Programme to their colleagues, and they felt they now had more confidence and that it has helped with their personal/career development. This helped with 30 per cent of participants achieving a step-up in rank during the Programme.

“We are both very proud of what this work has meant for our participants. The increase in confidence of our mentees from when the Programme was initiated has been undeniable.” said Samantha.





In September 2022 a second Mentoring Programme was launched by the Network, this time with 23 pairings from Assistant Customs Officer to Acting Director ranks. This Programme will run for nine months and is again supported by Nicky and Sam.

Nicky said “The buy in they received from the mentors during the Pilot Programme was very positive. They really enjoyed the experience of ‘giving back’ to our female officers and working with them to progress their careers. The rise in rank and the number of mentor’s wanting to be involved in this year’s programme is a testament to not only the success of the pilot, but also how committed our leaders are in fostering the development of our women in the Service.”

Recently the Minister of Customs, Meka Whaitiri and Comptroller and Chief Executive of New Zealand Customs Service, Christine Stevenson met with Nicky and Sam to learn more about the Women’s Network Programme.

Christine Stevenson said “I am very focussed on helping women into leadership positions, and initiatives like this are great to support more of our women to be ready and confident to apply for these positions when they come around.

We are very fortunate, and I feel incredibly grateful, to have senior women officers who are prepared to work so hard for those coming up behind them. The results have been fantastic – engaged mentees and mentors and successful promotions – and the word is clearly getting around about how good this is!”

Customs’ People and Capability work group are pleased with both Programme’s successes and have advised that it will prioritise a Customs-wide Mentoring Programme again for 2024-2025.

*Image (L-R): Samantha Hope, Minister of Customs Meka Whaitiri, Nicola Woon, and Customs Comptroller Christine Stevenson*

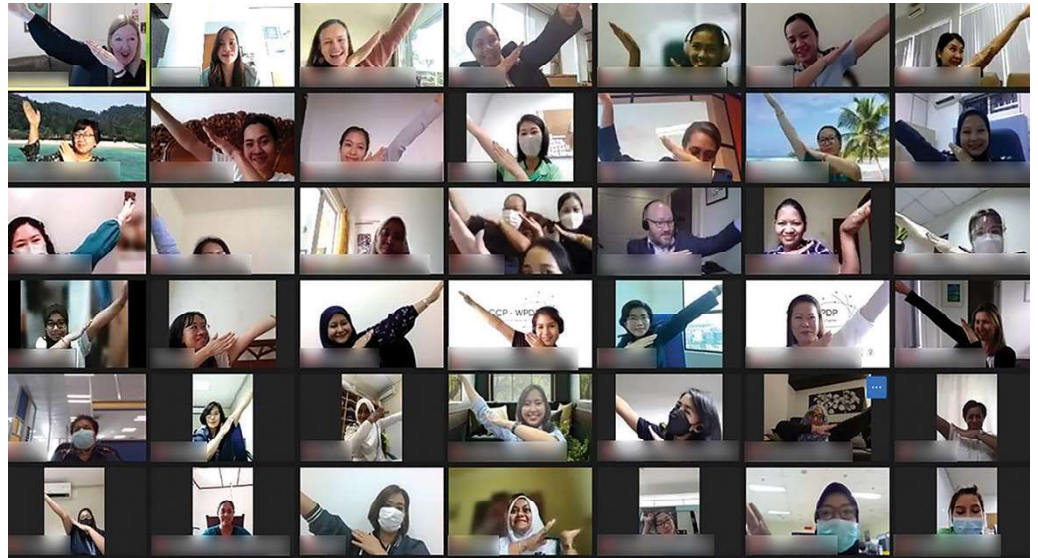
*/ Submitted by New Zealand Customs Service / Edited by Marivi Martin, ABF Assistant Director*

# WE CAN!

## – Women in Customs

**Women in Customs are succeeding and achieving. Women are disrupting drug trafficking, intercepting harmful shipments, detecting revenue fraud and representing their agencies with distinction.**

*Written by Michelle Bond,  
A/g ABF Superintendent  
/ Edited by Marivi Martin  
ABF Assistant Director*



Around the world, progressive institutions recognise the importance of strengthening gender balance. While positive efforts have been made, women remain significantly underrepresented in customs leadership.

Women play a critical role in global security; however, like other law enforcement agencies, customs continues to be a male-majority profession. In 2021, the World Customs Organization (WCO) reported that 37 per cent of the global customs workforce are women and 16 per cent of senior customs roles are held by women. In the Asia/Pacific region, women's representation in frontline and leadership roles in national customs administrations is expected to be even lower.

Women have both the capacity and the right to play a role, at all levels, in the critical work of our Customs

administrations. Research confirms that greater gender diversity leads to more effective outcomes for operational procedures, global trade facilitation and national security. Despite this evidence, significant barriers to women's recruitment, career progression and appointment to leadership roles within global national customs administrations endure.

The ABF has delivered two Women's Professional Development Programs (WPDP) into the Asia/Pacific region within the last 12 months, in partnership with key international multilateral stakeholders and RMIT University's Transnational Security Centre. A total of 118 emerging female officers from 27 countries in our region have successfully completed the program and successes are already being realised with women being promoted, contributing to published articles in the recent edition of the World Customs Journal (WCJ),

contributing to a shift in mindset in their respective administrations, continue to nurture strong connections and relationships and collaborating to detect, deter and disrupt transnational organised crime.

The focus of the WPDP was emerging female customs leaders in the Asia/Pacific region and our goal was to inspire and upskill these women to become capable, confident and future-ready leaders. The vehicle was an innovative program designed specifically to build leadership capabilities, technical skills and international connections. The program's aim is to develop women in the Asia/Pacific region to become effective leaders in the customs and border protection domain through the delivery of training and ongoing mentoring.

The ABF is committed to delivering innovation but also to taking a proactive approach to ensure gender equality both within our own agency and the broader customs community. We focused on delivering a robust, innovative and personable training that focused on supporting emerging women to develop their leadership skills and confidence to approach their current roles and their future leadership journey feeling inspired and capable.

The program also focused on creating and nurturing a network that will support these women throughout their careers – which has given them an international network that will serve them both personally and professionally as they forge ahead. Male counterparts have benefitted significantly from these sorts of opportunities and networks to further their professional development so we wanted to find a way to make this a reality for women too. The program was a springboard for emerging women leaders in customs to graduate with a real readiness, confidence to lead in the complex environment that is customs and global trade today.

The promotion of cooperation and collaboration within the program seeks to establish a strong network amongst participants and the ABF. This is likely to provide avenues to share information and strengthen bilateral/multilateral operational efforts to address transnational crime and border threats to disrupt illicit goods movements upstream in the border continuum.

In April 2022 the inaugural program, 'Container Control Programme – Women's Professional Development Programme' (CCP-WPDP) was recognised with a 2022 United Nations (UN) Gender award. The award recognises the outcomes of the program for strengthening gender inclusivity and empowering female officers in law enforcement.

Women in Customs are succeeding and achieving. Women are disrupting drug trafficking, intercepting harmful shipments, detecting revenue fraud and representing their agencies with distinction. If we are not engaging women, we are missing out on 50 per cent of the best people.



## ***SPOTLIGHT FROM THE EDITOR***





# Australasian Council of Women and Policing (ACWAP)

The Australian Border Force is very proud to share its nominee, A/g Superintendent, Michelle Bond won the prestigious ACWAP award for 2022. Michelle is the first ABF officer to win this award since its inception.

Established in August 1997, the Australasian Council of Women and Policing (ACWAP) is a growing group of women and men within police services, law enforcement agencies and the community who are working together to:

- **Improve the policing services provided to women;**
- **Improve opportunities / outcomes for women within policing; and**
- **Participate in the global network of women in policing.**

The ACWAP 2022 Excellence in Policing Awards was held on 19 October 2022 in Sydney and was kindly supported and co-hosted by the NSW Police Force, Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Australian Border Force (ABF). The Awards are an opportunity to publicly acknowledge and reward the achievements of women and men who are contributing to improving policing and law enforcement and ensuring services are enhanced for women in our communities. The Awards acknowledge the work being undertaken in the region to ensure that women's concerns and needs are considered by policing and law enforcement.

The 23rd Excellence in Policing Awards was held in conjunction with the ACWAP Professional Development Day with the theme **ReConnect: Together for a better future**. The event provided opportunities for women and men from diverse inter-jurisdictional policing and law enforcement agencies to discuss key topics in today's current society, take-away some key learnings and network with like-minded women.

The ABF nominated A/g Superintendent Michelle Bond for the **Most Outstanding Female Practitioner** category. The recipients of this award need to have:

- **shown a tangible commitment to improving the delivery of law enforcement services to women in the community;**
- **mentored, supported and/or provided guidance to others within law enforcement, particularly women; and**
- **enhanced the profile of women in law enforcement.**

Michelle has a genuine passion and drive in advancing Women's Leadership in Customs across the Asia/Pacific.

*"In the short time that I have known Michelle, she definitely lives by example. It is inspiring to speak to someone who is so well versed in the plight of women in law enforcement agencies and yet so humble and accommodating to the many questions I have asked her. I'm sure, you'll all join me in congratulating Michelle – an asset to the ABF and all women in law enforcement agencies."*



This is evident through her design, organisation and delivery of the Women's Professional Development Program. She has been a strident advocate for advancing Women in Customs. In a male dominated environment, she continues to advocate that if we are not engaging women, we are missing out on 50 per cent of the best people.

Image: Michelle Bond, winner of the 2022 ACWAP Most Outstanding Female Practitioner award

Written by Marivi Martin  
ABF Assistant Director

## The Contribution of Women Customs Officers in Empowering Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) at Customs Regional Office of Banten, Indonesia

Women's Empowerment in Customs is part of the United Nation's Goals for Sustainable Development for 2030, in accordance with Objective 5, *"Achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls."*

Written by Firsti Masdiani  
Head Division of Customs  
and Excise Facilities, Customs  
Regional Office of Banten  
/ Edited by Marivi Martin  
ABF Assistant Director



Women's Empowerment in Customs is part of the United Nations (UN) Goals for Sustainable Development for 2030, in accordance with Objective Five (5), *"Achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls"*.

In Indonesia, the contribution of women in Customs is important and Indonesian Customs has been committed to empowering women since 2013.

In spite of the pandemic, customs has a duty to maintain its three (3) main tasks – **community protection, revenue collection, and industrial assistance and trade facilitation** – in order to contribute to a sustainable economy in Indonesia.

MSMEs have proven they can survive in an environment of disruption – proven especially at the height of the

pandemic. Like many areas of the economy, MSMEs' income expectation have decreased significantly. This meant seeking and/or requiring assistance during these difficult times. The owners of MSMEs are mostly women - some retirees, elderlies, job seekers, and housewives who would like to help their families to earn more income. Most MSMEs come from the middle to lower economic levels.

In this regard, the government has issued regulations on fiscal and non-fiscal incentives where all ministries should be involved in empowering MSMEs. The finance minister stated that MSMEs have contributed to the economy and we must collaboratively support them not only in domestic economic scale activities but also in exporting their products.





*Image: Officers and staff of the Indonesia Directorate General of Customs and Excise at the Regional Office of Banten Indonesia demonstrate their commitment to their role and supporting MSMEs*

**To implement the direction of the Minister of Finance, Indonesia Customs launched seven strategies to help empower MSMEs:**

- 1. Fiscal Policy Regulation, in the form of providing Fiscal Incentives for MSMEs**
- 2. Logistics Support in the form of the National Logistics Ecosystem program**
- 3. Export Clinic and Ministry of Finance synergy program**
- 4. IT Support in the form of Database and export performance Dashboard**
- 5. Collaboration with Kemenkeu One, other Government agencies, with Indonesia attaché and customs internal synergy**
- 6. Designing Key Performance Indicators from Head Office to Service Office, and**
- 7. Strengthening communication strategies**

Following on from these strategies, Banten Customs Regional Office:

- Undertook several programs in 2022
- Uncovered and educated on export and re-import regulations
- Provided on-site MSMEs assistance
- Coordinated with other Government and private agencies, and business matching with Indonesian attachés.
- Provided IT support in the form of one stop information platform for MSMEs.
- Assessed the performance of officers using Key Performance Index, and
- Monitored and evaluated the programs regularly.

Going forward, MSMEs will still face several challenges such as maintaining product and service quality standards. Indonesian products are popular in other countries, so products must be maintained in good quality, fulfil the requirements of the 'go green' initiative, sanitation, and health issues according to other countries' regulations.

The second challenge is financial. Since most MSMEs start their business from scratch and come from lower-middle socioeconomic backgrounds, budget support from government is necessary for developing their enterprises.

With the advancement of digitalisation, MSMEs must be responsive and continuously develop their capabilities in order to compete in a sustainable global economy. To help them realise these goals, Customs and Excise needs to continuously assist, encourage, provide services, and empower them to complete export procedures that lead to increased national income.

Ultimately, in Smart Economics issues, people with different backgrounds bring different perspectives and ideas into the organization, which can improve efficiency and effectiveness. Women in customs have undertaken roles to improve working conditions in their work environment. To become an agile leader, women in customs can enhance their motivation and capabilities.

## Empowered Women = Vigilant Customs

**At present, the Vigilance machinery of Indian Customs and Indirect Taxes is very efficiently handled by some of the brilliant lady officers of Indian Revenue Service (Customs & Indirect Taxes).**

*Submitted by  
the Central Board of Indirect  
Taxes and Customs,  
Republic of India  
/ Edited by Marivi Martin  
ABF Assistant Director*

Two senior women officers, both having a long and distinguished career with the department, are currently at the helm of Vigilance, set up in Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).

Customs has set new standards of high performance including disposal of pending disciplinary cases and preventive vigilance activities. Due to their visionary approach a number of effective initiatives to redesign the business processes as well as to bring systemic improvements have been undertaken. Continued emphasis on preventive vigilance activities has been another important aspect of their approach. With such excellent results, the Central Vigilance Commission has earned continuous accolades and its place at the apex of Vigilance body of Government of India.



*Senior Customs Officers of  
the Central Board of Indirect  
Taxes and Customs, Indian  
Revenue Service discuss  
Vigilance efforts*

Ms Sungita Sharma, an IRS (C&IT) officer of 1986 batch is handling the portfolio of Member (Administration) in CBIC and in that capacity oversees the Vigilance matters of the service.

Ms Suchitra Sharma, an IRS (C&IT) officer of 1987 batch is currently the Chief Vigilance Officer (CVO) of CBIC and also heads its Directorate General of Vigilance (DGoV) as Principal Director General (DG), since September 2020. With these two women at the helm, excellent results have been achieved in key target areas, along with empathy and humane angle brought into fruition of complex disciplinary proceedings.

Under the able guidance and inspiring leadership of these two officers, the vigilance administration of Indian

It is very heartening to note that amongst the deputies of CVO, the two most important jurisdictional charges are also commanded by female officers. Ms V. Usha, IRS (C&IT) of 1990 batch and Ms Prachi Saroop, IRS (C&IT) of 1991 batch are heading the North & West Zonal Units of DG Vigilance respectively, as Principal Additional Director General. In addition, Ms Anice Joseph Chandra, IRS (C&IT) of 1995 batch is posted as ADG in DGoV Headquarters. DGoV is also supported by able women officers Ms Sarika Shah, ADC, Ms Ankita Singh, DC and Ms Nidhi Gupta, DC in middle management roles.

Women have a significant presence at all levels in DGoV and are contributing significantly towards strengthening the vigilance machinery of Indian Customs. CBIC is immensely proud of its female officers and wishes to maintain this gender parity in decision making in all areas of administration.



# ***WOMEN IN ACTION***



## Q&A with Natalie Cross – Detector Dog Handler

Australian Border Force (ABF) dog handler Officer Natalie Cross reflects on her role in the ABF detector dog team and the journey she took to get there.



*ABF dog handler Officer Natalie Cross reflects on her role in the ABF detector dog team and the journey she took to get there*

The Australian Border Force (ABF) is proud of the high female representation across all levels and disciplines within the Detector Dog Program (DDP). This includes the roles of Inspector, Senior Instructor, Training Instructors, Canine Development Team Leaders, many Detector Dog Handlers and Puppy and Juvenile Canine Development Officers and support staff.

These women support the crucial role the ABF's DDP plays in helping protect Australia's borders from the importation of prohibited and restricted goods.

***When did you first join the ABF and what were you doing previously?***

I first joined the Australian Border Force (ABF), then known as the Australian Customs Service, in September 2001. Previously, I was a stockwoman working in live export shipping, one of the first females in such a role in Australia, and before that I was a veterinary nurse for about five years.

I grew up on a farm west of Bundaberg in Queensland, and have always had an affinity with animals and enjoyed working with them!



### ***When and how did you enter the ABF detector dog unit?***

Well that's quite a story, spanning 15 years! With great clarity, I recall walking into the airport environment when I began my training in 2001, and seeing a dog and its handler and thinking "Okay, that is absolutely going to be me eventually!"

I then proceeded to work in airports and district offices including Gladstone, Townsville and Cairns over many years. In the interim, I also had periods of leave raising my three children and focusing on family, but finally in 2015 I became a Training Aid Coordinating Officer in the dog unit here in Cairns. I subsequently applied to become a dog handler and my intensive three-month course began in 2016.

### ***What is, or has been the most challenging aspect of the job?***

I think the fact that what we do is not always black and white. You have to be highly trained, highly attuned to your dog, and assess each situation on its specific merits.

You have to constantly problem solve situations with your dog, whether it's for training or live operations, to get the best results. It is important to know your dog, to make sure it is in peak performance to do its role well.

### ***What is something you have learnt doing this role?***

Quite simply, how important a good team is. As much as you may love your job, if you don't have a good team it is so impactful. I've developed the courage to help direct the culture as well. You have to make sure everyone at all levels has a voice and has their input appreciated. Respect and understanding is critical, and I am fortunate to have a great team here in Cairns, and excellent colleagues across our section and branch.

### ***Do you feel like you contribute to Australia's national security?***

I actually really like this question and think about it a lot. There are times, here in Cairns, where we might be self-conscious about the fact that we have a different operational tempo to places like Sydney or Melbourne.

But we can uncover things here through one detection that can contribute to intelligence gathering, which has downstream impacts on further detections elsewhere and following criminal investigations. We contribute vital pieces into the greater jigsaw puzzle, and this has happened numerous times.

We also do a lot of joint work with state police. If we detect some cannabis, there is an outsized impact on preventing that from entering some of our most vulnerable communities in Far North Queensland and the link it can have to things like sexual abuse, domestic violence and truancy. Finally, our very presence in the community has an invaluable deterrence effect.

### ***How well represented are women in the detector dog team?***

Women are well represented in the ABF detector dog team, and I'm very grateful for it. I have worked in a number of male dominated industries, and it has not been uncommon for me to be the only female in a work situation.

I really appreciate the strong female role models in the detector dog unit, both leaders, and colleagues. These talented women continue to have a significant positive impact, and I'm grateful for that.

*Submitted by  
Cairns Detector Dog Unit,  
ABF Detector Dog Program /  
Edited by Marivi Martin,  
ABF Assistant Director*

## Women's Role in Western Australia Maritime Operations

ABF Maritime Operations Western Australia (WA) have been increasing activity in support of Operation VAULTER targeting the increasing risk of drug trafficking occurring along the vast and remote coastline.

***“Working in such a diverse environment pushes me beyond my comfort zone”***

The Australian Border Force (ABF), as a law enforcement agency, recognises and understands the importance of representing the community it serves and encourages diversity in all areas. Diversity recognises the strength of different skill sets and increases innovation. In Maritime Operations, gender diversity is evident, with women involved in every aspect of operational activities. Senior Border Force Officer Amanda states, *“Working in such a diverse environment pushes me beyond my comfort zone. Since returning to work following maternity leave, I have accomplished things I never thought possible, from becoming a Confined Space Specialised Officer to leading multi-agency teams during high risk armed boarding operations, including boarding vessels underway via pilot ladder or helicopter”*.

ABF officers from Maritime Operations in Western Australia (WA) have been increasing activity in support of ABF's Operation VAULTER which was stood up to treat the ever increasing risk of drug trafficking occurring along a vast and remote coastline. Operational activity extends along incredible distances, with the WA coast encompassing nearly 21,000km (almost 13,000 miles), it covers approximately one third of Australia's border. ABF activities, and Operation VAULTER, are supported by nine district offices, all of which have a diverse staffing footprint that sees female officers in critical frontline roles. Officers need to be multi-skilled, adaptable and flexible in order to deal with the many challenges they face.

Although Operation VAULTER is an ABF-led operation, it recognises that a co-ordinated border management approach is key to effectively combatting illicit activities. The operation builds and leverages relationships with partner law enforcement, defence and other government agencies to provide a holistic multi-agency response. This enables ABF to conduct high visibility, integrated and sustained activities in order to detect and deter criminal activity in the region.

Criminal syndicates are becoming more sophisticated with various maritime-based concealment methods attempted over the past 12 months, including underwater concealments on large commercial vessels, 'mother-daughter' vessel transfers and 'rip-offs' utilising sea cargo containers.

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### **Activities undertaken by ABF officers in support of this operation include:**

- **Port control activities such as:**
    - **identification checks; and**
    - **vehicle searches**
  - **Vessel boardings and searches, both at sea and at berth**
  - **Crew checks**
  - **Container inspections**
  - **CCTV monitoring**
  - **Inshore marine patrols**
  - **Onshore remote area patrols**
-





Officers utilise specialised equipment such as detector dogs, trace and substance identification technology, biometric collection tools, confined space search equipment and self-contained breathing apparatus.

Community members can also play an important role in assisting ABF fight drug trafficking. The operation works with the Border Watch program to encourage the public to be the 'eyes and ears' for ABF and to report suspicious activities to a dedicated 24/7 hotline.

Operation VAULTER's intent to work collaboratively with joint agencies and community partners to detect and disrupt organised crime groups

attempting to import illicit drugs is realised through the excellent work of ABF officers, led by the Operation Commander, ABF Inspector John Sweet.



*Image (above): ABF Maritime Operations activity in support of Operation VAULTER at Western Australia's ports*

*Image (left): ABF Maritime Operations activity in support of Operation VAULTER off the Western Australian coastline /*

*Written by Sarah Lovett,  
ABF Supervisor /  
Edited by Janayah Orchard,  
ABF Cadet*



# Women on the Frontline

There cannot be any one single day sufficient to celebrate and recognise women and their contributions to society, but every year the world comes together on 8 March to highlight the stories of women.

Submitted by  
the Central Board of Indirect  
Taxes and Customs (CBIC)  
/ Edited by Janayah Orchard,  
ABF Cadet



There cannot be any one single day sufficient to celebrate and recognise women and their contributions to society, but every year the world comes together on 8 March to highlight the stories of women who work tirelessly all around the world in making it a better place to live in.

As part of CBIC's events under 'AzadiKaAmritMahotsav (AKAM)', on 12 October 2021, only female Customs Officers were chosen for operational duties, including Frontline staff at Airports, to celebrate the memory of the raising of 1st Women's Battalion in India - the Rani Jhansi Regiment.

# Women on the Open Water

The tough women from Sorong Marine Customs (Indonesia Directorate General of Customs and Excise) are always ready to protect the integrity and security of the seas of the Republic Of Indonesia.



Submitted by  
the Directorate General of  
Customs and Excise /  
Edited by Janayah Orchard,  
ABF Cadet

The DGCE is the first Indonesian agency, other than the Indonesian Navy, to have a contingent of dedicated marine patrol ships (starting since 1953), with a fleet of three ships.

Personnel manning the DGCE Patrol Vessel Fleet underwent in-depth training on Ship Safety, Search and Rescue, Transportation Means Inspection Techniques, and knowledge of Legislative Provisions in Customs and Excise among requirements in other related fields.

*Image: Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) officers carry out patrol duties and customs law enforcement at sea on the bridge of the Sorong Type B class vessel, which is a unit of DGCE assigned to oversee the seas of Papua, West Papua, Maluku and North Maluku in support of Customs and Excise Operations.*



## **WOMEN IN PROFILE**

# **Australian Indigenous Cadet in the Australian Border Force**

**I have only just commenced in this role, but have already learnt so much and  
I am looking forward to the many varied opportunities it can offer.**

***I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, where I live and work in the Australian Capital Territory (Canberra), the Ngunnawal people, and pay my respect to them and their continued advocacy, strength and contribution to the growth of First Nations' peoples and cultural recognition in this region. I also pay my respects to the traditional custodians of Meanjin (Brisbane), and specifically Yugambeh country (Logan), where my family and I call home***

*Written by Janayah Orchard,  
ABF Cadet  
/ Edited by Marivi Martin,  
ABF Assistant Director*



Wunyang (wone-young) / “hello” in my traditional Aboriginal language. My name is Janayah and I am a proud Aboriginal woman. My cultural connection is with the Gooreng Gooreng nation, from South Burnett region in South East Queensland, and the Kullili nation, from South West Queensland.

I am an Australia Border Force (ABF) Indigenous Cadet and I am undertaking this role as part of the Office of the Secretariat, working to directly support the ABF Commissioner in his capacity as the World Customs Organization (WCO) Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair.

The Australian Public Service has developed the Indigenous Apprenticeship Program (IAP) to increase the employment rates and diversity of First Nations staff within

Australian Government sectors, and I am glad to represent First Nations' peoples as a successful applicant. The IAP is a 12-month long program that offers a permanent, full-time, entry-level job in government, while also providing the opportunity to complete a Diploma in Government and Project Management. I applied for this program to further develop my professional skills and experience working in federal government. My previous work experience has been working with young indigenous adolescents that have come into contact with the Queensland (QLD) justice system. Everything I have worked on and have achieved in my life so far has always had this focus of supporting people and their communities. My goal is to inspire and pave the path for the next generation of Indigenous Australians.

The ABF was my first choice when applying for this program as, although I had minimal understanding of what types of roles the ABF entailed, my main motivation is to help protect and keep Australia and Australians safe. And, moreover, I wanted to be a part of something bigger than myself, and contribute to something greater. I have always been drawn by a sense of national service and I am very much looking forward to undertaking this role of Customs-focused international engagement, especially as a First Nations woman. I look forward to helping contribute to an inclusive environment and sharing a First Nations' perspective on topical issues that I hope can create further opportunities for my community.



## ***NEWS FROM THE REGION***





# Indonesia's Customs Day Celebration 2022



Submitted by  
the Directorate General of  
Customs and Excise  
/ Edited by Janayah Orchard,  
ABF Cadet

After independence, Indonesia's Customs and Excise Agency was formed on 1st October 1946 under the name Customs and Excise Service. Indonesia's first Minister of Finance, Mr Sjafruddin Prawiranegara appointed Mr R.A. Kartadjoemena as the first Head of Customs and Excise. Since then, 1st October has become a day of importance to Indonesia to commemorate the formation of Indonesia Customs and Excise Day.

Customs and Excise Service became a significant pillar of the Republic of Indonesia's history by pursuing

continuous reforms towards a better organisation. Now, it serves under the name of Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE).

This year, the Directorate General of Customs and Excise celebrated the 76th Customs Day with the theme 'Collaboration to Develop the Nation'. The theme is intended to strengthen the cooperation and collaboration of both internal and external stakeholders of DGCE. It also positions DGCE as one the front-line agencies at the border, not only responsible for protecting the community and facilitation of global



trade, but also its participation in the development of the country.

To commemorate the Indonesia Customs Day, DGCE held a ceremony led by the Minister of Finance on October 4th 2022. Following the ceremony, there was a Customs parade performed by Indonesia Customs officers with special tasks such as Customs Enforcement Team, Marine Customs officers, Customs laboratory

out their duties amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for the front-line officers. The success of Indonesia in overcoming the pandemic was also the work of Customs in which she is proud of and she thanked Customs for their dedication. She also appreciated DGCE for their achievement in completing their tenure as WCO Asia Pacific Vice-chair 2020-2022. This extraordinary achievement should be a source of encouragement to continuously



officers, K9 handlers, and special Marine Customs team. A series of performances was also presented by talented Customs officers. In addition to DGCE officials and officers from Headquarters, the event was also attended by several high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Finance, Jakarta-based Customs Attachés, as well as former Directors General of Indonesia Customs.

In her remarks, Minister of Finance expressed gratitude to all Customs officers who have been undaunted and remain professional in carrying

improve organisational performance, as Customs is one of the agencies that determines Indonesia's progress. She concluded her remarks by reminding that Customs needs to remain vigilant since at the end of the year and for early next year, it is estimated that global economic conditions will weaken.

Submitted by  
the Directorate General of  
Customs and Excise /  
Edited by Janayah Orchard,  
ABF Cadet



## Thai Customs Hosted the APEC Customs Business Dialogue (ACBD) and the APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures Meetings for APEC Thailand 2022

The ACBD 2022 included a panel discussion on “Customs and Green Economy: Enhancing Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability” by panelists from APEC Customs Administrations

Submitted by the Thai  
Customs Department  
/ Edited by Janayah Orchard,  
ABF Cadet



Tuesday 23 August 2022 at 9.00 am, Mr Patchara Anuntasilpa, Director-General of the Thai Customs Department, said it was his honour to deliver a welcome and opening address for the APEC Customs Business Dialogue (ACBD) 2022, which was held in a hybrid format at Ballroom 3 of the Shangri-La Hotel, Chiang Mai, and via online meeting platform.

The ACBD 2022 consisted of exhibition activities and a panel discussion on ‘Customs and Green Economy: Enhancing Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability’ by panelists from APEC Customs Administrations, namely, the United States Customs and Border Protection (USCBP); the Thai Customs Department; and the Royal Malaysian Customs Department (RMCD). They were accompanied by private sector operators, namely, Great Wall Motor Manufacturing (Thailand) Co. Ltd.; JWD InfoLogistics Pub Co. Ltd.; SCG

Logistics Management Co. Ltd.; and INSEE Ecocycle Co. Ltd.; as well as international organisations, namely, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). On this occasion, Mr Phantong Loykulnanta, Deputy Director-General from Thai Customs shared practices and ideas on such issues as a representative from Thai Customs.

In the afternoon of the same day, Mr Patchara delivered welcome remarks for the Second APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) Meeting, which would be held from 23 to 25 August 2022 in a hybrid format at Ballroom 3 of the Shangri-La Hotel, Chiang Mai. The Meeting was chaired by Mr Chaikut Kumkun, Principle Advisor on Customs Control Development, and attended by SCCP member economies, including Thailand.

## Thai Customs Hosted the 26th Meeting of the Joint Customs Committee for the Joint Development of Area (JDA) Seven (7)



Submitted by the Thai  
Customs Department /  
Edited by Janayah Orchard,  
ABF Cadet

Mr Chaiyut Kumkun, Principle Advisor on Customs Control Development as the chair of the meeting, together with delegates from Thai Customs Department, attended the 26th Meeting of the Joint Customs Committee for the Joint Development Area (JDA), which was held on the 7 and 8 September 2022 at the Westin Siray Bay Resort and Spa, Phuket.

The meeting aimed to discuss and exchange opinions on Customs cooperation in the Joint Development Area (JDA) as well as to update on several activities /operations in the JDA to ensure smooth implementation.

# **REGIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING**

## **WCO Asia/Pacific**

### **Digital Forensics Workshop**

The Office for the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair aims to continue hosting and supporting a series of capacity building events during its tenure.



The Australian Border Force, ROCB A/P, Japan Customs and WCO Secretariat Kimberlee Stamatis with ABF Commander Lauren Richardson and Asia/Pacific Regional Custom Officers and Workshop Participants

/ Submitted by the Australian Border Force / Edited by Adriana Rajic, ABF Assistant Director

Recently the Australian Border Force (ABF), in its capacity as the World Customs Organization (WCO) Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair, in cooperation with WCO Customs Operational Practices for Enforcement and Seizures (COPES), the Asia/Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB A/P) and sponsored by Japan Customs, hosted the WCO Asia/Pacific Region Digital Forensics Workshop in Perth, Australia, from 17 to 21 October.

Digital Forensics is an important technology for the collection of evidence and resources for investigations by Customs administrations.

With a focus on cyber investigation techniques, extraction of data on IT tools and digital evidence management, the workshop also provided an opportunity for experts and participants to share experiences and to discuss the way forward, as well as to raise awareness and provide a platform to share regional best practices.

The Office for the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair aims to continue hosting and supporting a series of capacity building events during its two-year tenure.



## GLOBAL SNAPSHOT

# Empowering Emerging Women Leaders in Law Enforcement and Customs

In September 2022, Mr Ahmad Mian, First Secretary Beirut, represented the Australian Border Force (ABF) at a Regional Gender Equality event hosted by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC).



Image (L-R): UNODC Regional Training Officer, Ms Maya Abi Adam and Mr Ahmad Mian, First Secretary ABF Beirut.

In September 2022, Mr Ahmad Mian, First Secretary Beirut, represented the Australian Border Force (ABF) at a Regional Gender Equality event hosted by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Container Control Programme (CCP) in Lebanon.

The event provided a unique opportunity to build leadership skills, enhance networks and share experiences with recruiting and promoting women in law-enforcement and customs agencies in the Middle East and Northern Africa region.

Ms Maya Abi Adam, a Lebanon-based CCP Regional Training Officer seconded from the Lebanese Customs Agency, said since joining CCP it has been a non-stop adventure.

***“I work with law enforcement officers from all over the region. I enjoy identifying their needs, supporting their professional development and inspiring them to perform a better job” - Ms Maya Abi Adam***

‘One big personal challenge for me is to find the balance between my passion for my work and my love and dedication for my family, especially as my work involves a lot of travel.

*Submitted by the Department of Home Affairs / Edited by Marivi Martin, ABF Assistant Director*

‘My colleagues and supervisors from Lebanese customs support me in my new role and anticipate my return, as a more experienced leader with a broader vision,’ Maya said.

The event was attended by female officers and leaders from Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon’s border agencies, as well as senior advisors from the UNODC. Given customs work is often performed in isolated offices in remote locations, representatives spoke to this issue in the context of their respective agencies as well as recognising women’s achievements in the workplace, key barriers hindering women’s progression into leadership roles, such as cultural and social barriers, biases women face at work and access to flexible work arrangements.

Events like the Regional Gender Equality forum help enhance gender balance in leadership across the ABF and sets a strong example for women in the public service.

# RECENT AND UPCOMING WCO EVENTS

**October 2022** 28th SAFE Working Group  
Digital Forensics Workshop, Perth  
Regional Private Sector Group Asia/Pacific Meeting  
**237th / 238th Permanent Technical Committee**  
107th Finance Committee

**November 2022** Opening Ceremony of Thai Customs' Regional Training Center (RTC)  
20th Meeting of Heads of Regional Training Centers (RTC Heads), Bangkok  
**32nd Regional Contact Points (RCP) Meeting, Brisbane**  
Caucus ahead of 87th Policy Commission (TBD)

**December 2022** **87th Policy Commission, Bahrain (5 - 7 December 2022)**  
Caucus w/ WCO Asia/Pacific RSP Coordinators (TBD)

**January 2023** -

**February 2023** Caucus ahead of WCO Modernization Plan – Development (TBD)  
17th Audit Committee (13 - 14 February)  
14th Capacity Building Committee (22 - 24 February)  
**18th Global Meeting of Regional Entities (20 - 21 February)**

**March 2023** **WCO Modernization Plan – Development (TBD)**  
43rd Enforcement Committee (27 - 31 March)  
29th SAFE Working Group (1 - 3 March)

**April 2023** **24th Regional heads of Customs Administration (RHCA), Perth (TBD)**  
108th Finance Committee (3 - 6 April)  
**239th / 240th Permanent Technical Committee (24 - 28 April)**

**May 2023** -

**June 2023** **WCO/UPU Global Conference, Tokyo (5 - 9 June)**  
Caucus ahead of 88th Policy Commission (TBD)  
**88th Policy Commission (19 - 21 June)**  
**WCO COUNCIL (141st/142nd) 22 JUNE 2022**

# MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARIAT: NEWSLETTER ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS



First, thank you to all the contributors from all of the Asia/Pacific Customs Administrations and local commands that submitted articles and pictures for the November 2022 issue of the Asia/Pacific Customs News newsletter, including:

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**The Australian Border Force**

**The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs of India**

**The Directorate General of Customs and Excise of Indonesia**

**The New Zealand Customs Service**

**The Thai Customs Department**

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The Office of the Secretariat for the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair is also very grateful to our colleagues in the Directorate General of Customs and Excise of Indonesia for their stewardship of the newsletter over the past two years, and in generating such

informative and interesting content, but also for their comprehensive guidance about managing the publication and for setting such a high example to follow.

Thank you again to all contributors for your submissions and helping to make this issue of Asia/Pacific Customs News a success. We would like to take this opportunity to invite Asia/Pacific regional customs administrations to consider submitting an article for the next issue, **Volume #68**, the theme of which will focus on the important topic of '*Supply Chain Integrity*.' Please send your submissions, including any photos we may publish, to the Secretariat mailbox at [apvc-wco@abf.gov.au](mailto:apvc-wco@abf.gov.au).

We hope you have enjoyed reading Volume #67 of the Asia/Pacific Customs News on '*Women in Customs*' and that you will look forward to the next issue in March 2023.



**NOTES**

# INDUSTRY SUMMIT



## 2022 Home Affairs Portfolio Industry Summit

International Convention and Exhibition Centre, Sydney Australia, 16 - 17 November 2022

A conversation on National Resilience between the Department of Home Affairs Portfolio (including the Australian Border Force) and Industry.

The Home Affairs Portfolio's annual Industry Summit is its premier industry engagement event. Preparations are underway for the 2022 Home Affairs Portfolio Industry Summit with this year's event being held at the International Convention and Exhibition Centre (ICC) in Sydney, Australia from Wednesday 16 to Thursday 17 November. This year's theme is **National Resilience**.

The Summit will bring together industry leaders, senior government executives, members of the diplomatic corps, academia and the community. The program of events includes Ministerial addresses, panel discussions, exhibitions and workshops that cover the breadth of the Portfolio's responsibilities. Further information can be found at **Industry Engagement Summit** ([homeaffairs.gov.au](https://homeaffairs.gov.au))



**ASIA/PACIFIC  
CUSTOMS NEWS**

Volume #67 November 2022

**WOMEN IN  
CUSTOMS**

Growth | Unity | Security | Prosperity