



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Immigration and Citizenship**

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**APSC Publication Launch – Contemporary Government Challenges**

**Strategies to Monitor and Improve the Performance and Corporate Health  
of Public Sector Agencies**

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**Introduction**

- Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of the launch of these excellent publications which provide a great resource for all agencies and are extremely pertinent to public sector management today.
- I can relate particularly to the booklet on *Agency Health – Monitoring Agency Health and Improving Performance* and want to briefly share with you the experiences of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship as they relate to this issue.
- I have been asked to share with you my thoughts on how the department has met the challenge of improving its performance and corporate health most recently in response to the criticisms of the Palmer and Comrie reports just over two years ago.
- The checklist at the back of the Agency Health booklet aptly covers the multitude of issues that must be considered to adequately monitor corporate health and performance.
- The immigration and citizenship change agenda incorporated these issues within its change framework which I will briefly outline to you.

**Firstly, the department and its context:**

- Australia's current population is just over 21 million - 45 per cent of us were either born overseas or have at least one parent who was born overseas.

**people** our business |

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- Around 6.6 million people have arrived here to settle permanently since October 1945.
- In 2007-08, the department will manage the entry of:
  - nearly 153 000 permanent migrants
  - 13 000 refugee and humanitarian visa entrants
  - more than 230 000 temporary residents
  - more than 300 000 student visa entrants
- Australian Bureau of Statistics recently announced that Australia had recorded its largest annual population increase ever. Net overseas migration contributed 54 per cent to this growth.
- Migration has overwhelmingly been one of the great and enduring success stories of Australia's modern history.

### **Where have we come from?**

- I expect everyone here will be aware of the release of the Palmer and Comrie reports, followed by a number of subsequent reports by the Ombudsman on cases involving immigration detention matters.
- These reports were highly critical of the operations of the department and became the catalyst for change within the department.

### **The Change Agenda**

- Corporate health and improving the performance of public sector agencies is more than rules, regulations, accountabilities, structures and frameworks. It is about institutional and individual attitudes, leadership, values and behaviours.
- I should mention that in tackling the massive transformation, I was attracted to Professor John Kotter's model of change management. His eight-step theory, although it will never replace the intuition and judgement of a good leader, is in my opinion, one the best frameworks for managing organisational change.

### **DIAC Plan**

- Our commitment to this approach is encapsulated through the creation a vision for staff through our motto '**people our business**' which is detailed in 'The DIAC Plan 2007-08' developed in consultation with staff and key stakeholders.

- In the plan we agree to work to our three strategic themes which are:
  - being an open and accountable organisation
  - ensuring fair and reasonable dealings with clients
  - having well-trained and supported staff.
- The plan sets out clear direction on our purpose, what we value, expected leadership behaviours, our strategic themes, expected outcomes, strategic priorities.
- The values include team work, service excellence, respect, openness and commitment.
- The DIAC Plan also specifies the leadership behaviours and capabilities we expect of our managers:
  - provide vision and meaningful direction
  - operate consistently with our values
  - communicate constantly and meaningfully
  - create the environment for success
  - function as team players
  - persist to achieve good outcomes.
- These capabilities and behaviours now underpin all our work. I have asked all leaders in the department to test their actions against these behaviours every day.
- All work area plans within the department are consequently linked back to the DIAC Plan creating consistency of messages and a joint commitment to future goals. Individual performance planning is then linked to the work area plans.

**Some of the ways we are influencing our journey of cultural change include:**

- **A new governance framework** – articulating our governance policy and principles, including identifying and promoting leadership as a key governance element and promoting the role of values and ethical conduct in governance:
  - providing support in the application of governance principles
  - introducing and refining frameworks for governance committees, risk management and quality assurance
  - expanding the internal audit programme
  - strengthening performance through robust corporate and business planning.

- Significant technical change by improving our IT systems and business processes through the roll out of *Systems for People* programme.
- Over the next three years, we will progressively roll out improved services to clients and will increase the consistency in our business processes, record keeping, quality control and reporting.
- Developing new programmes for our compliance and detention activities to ensure that our extraordinary powers of detention, removal from Australia and our other compliance powers are exercised lawfully, fairly and reasonably.
- This includes the implementation of the College of Immigration. The College was established in July last year to provide innovative industry certified training programs to address deficiencies in staff training and support especially in the areas of compliance and detention.
- A case management framework was introduced in mid 2006 to identify complex case and vulnerable people as early as possible and provide the necessary support to resolve issues.
- This service is making a difference to people's lives, helping reduce the time spent in immigration detention and seeing their cases through to an immigration outcome as quickly as possible.

## **IDEAL**

- Values, ethics and high-quality decision making is being influenced through a new leadership tool known as IDEAL – which stands for Immigration Dilemmas, Ethics and APS Leadership.
- IDEAL is a comprehensive kit developed to support all staff in using ethics and the APS Values in managing and resolving the dilemmas faced in the workplace in DIAC.
- It supports DIAC's strategic themes of ensuring our clients are treated fairly and reasonably by an open and accountable organisation using well-trained and supported staff.
- It provides a framework for leaders at all levels to work with their teams on ethical and APS value related issues.
- It also supports the DIAC Leadership Model in several ways such as:
  - encouraging dialogue within teams

- helping staff to understand their role in the department's success
- supporting staff to do their job well
- interacting constructively at all levels within the organisation
- encouraging teams to express their opinions and views
- Staff survey/culture model.

### **Employee Opinion Survey**

- The department is committed to listening, learning and responding to staff. Conducting regular staff surveys provides every staff member with an opportunity to express their view.
- DIAC has a methodology that measures both employee motivation and the operating culture model. The measures of employee motivation can be benchmarked against other private and public organisations.
- The results of the survey concerned with employee motivation were delivered to business areas face to face by staff able to explain the survey methodology and the use of the results.
- A method for undertaking action planning was provided and I asked that all business areas undertake action planning with the involvement of all staff and report back to be on the planned actions.

### **Client Service Improvement Strategy**

- Our renewed focus on client service is supported by a client service charter that is clear and available to all our clients. It is underpinned by client service standards against which our service performance is monitored.
- As part of this goal to be a high-performing organisation focused on excellence in client service we have established a '**Global Feedback Unit**' that provides for clients to feedback compliments and complaints to ensure that all our clients can expect to have fair and reasonable dealings with the department.

### **Conclusion – Ombudsman's 10 lessons learned**

- I would like to finish by referring you to the Ombudsman report on the Lessons for Public Administration which was in response to findings arising from the 247 immigration detention cases referred to the Ombudsman for investigation.

- This investigation exposed and highlighted a number of administrative problems and errors that were not unique to immigration administration and are lessons for all public administrators.
- I urge you all to read this very interesting and useful report – it can be found on the website of the Commonwealth Ombudsman:
- In summary the 10 lessons are:
  - Lesson 1 – Maintain accurate, comprehensive and accessible records
  - Lesson 2 – Place adequate controls on the exercise of coercive powers
  - Lesson 3 – Actively manage unresolved and difficult cases
  - Lesson 4 – Heed the limitations of information technology systems
  - Lesson 5 – Guard against erroneous assumptions
  - Lesson 6 – Control administrative drift
  - Lesson 7 – Remove unnecessary obstacles to prudent information exchange with other agencies and bodies
  - Lesson 8 – Promote effective communication within your own agency
  - Lesson 9 – Manage complexity in decision making
  - Lesson 10 – Check for warning signs of bigger problems
- I believe there is one more lesson.
- The 11<sup>th</sup> lesson is about culture and values. We can have the most perfect systems and processes in place but they will not be effective unless we also have a strong set of values in place.
- Values which are consistent across an organisation's roles and locations. In DIAC, we have identified in addition to the APS values, cores business values for teamwork service excellence, respect, openness and commitment.
- If there is a single lesson that I would offer to the broader public sector it is that good process and procedure needs to be complemented with a strong organisational culture and value set – constantly reinforced – in which all staff seek to ensure fair and reasonable dealings with clients.
- I recognise very clearly, and I remind my staff frequently, that there is much more to do in cementing cultural and business change in all our programmes.
- The key to successful change management, I therefore believe, is not to view the process as merely fixing mistakes. It is an opportunity to

acknowledge and learn from mistakes and be persistent in renewing systems and programmes for the benefit of the community, clients, stakeholders and staff.

- It is also necessary to create a culture that is accepting of and comfortable with change and is therefore open to self-reflection and continuous improvement. I encourage everyone here to keep these points in mind in your quest to improve performance and corporate health.