

OUTCOME THREE

Outcome Three seeks *sound and well-coordinated policies, programs and decision making processes in relation to Indigenous affairs and reconciliation.*

The supporting departmental output is:
3.1 – Indigenous Policy

The primary function of the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (OATSIA) was to provide high level policy advice to the Minister. OATSIA worked closely with departments and agencies across the Commonwealth and the states and territories, with the objective of achieving better coordination between governments and services that can have a significant impact, particularly in the key areas of health, housing, employment and education.

With the introduction of the government's new arrangements in Indigenous Affairs from 1 July 2004, OATSIA has been incorporated into the new Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) within DIMIA.

OUTCOME THREE - EFFECTIVENESS MEASURES AND RESULTS

MEASURES	RESULTS
<p>Key tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide policy advice to the Minister, including briefing and correspondence, on issues relevant to Indigenous people - provide strategic coordination and leadership on policies, programs and services to reduce disadvantage and promote Indigenous wellbeing - coordination of portfolio legislation, appointments and budget priorities for the Indigenous agencies in the portfolio - advising and instructing on certain litigation brought against the Commonwealth. 	
<p>The degree of satisfaction of the Minister and her office as expressed through formal and informal mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of key tasks.</p>	<p>Feedback from the Minister's Office indicated that the Minister and her office considered the policy advice they received to be timely and of high standard, and were satisfied with the achievement of key tasks.</p>

KEY HIGHLIGHTS 3.1

On 15 April 2004, following the Report of the Review of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) in November 2003 and amid increasing concerns that the organisation was dysfunctional, the government announced its intention to abolish ATSIC.

OATSIA provided significant support to the Minister in relation to the implementation of reforms in Indigenous affairs. This included preparation of legislation to amend the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989 and arrangements to transfer Indigenous-specific programs to mainstream departments and agencies. It also provided input into implementing other proposed reforms such as:

- the establishment of Indigenous Coordination Centres to enhance service delivery to Indigenous communities
- the establishment of a Ministerial Taskforce to oversee coordination of Indigenous policy and program delivery
- the establishment of the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination.

DIMIA was a key player in the establishment and development of Reconciliation Place, in conjunction with the National Capital Authority. Reconciliation Place recognises the importance of understanding the shared history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Reconciliation Place is located in the Parliamentary Triangle, between the National Library and the High Court in the Australian Capital Territory.

As part of National Reconciliation Week 2004 Senator Vanstone dedicated three new artworks at Reconciliation Place.

Two of the artworks depicted the experiences of Indigenous children who were separated from their families. The text on the major artwork is highly significant, as it was developed and agreed between the government and the National Sorry Day Committee in consultation with the Indigenous community.

The other artwork celebrated Indigenous leadership, particularly the lives of two distinguished Indigenous leaders, Neville Bonner and Vincent Lingiari.

OUTPUT 3.1 – INDIGENOUS POLICY

3.1 INDIGENOUS POLICY

Performance Information

MEASURES		RESULTS
Output 3.1 Indigenous Policy	Quality: The degree of satisfaction of the Minister and her office as expressed through formal and informal mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of key tasks.	Feedback from the Minister's Office indicated that the Minister and her office considered the policy advice they received to be timely and of high standard, and were satisfied with the achievement of key tasks.

Objective

To provide advice to government on Indigenous policy issues, coordinate Indigenous policy development with external agencies, and manage the conduct of litigation in those cases where the role of the Australian Government in Indigenous affairs is involved.

Description

The Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (OATSIA) was responsible for providing Indigenous policy advice to the Minister and undertaking Indigenous policy development and coordination with external agencies, including in the areas of:

- community capacity and development
- family policy and reconciliation
- service delivery and performance
- land and resources
- legal and international
- agency governance and legislation.

OATSIA also worked to develop and promote whole of government approaches to tackling problems in redressing Indigenous disadvantage, identified opportunities for government to advance reconciliation and monitored and advised on current and emerging issues on Indigenous policy.

Analysis of Performance

Social Programs and Reconciliation

During the year, OATSIA provided significant input to a number of policy processes. These included the work of the Demographic Task Force and the Indigenous Employment Policy Evaluation. OATSIA also provided significant input to cross-portfolio policy development processes in respect of Indigenous social wellbeing, including family support, child support and protection, youth, alcohol and substance abuse, and family violence matters. Its involvement included participation in key forums such as the Child Health and Wellbeing Taskforce (and its Indigenous Working group subcommittee), the Secretaries' Advisory Group on Youth, the National Inhalant Abuse Task Force, the Social Health Reference Group and other ad hoc committees on specific Indigenous policy issues. OATSIA also provided support for the Minister's engagement with the National Youth Roundtable and the National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group. OATSIA made a significant contribution towards improving and ensuring the relevance of data collection in relation to Indigenous Australians. OATSIA

participated in a number of Indigenous data development steering committees and working groups led by organisations such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Departments of Education Science and Training (DEST), Family and Community Services (FaCS) and Health and Ageing, and the Productivity Commission. Continuing improvement in the availability and quality of Indigenous data is essential for policy development and effective program management and monitoring and has been identified as a high priority.

During the year, DEST led a review of Indigenous specific education programs funded under Specific Purpose Payments arrangements, to which OATSIA provided substantial input. OATSIA also provided input to Indigenous education and training reports to Parliament.

The Department of Health and Ageing also led a review during the year, which focussed on primary health care and its impacts on Indigenous people. OATSIA provided a significant contribution to the review, emphasising the need for an evidence based and outcomes focussed approach.

Contributions were made to an evaluation project led by the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS). This project sought to develop a framework that will assist to determine the impact of government investments in regional Australia and assist in providing an evidence base for regional policy and program development.

OATSIA provided strong advocacy and support for the interests of Indigenous people in the development of major mainstream strategies and initiatives, such

as the second tranche of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy announced in 2003 and the draft National Plan for Foster Children and Carers.

OATSIA prepared Cabinet coordination comments, other briefings and ministerial correspondence in the areas of Indigenous health, housing, education, telecommunications, defence, family wellbeing, reconciliation, community governance, capacity-building, employment, welfare reform and Indigenous specific budget matters. OATSIA also appeared before a number of Parliamentary committees in relation to these areas. OATSIA coordinated Ministerial briefings for the Ministerial Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA) and associated officials' meetings.

OATSIA supported the Secretary of DIMIA in undertaking lead agency responsibilities with respect to the Council of Australian Government (COAG) trial site in Tasmania that is focussed on family violence issues. OATSIA provided briefings for the Secretaries' Group and co-chaired the inter-governmental Coordinating Committee for the project.

OATSIA managed the MCATSIA-sponsored independent evaluation of the effectiveness of government and non-government responses to the recommendations of the Bringing Them Home report. The review report was completed and accepted by MCATSIA in late 2003.

OATSIA played a key facilitation and coordination role in the arrangements for the design and development of new artwork for installation at Reconciliation Place in Canberra. OATSIA also coordinated the preparation of a whole-of-government response to the report of the Senate Legal

and Constitutional References Committee on progress towards national reconciliation, for consideration by the government.

OATSIA commissioned major independent research to undertake a rigorous analysis of Indigenous economic and social indicators, using data from the 1996 and 2001 censuses. This research (undertaken by Australasia Economics), focuses on disaggregated data by remoteness area to provide a more detailed analysis of change in socio-economic variables than has been available to date, providing a useful source of information for future policy development processes. The Australasia Economics report is available on the department's website.

During the year OATSIA also continued to:

- contribute to MCATSIA assessments of Indigenous Action Plans prepared by Ministerial Councils in response to the COAG Framework to Advance Reconciliation of November 2000
- work with ATSI/ATSIC on the development of an Indigenous environmental health strategy
- assist the Indigenous Communities Coordination Taskforce on evaluation and performance monitoring issues in the COAG whole-of-government trials.

Land, Legal and Economic Development

Advice was provided to the Minister on governance issues concerning agencies in the Indigenous Affairs part of the portfolio. This included advice in relation to the ATSIC review and more effective arrangements and structures for delivery of programs and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

OATSIA assisted with the establishment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Services (ATSI) on 1 July 2003 and in refinements to the Ministerial Directions issued to its Chief Executive Officer during the year. OATSIA also assisted in the transition to the new administrative arrangements to operate from 1 July 2004 by providing advice to portfolio agencies on proposed rearrangements.

It assisted in the preparation of legislation bids and policy approval in relation to proposed legislation. During the year, the Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Amendment Bill 2003 was passed. This Bill amended the *Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Act 1986*. The amendments facilitated improvement to the operation of the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Council.

OATSIA was significantly involved in work which prepared for the introduction of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004 into the Parliament on 27 May 2004. The Bill was passed by the House of Representatives on 2 June 2004. Following its introduction into the Senate on 15 June 2004, the Bill was referred to the Senate Select Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs which is to report by 31 October 2004.

OATSIA also provided assistance with office-holder appointment and misconduct processes.

OATSIA advised the Minister on developing reforms to the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. OATSIA supported the Minister in consultations with the Northern Territory Government, the Northern and Central Land Councils, Northern Territory members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the mining industry on

possible reforms. Reforms are aimed at streamlining the exploration and mining development process for the benefit of all parties. Other significant reforms under consideration include facilitating economic development by the use of leases over Aboriginal land, improving Land Council performance following the Australian National Audit Office Report No. 28 of 2002-03, and greater regionalisation of Land Council decision-making.

OATSIA chaired the reference group assisting the Indigenous Business Review which completed the Report on Support for Indigenous Business in November 2003. The terms of reference required the Review to report on how the Australian Government can best stimulate Indigenous business and address any outstanding gaps in Indigenous business support. OATSIA provided advice to the Minister on the report's findings and recommendations.

OATSIA advised the Minister on the development of an economic development concept framework by MCATSIA. Following acceptance of a draft concept framework in May 2004, MCATSIA agreed to develop a whole-of-government action plan in consultation with other Ministerial Councils. The plan will identify key actions and responsibilities for enhancing Indigenous economic development.

Following consultations with states and other relevant bodies, OATSIA prepared a draft discussion paper on impediments to economic development on Indigenous land for MCATSIA. The Standing Committee of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Affairs (SCATSIA) considered the draft paper at its meeting in April 2004. The draft paper concluded that while freeing up

restrictions on leasing of Indigenous land might assist Indigenous economic development, there were many other factors which also impeded such development. The paper concluded the greatest factors were lack of capacity and poor governance. In April 2004 SCATSIA agreed to integrate the findings of the report into its economic development concept framework.

OATSIA monitored initiatives to repatriate Indigenous human remains from the United Kingdom and other countries. OATSIA provided advice to the Minister, ATSIIS and other government departments on strategies to assist such initiatives.

OATSIA represented DIMIA at the third session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York, USA, in May 2004. The session concluded with a large number of recommendations dealing with a range of issues including Indigenous women and traditional knowledge. OATSIA continued its involvement in negotiations surrounding the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The last sessions of the working group on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will be held in 2004 subject to possible extension of its mandate.

Litigation in 2003-04 included:

- ongoing litigation surrounding the suspension of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Chairperson, Mr Geoff Clark
- defence of a challenge against the creation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services
- recovery of the amount of \$71,486 by the Australian Government in its ongoing pursuit of costs in the Hindmarsh Island litigation

- recovery by the Australian Government of \$105,000 from the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action.

OUTCOME THREE ADMINISTERED ITEM

COMPENSATION AND LEGAL EXPENSES

Performance Information

MEASURES		RESULTS
Compensation and legal expenses	Quality: Minimise the extent to which legal actions against the Commonwealth are successful.	The outcome of litigation in a number of cases involving the Commonwealth was such that the Australian Government's interests were protected.

Objective

To manage the conduct of litigation in defence of the Australian Government's interests, where certain Australian Government responsibilities in Indigenous affairs are involved.

Of the 2,016 separated children claims lodged in the High Court 12 were remitted to the Federal Court. Of these, two were dismissed and 10 were discontinued.

Description

OATSIA manages the conduct of some litigation where the Australian Government's responsibilities in Indigenous affairs are involved.

OATSIA actively pursued cost recovery in a number of matters and was successful in recovering costs.

OATSIA does not manage native title litigation, apart from some matters arising under Division 6 of Part 2 and Part 11 of the *Native Title Act 1993*.

Analysis of Performance

During 2003-04 the Australian Government recovered the amount of \$71,486 in its ongoing pursuit of costs in the Hindmarsh litigation and also recovered \$105,000 from the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action.

During 2003-04 the litigation conducted included ongoing litigation surrounding the suspension of ATSIC Chairperson Mr Geoff Clark and defence of a challenge against the creation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services.

The Australian Government did not initiate any litigation in the Indigenous affairs portfolio.

OUTCOME THREE ADMINISTERED ITEM

CROSS PORTFOLIO: INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES COORDINATION TASKFORCE (ICCT)**Performance Information**

MEASURES		RESULTS
Cross-portfolio Indigenous flexible funding arrangements	Quality: Timely cross-portfolio response to community identified and government agreed priorities.	Timely cross-portfolio response was provided.

Objective

To support the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Issues and develop the Australian Government's approach to the April 2002 Council of Australian Government (COAG) decision to trial whole-of-government arrangements with up to 10 Indigenous communities and regions.

Description

The cross portfolio ICCT was established by the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Issues to promote and support joint activity across Australian Government agencies and to work with the Indigenous communities participating in the initiative, and with state and territory governments.

The Executive Director and Office Manager positions are funded from a contribution from the agencies represented on the Secretaries' Group. The other 8-10 members of the ICCT team remain employees of their originating agencies whilst on secondment to the taskforce. Since its establishment in August 2002, the ICCT has reported directly to the Secretaries' Group and on a day-to-day basis, the Executive Director of the ICCT reports to the Chair of the Secretaries' Group. The Secretary of DIMIA was Chair

of the Secretaries' Group until April 2004, when this position moved to the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. This change reflected the broadened focus of the Secretaries' Group as part of the new arrangement for Indigenous affairs.

In May 2004, the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs announced the formation of a Ministerial Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs. The role of the taskforce, which met for the first time in June 2004, is to coordinate the government's Indigenous policies and report to Cabinet on directions and priorities in Indigenous policy. Under the new arrangements, the role of the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Issues is to support the taskforce and report annually on the outcomes of Indigenous specific services.

In its second year of operation the ICCT was responsible for:

- achieving agreement on eight whole-of-government trial sites. The sites are the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands in South Australia, Cape York in Queensland, Murdi Paaki in New South Wales, Shepparton in Victoria,

the East Kimberley region of Western Australia, north-eastern Tasmania, Wadeye (pronounced Wod-air), in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

- liaising with the Secretaries' Group to facilitate the nomination of a Secretary and their agency to assume primary responsibility for the Australian Government's response in each of the trial sites, with other Australian Government agencies operating as partners
- assisting lead agencies to establish and develop their role in each of the trial sites
- developing a Shared Responsibility Framework that provides the basis for agreement and commitment to the particular responsibilities that will be shared by governments and communities in each of the trial sites
- establishing linkages between the whole-of-government state and territory-level structures that have been established and the COAG trial structures and ensuring that the roles of the respective tiers of government are clarified
- monitoring progress in the trial sites and reporting to the Secretaries' Group.

Analysis of Performance

Policy advice and development

Regular progress reports and briefings on policy issues were provided to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs who is responsible for this COAG initiative to the Prime Minister. Reports were also made to all Ministers on the Ministers' Group on Indigenous Issues and additional reporting was provided when appropriate.

A cross portfolio funding pool (\$3 million on a cost neutral portfolio basis), which made funds available to support the communities' capacity to participate in the trials, operated in 2003-04. Funds were provided to model whole-of-government initiatives and projects that have the potential to foster sustainable development but could not be funded under existing program guidelines. The whole-of-government initiatives included a strong focus on governance as several of the Indigenous communities involved in the trials have identified the need to develop, and negotiate agreement and support for, community governance arrangements that facilitate more inclusive and effective interaction with government agencies.

Establishing whole-of-government trials

The ICCT worked with Australian Government agencies, the relevant Indigenous communities and state and territory governments to negotiate Shared Responsibility Agreements which:

- set out key strategic priorities identified in consultation with communities and related agreed outcomes and benchmarks
- establish partnership arrangements and outline each party's responsibilities
- support local governance and decision making.

As at 30 June 2004, Shared Responsibility Agreements had been negotiated in trial sites in the ACT, Cape York in Queensland, Wadeye in the Northern Territory, Murdi Paaki in New South Wales and Shepparton in Victoria.

The five agreements were signed in a spirit of partnership between representatives of the Indigenous communities, the Australian

Government and the relevant state or territory government. The agreements recognise and respect each of the parties' rights and responsibilities and set out the key strategic priorities and agreed outcomes that form the basis for collaborative cooperation between the community representatives and governments.

Implementing whole-of-government approaches

The Australian Government's lead agencies are at the forefront of change in the Australian Public Service (APS) approaches to the COAG trial. The sponsoring Secretaries and their respective agencies are the main drivers of the Australian Government's whole-of-government cooperative approach. The role of lead agencies over the year included:

- tailoring government action to identified community needs and aspirations
- coordinating government programs and services where this will improve service delivery outcomes and where necessary, increasing the flexibility of program guidelines to accommodate whole-of-government initiatives
- encouraging effective partnership arrangements between Australian Government agencies and across the three tiers of government
- promoting innovative approaches that deliver more effective responses to the needs of Indigenous Australians
- working with Indigenous communities to build the capacity of people in those communities to negotiate as genuine partners with government
- effecting cultural change at all levels within agencies.

The ICCT assisted staff in lead agencies to better understand the key issues being raised by Indigenous leaders and their communities and better equip them to address the challenges associated with implementing whole-of-government approaches by organising a number of activities, including:

- conducting workshops with representatives from lead agencies to share learnings and facilitate more effective whole-of-government approaches
- establishing a website that sets out the key objectives of the COAG trials in Indigenous communities and highlights new and innovative approaches
- ongoing participation in relevant meetings and seminars conducted by Australian Government agencies to promote cross-agency collaboration and involvement in the trials.

Evaluation and reporting

The Shared Responsibility Framework provides the basis for the capture of performance data, benchmarks and feedback that underpins the evaluation and reporting of new approaches and initiatives agreed to by all parties to the respective Shared Responsibility Agreements. This data is important to determining the impact of governments' activities and to nurturing mutually beneficial outcomes between governments and communities.

State and territory representatives have agreed to the implementation of a Shared Responsibility Framework that commits all parties to monitoring and evaluation of the trials and cross-jurisdictional initiatives.

Communication

The ICCT convened a meeting of the Regional Women's Advisory Council (RWAC) in Alice Springs to discuss common issues

and allow participants the opportunity to network in order to increase women's involvement in decision-making in Indigenous communities.

All relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Regional Councils received ongoing briefings on the progress of the COAG trials and the whole-of-government cooperative approach being implemented. The Executive Director of the ICCT provided briefings to the ATSIC Board on several occasions.

From 1 July 2004, the role of the ICCT will be subsumed in the new Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination in DIMIA.

OUTCOME THREE ADMINISTERED ITEM

RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA – CONTINUED SUPPORT

Performance Information

MEASURES		RESULTS
Reconciliation Australia – Continued Support	Quantity: Provision of \$15 million to Reconciliation Australia will enable continuation and expansion of its activities in advancing the process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians for at least four years.	Funding was provided in June 2004 to support Reconciliation Australia for at least another four years.
	Quality: Progress with process of reconciliation over time.	The efforts of Reconciliation Australia have fostered demonstrations of goodwill and involvement of governments, non-government organisations, communities and individuals in their support for the process of reconciliation and community based initiatives. There continues to be a need for strong focus on improving the socio-economic conditions of Indigenous Australians to progress the process of reconciliation.

Objective

To enable Reconciliation Australia to continue and expand its activities in advancing the process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians for at least another four years.

Description

The government has invested significant support in Reconciliation Australia as the major public vehicle for the people's reconciliation movement. Reconciliation Australia will provide an enhanced national focus on reconciliation. It will promote and support community activities designed to foster and advance the reconciliation process, including the production of school kits and community education materials. It will further develop the Friends For Reconciliation network,

liaise with state peak reconciliation bodies for the development and coordination of community events aimed at fostering reconciliation, and engage with governments, non-government organisations and the corporate sector to advance the cause of reconciliation at the community level.

Analysis of Performance

The additional funding was provided to Reconciliation Australia in June 2004, to support the continuation and expansion of its reconciliation activities over the next four years. Analysis of performance will necessarily involve an assessment of changes in public opinion and attitudes over that time period and changes to the state of relations between the Indigenous community, the non-Indigenous community and governments.

OUTCOME THREE ADMINISTERED ITEM

RECONCILIATION PLACE – STAGE 2

Performance Information

MEASURES		RESULTS
Reconciliation Place – stage 2	Quantity: Three new artworks for installation at Reconciliation Place.	With the assistance of the National Capital Authority, the artworks were developed, manufactured and installed at Reconciliation Place. The new artworks were dedicated on 28 May 2004.
	Quality: Form and content of artworks appropriate, meaningful and acceptable to members of the Indigenous community.	Artworks developed in consultation with the Indigenous community.

Objective

To develop, manufacture and install artworks that are appropriate, meaningful and acceptable to the Indigenous community, reflecting the experience of separated Indigenous children and commemorating Indigenous leadership.

artworks represent the experiences of Indigenous children who were separated from their families.

Description

Reconciliation Place is located in the Parliamentary Triangle in Canberra, and is intended to honour the importance of reconciliation in the nation’s life. OATSIA has a central role in the ongoing development of the site.

During the process OATSIA was involved in extensive discussions with stakeholders and the NCA over the form and content of the new artworks. The National Sorry Day Committee in particular, was heavily involved in these discussions as a representative of separated children groups.

Analysis of Performance

With the assistance of the NCA, the three new artworks were developed in consultation with the indigenous community, manufactured and installed at Reconciliation Place. Feedback from a variety of sources indicated that the ceremony and artworks were well received.

PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE CLIENT SERVICE CHARTER

The department's Client Service Charter and companion brochure 'Do you have a complaint?' were introduced in 1998 as part of a whole-of-government reform agenda to promote a more open, client-focused public service.

The charter articulates the values that underpin the department's provision of client service, informs clients of the standards of service they can expect and provides clients with an avenue to comment on the department's performance.

The charter's companion brochure 'Do you have a complaint?' further describes the department's mechanism for receiving and resolving client feedback about service quality.

Both the charter and the associated complaints brochure are available in two versions, one for clients in Australia and one for clients overseas. Both are available in 19 community languages either electronically on the department's website www.immi.gov.au, or in print from our general enquiry line 131 881 or any office of the department in Australia and overseas.

To ensure that the charter continues to be a useful and strategic tool for shaping service delivery, the department commenced a review of the charter in April 2004. The purpose of the review is to implement a revised client service charter and associated feedback and complaint handling mechanism that better aligns our service standards with changes in the department's processing arrangements including the centralisation of visa processing, e-visa initiatives and third party processing. The revised charter will inform clients of our

preferred service channels and the level of assistance they can expect from the department, incorporating improved monitoring and reporting processes to promote continuous improvement in client service.

Performance against the client service charter service standards

In 2003-04 the department continued to perform strongly against the charter's service standards, with onshore offices and overseas posts significantly exceeding the benchmark performance in eight of the 13 service standards measured. The department continued to develop and implement initiatives to improve performance and client service.

DIMIA is increasing access for clients both onshore and offshore by enabling clients to lodge applications without the need to visit an office. The department is expanding the use of trusted third party providers to receive applications and increasing the range of e-lodgement services to allow clients to lodge applications online.

User testing has also been undertaken on the department's www.immi.gov.au website, with recommendations based on this testing being implemented to make the website easier for clients to use.

The department is also developing a national appointments system for introduction in 2004-05 to better manage client traffic peaks and minimise client waiting times at counters. The department's centralised contact centres in Sydney and Melbourne also inform clients of requirements and encourage the lodgement of complete applications to reduce the need for clients to

visit the department repeatedly. Other initiatives to improve performance include:

- allocating responsibility for processing certain applications, from any part of the world, to specific offices in Australia to gain efficiencies and reduce processing times
- establishing a call centre in Ottawa to respond to telephone enquiries from North America
- providing tailored client contact training to contact centre staff to enable them to respond to enquiries and other feedback more efficiently and effectively
- centralising the 133 177 client service feedback line to the contact centres to realise greater efficiencies in complaints handling.

Complaints Data & the Department's Response to Complaints

Clients can provide feedback to the department by using the tear-off portion of the 'Do you have a complaint?' brochure, or by contacting any office by letter, fax, e-mail, telephone or in person. The department also operates a dedicated client service feedback line for complaints, compliments and suggestions.

In 2003-04 the department received 12,432 calls through the 133 177 client service feedback line (compared to 11,596 in 2002-03 and 12,702 in 2001-02). Calls to the 133 177 client service feedback line include compliments, suggestions, some general enquiries and complaints.

The centralisation of the 133 177 client service feedback line to the contact centres resulted in a higher proportion of complaints being resolved immediately by contact centre

operators, with only 23 per cent requiring escalation to a complaints handling officer.

In 2003-04, 2,105 complaints were referred to a complaints handling officer, a decrease from the 2,935 complaints referred in 2002-03 but an increase on the 1,812 complaints referred in 2001-02.

The level of compliments remained steady with 517 compliments received in 2003-04 compared to 516 in 2002-03 and 270 in 2001-02.

Issues raised with complaints handling officers continued to focus on service delivery (45 per cent in 2003-04) with timeliness and staff attitude as the predominant sources of complaint. While complaints have consistently focussed on service accessibility in previous years, in 2003-04 complaints about service accessibility fell significantly (70 per cent) due to a 73 per cent decrease in complaints about telephone access. This demonstrates that the department's contact centres are meeting client demand and improving client access.

Complaints handling officers continued to resolve the majority of complaints referred to them within one to three working days (72 per cent in 2003-04). Further action was recommended in 74 per cent of cases with action being taken to either amend service procedures, provide staff training, provide staff counselling, undertake discussions in management meetings or to refer the issue to the relevant operational or policy area for action.

The review of the department's complaints handling mechanism will examine opportunities to improve complaints handling and reporting.

PURCHASER/PROVIDER ARRANGEMENTS

Purchaser Arrangements - DIMIA and DFAT Service Level Agreement

The department maintains a purchaser arrangement with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for the purchase of management services at overseas posts.

Responsibility

The Service Level Agreement (SLA) is an agreement between DIMIA and DFAT for the provision of management services at DFAT managed posts. An agreed fee is charged for these services. The SLA is intended to facilitate efficient and effective Australian Government business overseas by avoiding unnecessary duplication of common services at overseas posts.

Control Arrangements

The initial SLA covered the period 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2004. Negotiations with DFAT for a replacement agreement commenced in December 2003, with the SLA that formally expired in June 2004 extended until these conclude. The SLA details the management services, performance standards and cost recovery arrangements to be provided for the term of the agreement. Management services include personnel services, office services, property services, financial services and communications. The agreement also contains a dispute resolution mechanism and a provision for reduced fees if services are not provided to the agreed standard.

Resourcing

DIMIA pays a global service fee for management services for each financial year of the SLA. The fee was fixed in the first year and only varied annually after that in

the event of a variation of five per cent or more in either DFAT locally-engaged-employee salary costs or DIMIA staffing numbers. The 2003-04 SLA fee was \$5.75 million, which was unchanged from 2002-03.

Performance against Outcomes and Outputs

The SLA contributes to the department's outcomes through the efficient delivery of support services at overseas posts.

Provider Arrangements - Cluster 3 Contract Management

The department obtains its IT and telecommunications services as part of Cluster 3. IT services are provided by Computer Science Corporation (CSC) Australia Pty Ltd. Telecommunications services are provided by Optus Networks Pty Ltd. The Cluster Support Unit (CSU) which is accommodated in DIMIA provides a coordination function for the Cluster contract management.

The Cluster extended its contracts with CSC and Optus until 30 June 2007.

The services received by each of the Cluster agencies are set out below:

- DIMIA (CSC and Optus)
- Australian Electoral Commission (CSC and Optus)
- Department of Finance and Administration Electorate Offices System (Optus)
- Australian Government Analytical Laboratories (Optus)
- National Mapping Division Geoscience Australia (Optus)
- IP Australia (CSC and Optus)
- IPS Radio and Space Services (Optus).

Note: Some agencies who were former Department of Finance bureau customers also receive services under the contracts.

Responsibility

In 2003-04 the previous Cluster 3 Management Office was replaced by a streamlined Cluster Support Unit (CSU). The CSU is responsible for:

- providing high level support to the Cluster Management Committee
- maintaining the integrity and currency of the service agreements through variations
- meeting other contract management requirements, as requested by the Cluster Management Committee
- providing agencies with ad hoc advice regarding the Cluster's contracts.

Control Arrangements

Cluster 3 agencies are parties to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which establishes:

- protocols of operation for dealing with the contractors
- the Cluster 3 Management Committee
- the CSU.

Resourcing

The MOU provides for Cluster contract management resources and funding. Agencies contribute towards the management and administrative costs on an agreed basis, commensurate with usage.

Performance against Outcomes and Outputs

The CSU contributes to Cluster agencies' and Australian Government objectives of IT and telecommunications infrastructure outsourcing by providing a central point of reference and coordination for Cluster contract management.