



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

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**SECRETARY**

May 2007

Dr Vivienne Thom  
Acting Commonwealth and Immigration Ombudsman  
GPO Box 442  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Dr Thom

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft *Report into Referred Immigration Cases: Data Issues*. The department agrees with the recommendations in your report and the response to your specific recommendations is attached. As I have said in responses to you on other reports, your findings, and the observations that you make, demonstrate the serious errors that have occurred in the past, which have directly impacted on many peoples' lives. They are very clear reminders of the importance of my department maintaining direction with the substantial changes it has made, and continues to make, aimed at preventing such mistakes recurring.

The central theme in your report is the importance of data management to good public administration. As you know, the department has embarked on the development of its new integrated client information system – *Systems for People* – which will provide a single view of the client, improved record-keeping and better quality data for decision makers.

In highlighting the serious consequences of poor data management, your report also reinforces my commitment to strong quality assurance practices to ensure accountability and transparency about the way our business is conducted. Quality assurance processes (for example, automated reporting systems, internal and external audits) have recently been strengthened by the development of a principles-based National Quality Assurance Framework. I have also issued an instruction identifying roles and responsibilities in relation to quality assurance practices, including the responsibility of my Governance and Assurance Branch in monitoring the implementation of quality assurance processes throughout the department.

A fundamental basis of the department's change agenda is to learn from the problems of the past to ensure that we meet our objectives of being open and accountable, having fair and reasonable dealings with clients and well trained and supported staff. With this in mind, I have also asked that the case examples provided in your report be used to inform future case studies in the training curriculum for the College of Immigration.

While you have not recommended any action in relation to individual officers involved in these cases, I would like to reassure you that I have asked that the cases noted in your report be considered and, where appropriate, action be taken to address any inappropriate conduct. As I have said before, I expect staff to treat clients fairly, reasonably and with respect.

Yours sincerely

(Andrew Metcalfe)

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