



Australian Government
Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

Opening statement to Senate Supplementary Budget Estimates
Parliament House, Canberra
30 October 2006

Andrew Metcalfe
Secretary, Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

Madam Chair, members of the committee—

At the last Estimates hearing in May, I provided a document setting out our progress in implementing a comprehensive programme of reform in the department.

With the agreement of the committee, I would like to provide an update of that document to you, bringing you up-to-date on these issues.

I also draw your attention to the achievements and initiatives summarised in the department's Annual Report for 2005/06, and in particular, the feature article on the change process that has occurred in the department over the reporting year.

This year for the first time, we have produced a CD-ROM version of the annual report, and are surveying key recipients to see if they would prefer that version in future in an effort to reduce the use of paper.

Since the last Estimates hearing, the department has achieved some key milestones in our reform and improvement programme, including implementation of:

- the Client Service Improvement Programme and Client Service Charter
- the DIMA Plan for 2006/07
- the National Assurance Quality framework, and
- our leadership tool on values, ethics and decision-making, known as IDEAL.

I am pleased to provide copies of these signature documents today and point out how they embody our three key strategic themes of being an open and accountable organisation, having fair and reasonable dealings with clients and having well-trained and supported staff.

Divisions, State and Territory offices and our overseas posts are using the themes to guide their planning and performance reporting.

They are, of course, summed up in our motto: **people** our business.

Our client service improvements are essential to building the trust of our clients and stakeholders.

We are an organisation that must aim for service excellence.

I am indebted to Deputy Secretary Carmel McGregor for her initiative and leadership in this area.

The DIMA Plan for 2006-07 strongly contributes to our building an ongoing positive departmental culture.

It defines the purpose of the department as 'enriching Australia through the well managed entry and settlement of people'.

The Plan forms the basis for the cascading set of business plans that guide our work right down to the individual workgroup level.

These are not plans to sit on the shelf.

Business planning, risk management and reporting performance against the plans are a fundamental part of our improved accountability arrangements.

The Plan articulates our key values: teamwork, service excellence, respect, openness and commitment to delivering government policy in a fair and reasonable way.

These values develop, and are consistent with the Australian Public Service values.

They are seen in thousands of examples of the department's work—for example, the services provided to Australians evacuated from the Lebanon recently.

Our staff went above and beyond the call of duty and deserve high praise.

Our IDEAL package was developed with the support of the Australian Public Service Commission, and is the basis for putting the APS and DIMA values into practice and implementing a culture of ethical decision-making.

I have copies here of some further documents produced by the department which demonstrate the breadth of our activity:

- the Citizenship Testing Discussion Paper
- the 12-month Palmer Update: 'On the Move to Improve'
- 'Managing Records in the Department'
- the Settlement Outcomes Discussion Paper, and
- the 'New Beginnings' settlement publication.

The establishment of the College of Immigration in July was a significant achievement in addressing the learning and development needs of our compliance, border security and detention staff.

I am delighted we have a strong Advisory Board in place, with Mr Mick Palmer in the Chair, representation at deputy secretary level from the department, and with other leading

public sector experts including Mr Tony Blunn, Professor Mary O'Kane, Dr Vivienne Thom, (Deputy Ombudsman) and Ms Sue Tongue from the Australian National University.

We are also working to develop a refreshed stakeholder and community engagement framework to ensure that our service delivery is outwardly-focussed and that we are an open and accountable organisation fully plugged in to the Australian community.

Work involving the skilled temporary visa category—the sub-class 457 visa—has been a key priority in recent times.

A strong policy agenda is being advanced, particularly through the Council of Australian Governments' process.

Deputy Secretary Abul Rizvi is heading a taskforce on these issues, and as a result, Peter Hughes is presently acting as deputy secretary for the group of divisions involved with migration, refugees, citizenship, settlement and multicultural affairs.

Considerable progress has been made with *Systems for People*, the information management programme that will vastly improve our ability to serve client needs in a timely, efficient and fair manner.

Deputy Secretary Bob Correll is providing very strong leadership on this major initiative.

We have recently let some significant contracts under *Systems for People* and have also rolled out the new Client Search facility to all staff. This facility gives staff a single view of the department's holdings on a particular client and will greatly improve our ability to make accurate decisions more quickly.

Over the next six months, we will re-tender for the Detention Services Contract and the Detention Health Services Contract as separate processes.

The National Case Management Framework is now finalised, to provide a holistic approach to managing clients with complex circumstances or who are vulnerable.

With supports such as these in place or near completion, our approach is now very much focussed on the future.

But much more remains to be done. No one should underestimate the scale of activity required to do our work, the comprehensive nature of our change and improvement programme and our commitment to doing the very best we can.

The workload for staff is often substantial, and I want to put on record my appreciation for the efforts of my deputy secretaries and departmental staff in meeting the many demands and challenges we face and in embracing the opportunities we have.

If you have any questions we would be pleased to answer them.

**OPENING STATEMENT
ESTIMATES, OCTOBER 2006**

**ANDREW METCALFE
SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS**

ATTACHMENT: PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTING THE PALMER PROGRAMME

Initiative	Status
<i>Being more open and accountable</i>	
Governance and Assurance	<p>A key development in the last six months has been the implementation of the DIMA Plan, which provides the department with a service focus for integrating policy, programmes and delivery, and clear strategic priorities.</p> <p>Delivery of the enhanced internal audit programme is ongoing, complemented now by development and circulation of a departmental Quality Assurance Framework to better ensure that mistakes and errors are being identified and rectified.</p>
Re-tendering for the Department's Detention Services Contract	<p>The department will re-tender for Detention Services and Detention Health Services in 2007. In preparation for the tender, the Department has developed a new service delivery model based on DIMA's themes of: an open and accountable organisation; fair and reasonable dealings with clients; and well trained and supported staff. The model will provide the basis for how the services are to be delivered to meet the needs of our clients. Significant stakeholder and industry consultations have been undertaken over the past few months with positive feedback on the reforms to detention.</p> <p>The delivery of health care and psychological services was novated from the current Detention Services contract on the 1st of October 2006 to allow DIMA to directly engage with the health providers to support a greater focus on the individual needs of clients.</p>
Immigration Detention Advisory Group (IDAG)	<p>IDAG's capacity to provide advice on detention related matters has been improved with an expanded role in day to day business, including involvement with the Detention Services Steering Committee, the Detention Health and Long Term Detention Strategies, and the Detention Services Contract review.</p> <p>IDAG has been expanded by the appointment of an additional member, Tsbin Tchen.</p>

Stakeholder relationships	The Secretary and other executives continue high level engagement with organisations that have an interest in DIMA operations. The Secretary regularly writes to external stakeholders to keep them informed of issues in which they may have an interest and inviting feedback. A systematic approach to mapping the department's stakeholders has been commenced, to ensure that the department remains engaged with all relevant parties. The Secretary has appointed a principal adviser on community and stakeholder engagement. The Minister tabled a 12 month progress report on the Palmer Programme on 12 September 2006, which is also available on the DIMA website.
<i>Fairer and more reasonable dealings with clients</i>	
Client service improvement programme	DIMA's Client Service Improvement Programme is one of the strategic priorities within the DIMA Plan. The Programme was launched by our Minister in June and is underpinned by the Client Service Charter. The Charter was developed through extensive consultations with clients and other stakeholders, and explains our commitment to clients, what they can expect from us, and how they can provide feedback.
Client satisfaction surveys	A client research framework has been developed to guide departmental decisions about intended outcomes, processes and priorities for undertaking research and surveying clients over the next 18 months. This will enable us to have a targeted approach to talking to our clients based on their specific circumstances and preferences through the appropriate process and methodology.
Centralise client feedback mechanisms	Client compliments, suggestions and complaints are vital to improving the quality of our information, products and services. The department has centralised the processing of all feedback through the Global Feedback Unit. This unit collects, analyses and reports on all forms of feedback, including telephone calls, web-based feedback and mail. Progressive roll-out of an IT system to assist automate processes commenced at the start of this month. A comprehensive Client Feedback Framework that will integrate all elements of client feedback received in the Department will be implemented over the next 12 months.
Community care pilot	The Community Care pilot programme commenced in May in Sydney and Melbourne and will run for twelve months. The pilot programme has two main components: community assistance, which will be provided through the Australian Red Cross (ARC), and an immigration information and counselling service, to be provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). A third component provides for limited migration advice for a small target client group. The pilot programme involves case managers coordinating a range of immigration information and community care services, on an individual needs basis to vulnerable clients who are not covered by existing programmes, or whose exceptional circumstances cannot be met by an existing programme.

Case management framework	The National Case Management Framework has been finalised, providing a holistic approach to managing clients who have complex circumstances or are vulnerable, ensuring an appropriate immigration outcome in a timely, lawful and reasonable manner. The initial 15 qualified case managers in Sydney and Melbourne has now been expanded to 35, and will expand to 50 nationwide during the 2007-08 financial year.
Onshore Detention Strategy	A new Onshore Detention Strategy was funded in the May Budget, and work has started on implementing the strategy. The Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation Centres will be the first of three new hostel-style accommodation centres to be established under the strategy, with stage 1 completion expected in mid 2007. A residential housing centre in Sydney was opened by the Minister on 1 August 2006. This is the second of three; the original one is in Port Augusta and the third, in Perth, will be completed by December this year. Significant upgrades to Baxter have been implemented and comprehensive refurbishments of our Maribyrnong (Melbourne) and Perth detention centres are underway. All of this provides a greater range of placement options for people who are detained.
24/7 hotline for police and consular inquiries regarding immigration status	The 24/7 hotline facility known as the Immigration Status Service commenced operation in February and has been progressively rolled out to police services, embassies and high commissions, becoming fully functional in July. The hotline provides police nationally with an avenue to make inquiries into the immigration status of individuals, and a contact point and referral service for the staff of Australian-based diplomatic missions in relation to their nationals who may be in detention.
Identity verification	The expanded National Identity Verification and Advice Section has been in operation for some time, conducting complex identity investigations and providing oversight and support for identity establishment practices. Cases are monitored to ensure that attempts to establish identity have not stalled, and monthly statistics are gathered to identify trends and any areas of concern.

<i>Well trained and supported staff</i>	
Key Migration Series Instructions (MSIs)	The key instructions guiding compliance and detention officers in establishing identity and visa status have been reviewed, and most will have been amended as necessary by the end of 2006. A broader project is addressing all departmental policy instructions, under which all remaining MSIs will be reviewed during the course of 2007 and revised or replaced as appropriate.
Systems for People	In June DIMA announced that a consortium led by IBM had been appointed as the strategic partner to help implement the \$495 million <i>Systems for People</i> programme of work. In September the programme delivered its first enhancements, including: an upgrade to the Humanitarian Entrant Management System; a new intranet for staff; and the initial release of a person centric search facility, which will improve staff's client searching capabilities by enabling simultaneous search across a number of departmental systems. Further enhancements are planned for 90 day intervals, with the first role-based portals for staff to be delivered in April 2007.
DIMA College of Immigration	The DIMA College of Immigration has been established to provide training for individuals in key roles including compliance and detention officers. The College curriculum is being developed with careful attention to the recommendations of the Palmer and Comrie inquiries. Mr Mick Palmer has accepted an appointment as Chair of the College Board. The first course offered through the College, the Compliance Officer Pilot Course, is now complete and participants have moved on to the workplace component of their training. The Detention Officer Pilot commenced on 16 October and the second Compliance Course will commence on 6 November.
Records Management Improvement Programme	Improvements implemented include the successful upgrade of the department's records management system in July 2006. Recordkeeping Policy and Guidelines have been reviewed and updated and a Managing Records booklet has been distributed to all staff. Recordkeeping training has been incorporated into a number of training programmes within the training college curriculum, the induction program, compliance training program, the detention program and the overseas training course.