



Palmer Report – two years of progress – Compliance reforms

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) developed a new Onshore Compliance Strategic Plan in 2006-07 which sets out clear risk-based areas of focus for operational compliance activities and establishes a balance between prevention, deterrence and enforcement activities.

It seeks appropriate outcomes for clients and stakeholders and was developed following discussions, including with the Ombudsman. The plan has been well-received in operational environments as it provides a clear focus for compliance officers, guiding the prioritisation of the complex and high volume caseload.

The plan's emphasis on the importance of prevention and deterrence has led to new strategies aimed at assisting clients to comply with migration laws. Compliance policies actively encourage clients who are unlawfully in Australia to present voluntarily to regularise their status, with detention as a last resort. Information is provided to employers and education providers regarding their roles in ensuring that workers and students have the correct visas. A promotional and engagement program is providing information to employers and labour suppliers on the commencement of the Employer Sanctions legislation in August 2007.

Compliance officers focus on high value work and pursue an enforcement approach for high risk clients identified as a mandatory priority in the Plan and with those who repeatedly demonstrate unwillingness to comply voluntarily with migration laws. Character and security cases (such as serious criminals or alleged war criminals) are actioned as a mandatory priority.

Business transformation of the department's compliance, case management and detention services will continue in 2007-08 within a nationally integrated business model, focussing coordinated services to achieving timely, lawful, fair and reasonable immigration outcomes for all clients. The development of the 2007-08 Onshore Compliance Programme Plan is underway as part of the Department's planning process.

The introduction of the *Systems for People* compliance and case management portals in April 2007 and the detention portal in July 2007 are supporting globally consistent integrated operations and improved record keeping. This is reinforced by the onshore compliance quality assurance framework, implemented in late 2006 to improve controls over key decisions such as detention, visa cancellation, and removal decisions.

The National Identity Verification and Advice Section has been expanded to provide better support for officers seeking to correctly establish the identity of clients in the field and in detention. This section recently received its 500th referral to actively investigate the most complex identity issues encountered by the department.

This service complements the work of the Immigration Status Service (ISS), which has provided since August 2006 a central contact point for police enquiries about a person's immigration status.

The ISS had received about 8000 enquiries by April 2007. At least 90 per cent of those related to people who were in Australia lawfully. The service enables police to make timely decisions on the status of these people.

'... the most efficient, professional, amicable, reasonable and fair officer...'

Client feedback regarding compliance counter officer