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**FUTURE OF CUSTOMS IMPORT ENTRY PROCESSING SYSTEMS**

Customs has recently concluded a review of future directions for its existing import entry processing systems, namely COMPILE, Interim EDIFICE and EDIFICE.

At the 17th meeting of the Customs National Consultative Council in December 1996, the Chief Executive Officer of Customs signalled an intention to consider phasing out the COMPILE system. He promised a minimum of two years notice before the COMPILE service was withdrawn and indicated that consultation with COMPILE users would be undertaken prior to any formal commitment on the timing being made.

In March this year a discussion paper was published and distributed to all COMPILE users. Following the receipt of submissions, a consultative group consisting of Peter Johnson and Lawrence Chan from Customs, Ron Aitken, the COMPILE User Representative, and Ernie Dean, the Vice President of the CBCA was formed.

After consultation with approximately 60 companies and associations Australia-wide, a findings paper was released on 1 September 1997.

Customs has now considered all information gained from the consultative process and has decided to adopt the following strategy:

immediate attention will be focussed on ensuring that the EDIFICE support infrastructure will deliver the levels of reliability and performance necessary to satisfy users requirements;

EDIFICE will be further enhanced to the point where, by 30 June 1999, it will be capable of delivering all the functionality currently provided by COMPILE;

existing COMPILE and Interim EDIFICE services will continue to be supported until at least the end of the year 2000.

In establishing this direction, Customs is mindful of the fact that developments arising from the Integrated Cargo System component of the Cargo Management Strategy are likely to alter the nature of cargo reporting and clearance processes and systems.

As different data reporting requirements develop, the clearly-defined, standards-based

interface which EDIFICE establishes is expected to prove much more flexible and adaptable than the direct COMPILE interface. Customs recognises, however, the need to continue to balance the use of on-line interactive and EDI-based services to best meet a range of client needs.

A project team will be established, in the near future, to commence design of the Integrated Cargo System. This design exercise will be conducted in close consultation with industry and will seek to ensure that future risks, posed by the increasing age, difficulty of acquiring skilled resources, and cost to maintain the core COMPILE system, are minimised. It is expected that a number of aspects of the Integrated Cargo System will start to be implemented during the period covered by the strategy outlined above

Customs is currently evaluating options for provision of an Internet-based import entry declaration facility which will initially be aimed at providing a lower cost alternative to the present manual entry processing option. This facility will be available by 1 April 1998. It is expected that over the coming years, the Internet will play a greater role in the delivery of Customs electronic systems.

Reassessment of the longer term support of COMPILE and Interim EDIFICE will be undertaken once more detail of the Integrated Cargo System is developed and the potential for the use of the Internet as a service delivery medium has been tested. An update on this announcement can therefore be expected towards the middle of 1998. In the meantime current users of the Customs import entry processing systems may rest assured that all of the current service offerings will continue to be supported for the foreseeable future.

(J M DRURY)

Deputy Chief Executive Officer

15 October 1997