



Australian Government

Department of Immigration and Citizenship

Speaking notes

**Launch of Best Practice Guides for Administrative Decision Makers
Administrative Review Council**

Parliament House, Canberra

10 August 2007

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Introduction

As the Attorney- General indicated, the decisions made by officers in government departments and agencies can affect the lives of many Australians. In the case of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the decisions we make also affect people who are not citizens or permanent residents.

The administrative decision-making environment in which my officers operate is complex, reflecting our sophisticated policy and operational environment. Since 1986, the Migration Act has changed from a slim volume of broad principles to now encompass more than 550 provisions and more than 1900 pages of regulations. In addition, the new Australian Citizenship Act commenced on 1 July 2007.

In making decisions of this personal significance and complexity, it is vital that my 7000 officers in 80 locations around the globe are well supported with appropriate training and consistent guidance on decision-making.

The Best Practice Guides

These five Best Practice Guides provide clear guidance in plain English on the many legal and procedural steps involved in making administrative decisions.

In recognition of the value of this project, we have provided significant resources to the development of these publications including seconding an officer to work with the Council in preparing the guides.

There is a generic set of guides, which I know will be of value to many departments and agencies across the public sector, and versions that are specifically tailored to the needs of DIAC decision-makers. Today three DIAC-specific guides will be launched; the remaining two will follow shortly.

These DIAC-specific guides will help to advance the extensive business and cultural transformation undertaken since I was appointed as secretary of the department in July 2005.

In particular, they mesh neatly with the three strategic themes by which we now undertake all our work:

- being an open and accountable organisation
- having fair and reasonable dealings with clients, and
- ensuring we have well-trained and supported staff.

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For example, the first guide on lawful decision-making will help my officers with the legal and policy complexity I mentioned earlier. The second guide on fairness will provide fresh insights into the issues we grapple with every day of how we can have fair and reasonable dealings with our clients. And the other guides on the evidentiary and accountability aspects of decision-making are critical to our aim of being an open and accountable organisation.

These guides will complement and add to the other initiatives underway to improve our decision-making such as the College of Immigration, and other training packages on ethical decision-making and leadership.

They will also help us to make progress with our continuing commitment to critical self-appraisal and review. This includes greatly strengthened internal governance, complaints handling and review processes, and a substantially strengthened internal audit programme chaired by an independent member.

Conclusion

I anticipate that the DIAC-annotated guides will be a valuable training tool for my officers in our service delivery network around Australia and overseas, who are regularly called upon to make complex decisions in a pressured and time-critical environment.

I thank the Council for this partnership. I am confident that it will deliver real benefits for decision-makers in my department in the future. And I look forward to the use of these guides to provide consistent, high quality decision-making across the public sector as a whole.