



# QUICK GUIDE TO IMPORTS

## LICENSED CUSTOMS BROKERS

Licensed Customs brokers provide a professional service to importers by arranging the clearance of goods on their behalf. The Customs broker is responsible for clearing these goods through Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (Customs and Border Protection) and Biosecurity Service Group (Australian Quarantine Inspection Service) before they reach the Australian market.

### CLEARING GOODS INTO AUSTRALIA

The process of clearing goods involves the lodgement of an Import Declaration into the Integrated Cargo System (ICS). Full Import Declarations may be used to clear the goods directly into home consumption or move the goods into a warehouse pending the payment of duties and taxes. Other options for clearing goods are a Self Assessed Clearance (SAC) Declaration for low value goods or an Unaccompanied Personal Effects (UPE) Statement to clear household and personal belongings.

Clearing goods into Australia can be complex and requires in-depth knowledge of the Customs Tariff in order to correctly classify the goods for duty and tax calculation. In addition, certain types of goods are subject to government regulatory requirements such as motor vehicles and firearms. It is the responsibility of the customs broker in conjunction with the importer to ensure that those requirements are met before the goods are released into home consumption. Customs and Border Protection apply a cost recovery schedule of charges for import processing.

### REPORTING OPTIONS

There are several options available to Customs brokers to communicate cargo information to the ICS. These are as follows:

- manually, via a Customs and Border Protection counter
- report via the online ICS Customs Interactive facility
- report via electronic messaging using your own in house software or a commercially available package.

### REGISTRATION AND LICENSING

Customs brokers must be licensed under Customs and Border Protection legislation and operate in a strictly regulated environment. The process of obtaining a Customs broker's licence is complex and prospective licensees are advised to contact Customs and Border Protection for details. Customs brokers require a digital certificate/s and register in the ICS prior to submitting any electronic reports. Customs brokers who choose to report via the Customs Interactive facility should be aware that this facility best suits low volume reporters as there is no bulk lodgement functionality. Comprehensive supporting documentation is available to clients who wish to develop their own reporting software.

### FULL IMPORT DECLARATION (FID)

Full Import Declarations are used to clear goods valued over the threshold into Australia. It provides details of the cargo, its journey and entities involved. An Import Declaration may only be lodged by the importers or a licensed Customs broker. The Import Declaration is used to pay duties and taxes on the declared goods. Import Declarations link to Cargo Reports and are critical to the process of assessing risk and releasing cargo.

The risk assessment process takes time and some cases require further investigation which may impact on the delivery of the cargo. Both Customs and Border Protection and Biosecurity Service Group are responsible for the risk management of all imported cargo and the interception of high risk and prohibited items.

Import Declarations provide information about the goods including:

- details about the transportation of the goods
- details of the goods
- owner of the goods
- supplier of the goods
- value of the goods
- community protection information on the goods.

## CARGO REPORT SELF ASSESSED CLEARANCE (SAC) DECLARATIONS

The Cargo Report SAC declaration is lodged as a part of the Cargo Report message. It is used when the goods are:

- valued at less than the prescribed import entry threshold
- not tobacco or alcohol
- not subject to any prohibitions or restrictions.

## SHORT FORM SELF ASSESSED CLEARANCE (SAC) DECLARATIONS

A short form SAC declaration can be used where the goods are valued at less than the threshold and where required allows the importer to declare certain information such as the goods being subject to quarantine conditions or the goods being tobacco or alcohol. The short form SAC must be lodged electronically.

## UNACCOMPANIED PERSONAL EFFECTS (UPE) STATEMENT

This is a manual process to clear personal effects. The owner is required to complete a UPE Statement (Form B534). This may be lodged by the Customs broker or a nominee such as a friend, relative or importer. The Form B534 is a joint statement to Customs and Border Protection and Biosecurity Service Group. Supporting documentation such as packing lists and copies of passports are required when clearing UPEs.

## UNDERBOND MOVEMENTS

In addition to reporting vessels and cargo, Customs brokers may be responsible for moving their cargo from the place of discharge to another licensed premises or location for delivery. These moves are reported in the ICS electronically via an Underbond Movement Request. Requirements for underbond movements are mandated by legislation.

## PERMITS

Customs and Border Protection has responsibility for a range of legislation that provides for the importation of certain goods controlled by prohibition or restriction. Goods that are conditionally prohibited may not be imported unless all required import permits are obtained from the relevant Permit Issuing Agency. Permits must be quoted on the Import Declaration.

## CUSTOMS INTERACTIVE (CI) FACILITY

The ICS offers a comprehensive search and diagnostic facility where Customs brokers can view and amend the documents they have lodged. Details about the status of cargo are available to monitor its progress towards release. In addition, vessel and aircraft arrival information is available to all users.

## COMPLIANCE

Customs and Border Protection's Compliance Assurance Branch undertakes regular audit checks to ensure accuracy of Import Declarations against the commercial documents and the physical cargo. Commercial documents relating to the goods must be retained and available for inspection for at least five years.

Regional Compliance officers are available to help clients to comply with Customs and Border Protection requirements. Compliance officers are also on hand to undertake onsite visits and provide a range of educational and other helpful material.

Penalties apply where instances of non-compliance with Customs and Border Protection requirements are detected.

