



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Immigration  
and Multicultural Affairs**

**12 MONTHS AFTER PALMER**

**ON THE MOVE  
TO IMPROVE**



## 12 MONTHS AFTER PALMER: ON THE MOVE TO IMPROVE

One year ago, a comprehensive series of reforms in the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) was announced following the Palmer and Comrie reports.

These reports highlighted a number of deficiencies within key areas of DIMA which meant that it was not meeting the expectations of the Australian Government and the community.

DIMA's work makes a great contribution to Australia – on a typical working day, DIMA will receive more than 12 000 visa applications; grant citizenship to around 375 people; meet around 560 clients face to face at scheduled interviews, and process more than 60 000 people across the border at air and sea ports (around one person per second).

It has undertaken this reform process while fulfilling its normal tasks with aplomb. After 12 months of reform to DIMA's processes and structures, the department is now beginning to meet the expectations of the Parliament and the public, although the scale and extent of the challenge ahead should not be underestimated.

DIMA, led by Secretary Andrew Metcalfe, has been focused heavily on reforming the department around three themes: the need to be fair and reasonable when dealing with clients; the need for the department to be open and accountable; and the need to have well-trained and supported staff.

Since the release of the department's 2005 implementation plan in response to the Palmer Inquiry, a total of 56 projects have been completed.

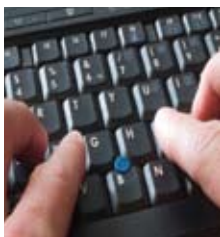
Some notable projects which have been completed include:

- The expansion of the National Identity Verification and Advice Section;
- The development of facial recognition software to match missing persons against images of immigration detainees;
- Improvements to the Baxter Immigration Detention Facility, and
- Improvements to health service delivery.

Substantial resources have been committed by the Government to ensure DIMA is provided with an appropriate level of resources to do its job, including \$495 million for DIMA's largest-ever information technology overhaul and funding for the long-term detention strategy with significant upgrades to improve conditions at detention centres around Australia. New types of accommodation, such as residential housing and transit accommodation, are also being provided for low-risk detainees, women and children.

While much has been achieved, the acceptance of the recommendations of the Palmer and Comrie Reports marked the start of a long-term process which means much still lies ahead.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the improvements to DIMA are sustained and built upon in the future to ensure that the expectations of the community are met and DIMA gains a reputation as a professional, responsive and accountable organisation.



## HOW DIMA IS ENSURING IT DEALS WITH CLIENTS FAIRLY AND REASONABLY

### **Fair, prompt and consistent individual case management**

A new case management service is being implemented to improve the delivery of services to vulnerable DIMA clients. In particular, this service will seek to ensure that immigration outcomes are reached for clients in a timely, lawful, fair and reasonable manner and that clients receive individual attention.

In addition, a community care pilot programme is currently underway with partners such as the Australian Red Cross and the International Organisation of Migration. The programme complements the case management system by coordinating the delivery of a range of immigration information, counselling and community services to clients while they await their immigration outcome.

### **Improved client engagement**

DIMA engages closely with its external stakeholders to ensure its work is tailored to the community's needs and expectations.

DIMA has launched a Client Service Charter which explains what clients can expect when dealing with DIMA, how they can help the department to help them, and how they can provide DIMA with feedback or make a complaint.

The charter is an important element of the Client Service Improvement Programme, which is helping to ensure that DIMA is a client-focused organisation.

Workshops have been held with clients to obtain feedback about what is important to them and what changes would help the department and staff provide further improvements to client service.

The department has centralised the processing of all feedback by establishing the Global Feedback Unit. This unit collects, analyses and reports on all forms of feedback.

The immi.gov.au website has been upgraded to enable clients to access information which is clear, consistent, accurate and up-to-date.

## Improved health services and wellbeing outcomes for detainees

A new Detention Health Strategy has been implemented which will emphasise the need for procedures and actions to be linked to client health diagnosis, specify essential and elective treatments, and provide continuity of health care for people during and after detention.

The Detention Health Advisory Group (DeHAG) has been established to provide expert advice on detention health services.

The department is in the process of re-tendering its detention services contract in response to the recommendations of a wide-ranging review. A separate contract will be developed to deliver health and psychological services to detainees, which will bring monitoring for the provision of health and mental health care under the direct management of the department.

Alternative strategies are now being used to better manage people with particular health needs, including the availability of enhanced clinical services, particularly mental health services.

The department has also focused on improving the health of detainees through better facilities at immigration detention centres, including new recreational facilities and kitchen and barbeque facilities so detainees can cook their own meals. The department is also negotiating access to appropriate public and private health services in key states for detainees.

New detention health standards are also being developed in conjunction with the Royal Australasian College of General Practitioners and in conjunction with the DeHAG.

## Efficient and effective identity verification

All cases where a person has been in detention for more than nine days, where identity is in question, are referred to the National Identity Verification and Advice Section (NIVA). NIVA registers and monitors these cases, providing active oversight to ensure identity investigations are finalised as soon as possible. Individual cases where all available avenues of inquiry have been exhausted at the state or territory level are referred to NIVA for active management until a final resolution.

## HOW DIMA IS BECOMING OPEN AND ACCOUNTABLE

### **Strengthened governance and quality assurance frameworks**

A new DIMA Plan created in the last year is providing the department with clear strategic priorities and a service blueprint to integrate policy, programmes and delivery.

The creation of the Governance and Assurance Branch is part of a major effort by DIMA to strengthen leadership, management and accountability which will include the promotion of a strong risk management and quality assurance culture.

A model to help guide the development of consistent quality assurance processes is currently being implemented nationally. The Department has also significantly strengthened its internal audit programme. Audit results are reported to the Departmental Audit and Evaluation Committee, which has an independent chairman.

### **Clear lines of responsibility and accountability, and improved decision-making**

The department has been restructured to remove overlap and uncertainty and create more direct lines of responsibility and accountability. Three new deputy secretaries were appointed with clear programme responsibility and accountability and new divisions and branches were put in place to create a higher level of accountability and to ensure critical issues were addressed rapidly.

## HOW DIMA IS ENSURING ITS STAFF ARE WELL-TRAINED AND SUPPORTED

### **Staff have the skill and knowledge required to carry out departmental business**

DIMA has created the National Training Branch to help develop a national training strategy to coordinate a consistent programme of training.

A substantial leadership training programme is underway for all executive level staff to ensure they are equipped to lead staff through a process of major change.

The DIMA College of Immigration has been established to provide training for individuals in key roles.

Enhanced compliance training has been underway since late 2005. Compliance officers are required to complete relevant training prior to undertaking field operations.

A Values and Standards Committee has been established to assist in ensuring that the department's operations reflect appropriate values and ethical standards. A practical tool known as IDEAL (Immigration Dilemmas, Ethics, Australian Public Service (APS) Values and Leadership) has been developed through the Committee to guide staff in applying the APS Values and DIMA leadership behaviours in their everyday work.

### **DIMA College of Immigration**

The DIMA College of Immigration has been established to provide training for individuals in key roles. The college curriculum is being tailored to comply with the recommendations of the Palmer and Comrie inquiries. Mr Mick Palmer has also accepted an appointment as chair of the college board.

### **IT systems to provide easy access to relevant information**

Following several reviews of DIMA's business information systems and needs, the Systems for People programme has been developed to overhaul the way the department uses technology to support its business. This new approach will provide role-based information portals for staff, a single view of a client's details, improved support for record-keeping and case management, and improved confidence in the integrity and consistency of data. A consortium led by IBM has been appointed as the strategic partner to assist with implementation.

### **Improved record-keeping to support business needs and legislative obligations**

DIMA has implemented a range of initiatives to improve its record management capability following recommendations from a review by the National Archives of Australia. This has included an upgrade of DIMA's records management systems in mid-2006. Work now continues to ensure that the standard of DIMA record-keeping will be regularly reviewed and upgraded if necessary.