



Australian Government
Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

SECRETARY

25 August 2006

Prof. John McMillan
Immigration Ombudsman
GPO Box 442
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Prof. McMillan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft Report into Referred Immigration Cases: Mr. G, who was detained by the department for 42 days in 2002. After considering your report, I agree with the recommendations you have made.

This case is serious and concerning and I have written to Mr G, through his representative, to apologise for my department's handling of his case.

As you know, the department commenced a major reform and improvement agenda last year in response to concerns raised in the Palmer and Comrie reports. The government has committed around \$780 million in new and redirected funding over the period 2005-06 to 2009-10 to dozens of projects to effect these reforms. Your report into the detention of Mr G highlights a number of critical issues being addressed by the reform process.

Your report reinforces my commitment to changing the culture of the department. I will take the opportunity now to again say unambiguously that I expect departmental officers to treat clients fairly, reasonably, and with respect. While I note that you have not recommended any action in relation to individual officers pertaining to events in 2002, after carefully considering your report, I have taken appropriate action in relation to the officers' conduct in this case. Looking to the future, the new DIMA Plan 2006-2007 includes respect and service excellence as key values. Staff training on values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, and ethical decision making is now comprehensively covered in our new training college. Projects under the Client Services Improvement Programme, including the Client Services Charter and Strategy, Value Creation Workshops, Community and Stakeholder Relationships Strategy and the Client Services Performance Management Committee, have and will continue to influence the culture within the department.

Your report has significantly highlighted the need for reliable information systems to properly support good decision-making. Central to the new DIMA Plan is the development of a more client-focused approach to information systems and records management and the ongoing

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improvement of service to clients. The department is in the process of implementing its major Systems for People initiative to integrate into a single system view, the full client records and all available information needed for DIMA officers to make reliable and accurate decisions and improve client focus and service. This initiative will greatly improve business processes, record keeping, quality control, support for decisions, clarity of operating instructions and operational training. Systems for People has been allocated \$495 million in new and redirected funding over the next four years.

My response to this report indicates my strong commitment to the process of change. DIMA has set in motion a range of policy and programme delivery reforms in response to the Rau and Alvarez inquiries, and to issues you have identified in the case of Mr T. Your report notes some of those reforms. Despite the fact that Mr G's detention occurred in 2002, prior to Mr T's detention, your report provides a further reminder of the need to build on the changes already implemented. This department has laid solid foundations for change. More importantly, I and my colleagues are committed to ensuring that the changes it implements achieve their intended results in the long term.

Yours sincerely

(Signed by Andrew Metcalfe)