



## Palmer Report – two years of progress – Immigration detention reforms

A new Onshore Detention Strategy has been developed by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) to ensure sound arrangements for immigration detention to meet the forecast demand for the next decade.

The strategy provides for the upgrade of several immigration detention centres and the establishment of separate immigration transit accommodation in Adelaide, Brisbane and Melbourne. The Port Hedland immigration detention centre, currently mothballed, is to be leased for private accommodation to alleviate the acute housing shortage in the Pilbara, and consideration is presently being given to placing Baxter immigration detention centre into contingency mode.

DIAC's new detention client service model tailors services to the differing needs and circumstances of different detainees to ensure that people in detention receive appropriate attention. The client service delivery model represents the approach that the department and its contracted service providers will take to deliver quality services in a seamless manner. The approach incorporates inputs from many different sources, and reflects the outcomes the department seeks, in terms of what services are required, and how the services are to be delivered. The detention client service model is enshrined in tenders for delivery of detention and health care services to detainees.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) recognised in its recent report on detention services that conditions within immigration detention centres had substantially improved over previous years. HREOC noted improvements in the physical environment, a reduction in tension levels, enhanced programmes and activities for detainees, and improved mental health services.

The Detention Health Advisory Group (DeHAG) has been established as the key advisory group on matters concerning the design, implementation and monitoring of improvements in detention health care policy and procedures. Chaired by Associate Professor Harry Minas, DeHAG is made up of nominees from major health advisory and professional bodies, with the Ombudsman's office having an observer status.

In May 2006 the government funded the implementation of a detention health branch in DIAC. A detention health framework has been developed and is being implemented in consultation with DeHAG. This framework describes the range, level and standard of health and mental health care which is to be provided to people in all types of immigration detention. In addition detention health standards have been developed and recently released by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. These standards match those found in the wider Australian community.

'We are pleased with the preparedness to acknowledge the tragic mistakes of the past as this is an important signal that things have changed.'

John Gibson, President of the Refugee Council of Australia