



**Australian Government**

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**Department of Immigration and  
Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs**

2002-03

# INTRODUCTION

REVIEW BY SECRETARY

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The key role of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) is to manage and provide advice on migration and humanitarian policy, border control, Australian citizenship, multicultural affairs, settlement services and Indigenous affairs. The department operates in an often difficult and uncertain global environment and continues to respond well to the challenges it faces in managing our programs.

### MIGRATION PROGRAM

Australia's 2002-03 Migration Program was delivered on target. It was the largest in a decade and the most highly skilled ever. The Program was delivered at the upper end of the announced planning range, with an outcome of 108,070 and a Skill Stream outcome of 66,050 or 61.1 per cent of the Program. Australia continued to attract highly skilled migrants and respond to genuine close family reunion claims. In general terms skilled migrants were younger, had better English language skills, were more highly qualified and were targeted towards meeting national skill shortages.

### HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

The department continues to focus particular effort on improving the operation of Australia's humanitarian resettlement program.

A total of 12,525 humanitarian visas were issued during 2002-03, including 11,656 offshore. Offshore visa issues were up 38 per cent compared to the previous year, reflecting increased availability of places as a result of reduced unauthorised arrivals and consequently lower demand for onshore refugee places. Processing times, particularly for refugees resettled under the program were considerably reduced. The department signed an Emergency Rescue Agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees which set out procedures for referral to Australia of individual refugees requiring immediate resettlement because of

life-threatening situations.

Key source regions for the program were Africa, the Middle East and South West Asia.

### TEMPORARY ENTRY

Concerns about terrorism, the war in Iraq, the economic downturn in a number of key tourism markets, and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic had a significant but short term impact on international travel. Although there was a three per cent decline in the number of Visitor visas issued in 2002-03 compared to 2001-02, 98 per cent of all applications were approved. Student visa grants increased by seven per cent, reflecting the continuing growth of the education export industry, 977 Business Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) grants recorded a nine per cent increase and grants of Working Holiday visas held up with a four per cent increase. The increase to 47 per cent of applications lodged electronically reflects better client service and greater operational efficiency. During 2002-03, the International Event Coordinator Network played an active role in the entry of 94,000 overseas delegates to international events and conferences in Australia – a significant increase on the 25,000 delegates in the previous year.

An important point to note is that, as a result of proactive work by the department, Visitor visa approval rates increased and non-return rates declined, a sign that genuine travellers were receiving better service and non-genuine travellers deterred.

### INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Reflecting the crucial importance of international cooperation in dealing with migration issues, the department continued to support the Ministers in an active program of international engagement aimed at promoting orderly migration, combating irregular migration and people smuggling and benchmarking our policies and practices in areas like settlement and citizenship.

This program of activity included working both multilaterally and bilaterally with source countries, countries of first asylum and transit countries as well as other destination countries. Relationships with key countries were strengthened, cooperative agreements signed and practical cooperation implemented through measures such as capacity building projects. This high level of international cooperation was instrumental in limiting unauthorised arrivals to Australia and facilitating the return to the country of origin of people with no right to remain in Australia.

In April 2003, Australia co-chaired with Indonesia the second Regional Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and related Transnational Crime. The outcome of the conference included renewed commitment by participating states to pursue more effective measures for border management and dealing with people smuggling in the region.

The department also supported the government's agenda for the promotion of managed migration and improvements to the system of international protection. This included working with UNHCR and other states to promote more comprehensive and innovative approaches to the management of refugee and asylum seeker flows.

## **BORDER SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE**

Apart from illegal fishers and stowaways, no unauthorised boat arrivals occurred in 2002-03, compared to 1,277 in 2001-02 and 4,137 in 2000-01. In addition, there was a significant drop in unauthorised air arrivals. The numbers in offshore centres reduced from 1,424 to 437 over the 12 month period. The Manus processing centre no longer has any Australian caseload, but is being held in operational readiness.

Within Australia, the department faced a number of issues concerning unlawful activities or stay. The department continued to work actively with other agencies to curb sex trafficking of women. Through a

successful program of compliance operations targeting businesses, the department also sought to reduce the number of unlawful non-citizens working illegally in Australia.

## **DETENTION**

The year saw a marked reduction in unauthorised boat arrivals held in detention. While there was a continued focus on the services provided to people in detention, the department also implemented new instructions for alternative detention arrangements for women and children. Alternative detention arrangements were used for detainees with special needs. The expansion of places at the Residential Housing Project at Woomera also provided further detention options. Consultation on Residential Housing Projects for use in association with Baxter Immigration Detention Facility (IDF) and Port Hedland Immigration Reception and Processing Centre (IRPC) was also progressed.

The year saw the successful removal of significant numbers of detainees found not to be in need of Australia's protection and improved responsiveness to major disturbances at detention centres. Despite the extensive and costly property damage from some disturbances there was no loss of life or major injuries. Considerable departmental resources were also devoted to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) Children in Detention Inquiry and to increasingly complex public scrutiny of, and litigation over, detainee issues.

A preferred tenderer (Group 4 Falck Global Solutions) was announced for the new Detention Services contract and negotiations proceeded.

## CITIZENSHIP, SETTLEMENT AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

A highlight of the year was the release of the *Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants*. The directions set out in the report and its recommendations, which were endorsed by the government, provide the framework for the future delivery of settlement services leading to better quality outcomes for migrants and humanitarian entrants.

The review indicates that DIMIA-funded settlement services are advanced by world standards – but we can do better, for example by focussing more strongly on helping recently arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants, as well as family stream migrants with lower levels of English proficiency.

The government released a new policy statement on multiculturalism, *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity*, which re-affirms its commitment to multiculturalism. The government allocated \$1.1 million per year, for the next three years, to implement the new policy statement strategic directions, and to continue to promote community harmony and the cultural, social and economic benefits of multiculturalism.

An evaluation of the Council for Multicultural Australia (CMA) at the end of its third year of operation concluded that it had made a significant contribution to the promotion of multiculturalism and community harmony. A new Council is to be appointed in 2003-04 for a term of three years.

Following the Bali bombing and in the lead up to and during the war in Iraq, DIMIA played a pivotal role in facilitating opportunities for the Prime Minister and Ministers Ruddock and Hardgrave to meet with affected communities and offer support. DIMIA also facilitated opportunities for communities to come together to share common understandings and to learn from each other, and thus minimise community relations tensions.

The *Living in Harmony* initiative continued to build on the successes of previous years. The grants program continued to attract significant support from the community, proposing creative local solutions to local problems. Larger numbers of Australians observed

Harmony Day 2003 than in previous years. Given that Harmony Day fell the day after the commencement of hostilities in Iraq, the increased support demonstrated the desire of Australians to maintain our enviable record of community harmony, cultural respect and understanding.

Activities of the Productive Diversity Program during 2002-03 remained focused on its overall aim of encouraging and supporting business to make better use of the language skills, business networks, market knowledge and experience of Australia's diverse population. The department built on previously established partnerships to develop and disseminate tools to assist business to manage and capitalise on an increasingly diverse workforce and consumer market.

Amendments to the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* included new provisions to benefit young people and initiatives to strengthen the integrity of the citizenship process.

A further Australian Citizenship Promotion campaign was conducted in 2002 to promote the acquisition of Australian citizenship among eligible non-citizens and to enhance the profile and significance of Australian citizenship.

The Citizen 2030 Youth Challenge, an official *2002 Year of the Outback* project, was led by Mr Hardgrave and involved over 850 students from 44 schools at 13 regional centres across Australia. The program provided a unique forum to discuss citizenship and cultural diversity in Australia.

## INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Against a background of public concern about leadership, accountability and apparent conflicts of interest in decision making in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the department provided advice to the Minister on improved governance arrangements for ATSIC, including a Misbehaviour Determination and a conflict of interest direction.

On 17 April, the government announced that a new agency, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS) would be established to commence on 1 July 2003. The department provided advice and assistance in the establishment of the agency. ATSIS will

be responsible for programs that, prior to 1 July 2003, were delivered by ATSIC.

The department assisted the Minister in the establishment of the ATSIC review. The review began the process of exploring the potential for more effective arrangements for ATSIC at the national and regional level.

### **Indigenous Whole-of-Government Trials**

Consistent with the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) decision of April 2002, whole-of-government trials have been or are in the process of being established with Indigenous communities in each state and territory. Australian government engagement involves all major service portfolios led by a Ministers' Group chaired by Mr Ruddock and a Secretaries' Group. The Indigenous Communities Coordination Taskforce housed in DIMIA supports the Secretaries' Group and has had a key role in establishing the trials with communities and state and territory governments. These high level, collaborative mechanisms reflect the importance of the initiative and are at the forefront of the new whole-of-government way of doing business.

As well as better coordination of services, trial partners are working to develop a shared responsibility approach, recognising that both communities and governments have responsibilities for the well-being and advancement of Indigenous people and communities. The trials provide governments with the opportunity to redesign services to better deliver on priorities agreed with communities. Feedback, learning and evaluation are fundamental to the trials, with COAG looking for advice on where lessons and models could be promulgated more widely.

### **IMPROVING OUR BUSINESS PROCESSES**

One of our key achievements has been the introduction of a range of initiatives to improve the way we do our business.

Global working arrangements saw the repatriation of much of our migration work to

Australia, which is expected to continue to result in efficiency and integrity gains, both in Australia and overseas, that will be built on in the next few years. We continued to implement electronic visa lodgement and, where appropriate, decision making. Our objective is to provide genuine travellers with convenient and cost-effective service delivery channels and appropriate outcomes while preserving or enhancing the integrity of the program.

Considerable progress was made on improving our entry processes. The Advance Passenger Processing system (APP) is acknowledged as the world's most advanced border control system. It was expanded and made mandatory for most passengers in 2003 with coverage of around 94 per cent by 30 June 2003, moving towards full coverage by 1 January 2004. The department also placed heightened focus on combating identity fraud. We continued to closely examine work on identity verification and the possible application of biometric technology to this field, supported by the development and introduction into parliament of relevant legislation.

Technology is crucial to the effective delivery across the full range of DIMIA business. In August 2002, Cluster 3 signed a four-year extension to the Cluster 3 Information Technology (IT) Infrastructure services contract with Computer Science Corporation (CSC) Australia Pty Ltd. Valued at around \$173.6 million, the contract commences on 1 July 2003. The contract extension provides for a commercial arrangement that is independently assessed as value for money, provides flexibility in meeting DIMIA's business growth and improved visibility, predictability and governance arrangements.

Other major contracts negotiated during the year included the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

## THE YEAR AHEAD

Australia's social and economic development.

Over the next 12 months the department will continue to work in partnership with other governments, government agencies, community and business organisations and individuals to deliver our outcomes.

We will continue to improve our processes to ensure that there is accessible, efficient and effective service delivery to our clients. Business visitors will benefit from the new multiple entry facility offered by the 977 Business ETA. Initiatives such as eVisas and global working arrangements will continue to be expanded and refined. We will also continue to stress integrity issues to ensure that only those people who meet the legal criteria for the grant of a visa or for Australian citizenship are able to enter and remain in Australia.

We will seek the expansion of more flexible detention arrangements within facilities and through alternative places of detention. A particular focus will be on ensuring more appropriate detention arrangements for women and children. The department will also pursue strategies to encourage increased levels of removals, continued implementation of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) (with other countries, state governments and relevant welfare organisations) and continuing review of issues in management of detainees. The coming year will also see the move to the new Detention Services Contract with Group 4.

In Indigenous affairs, the Indigenous Business Review is due to be completed before the end of 2003. The Review of ATSIC will be completed and government decisions on ATSIC's future role are expected. The government is likely to make decisions about reforms to the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*.

I acknowledge the achievements of the department's staff. Our ability to meet portfolio responsibilities to high standards has been possible because of the dedication and professionalism of our employees. In the year ahead I am confident that the government will again be well served by our officers as we continue our important work of contributing to