



## Palmer Report – two years of progress – The secretary's introduction

It is nearly two years since the Palmer and Comrie reports set out in detail the serious mistakes which were made in the detention of Cornelia Rau and the removal from Australia of Vivian Alvarez. More than 240 other cases involving immigration detention matters were also referred to the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2005 and 2006.

The Palmer and Comrie reports and the subsequent reports by the Ombudsman have provided the major catalyst for comprehensive business and cultural change in the department.

The first year of our reform and improvement programme saw the design and introduction of specific programmes to address client service, compliance, case management, training through the College of Immigration, improved health services for detainees and identity verification.

The department also introduced new approaches and expanded programmes in supporting areas such as governance, stakeholder engagement, quality assurance, risk management, a substantially strengthened internal audit programme chaired by an independent member, the application of consistent values and ethical decision-making.

We introduced the three strategic themes by which all our work is now undertaken:

- being an open and accountable organisation
- ensuring fair and reasonable dealings with clients
- having well-trained and supported staff.

In 2006-07, the department has continued to implement this ambitious reform agenda, while introducing further reform initiatives. This has also occurred while managing an increasing case and client workload, including the successful delivery of Australia's largest skilled migration programme ever, and the development and implementation of some significant policy changes.

Key developments over the past year include:

- the release of the 2006-07 overarching plan which provided the framework for all our business unit planning
- the release of the major tenders which showcase our improved approach to detention services
- the release of portals for case management, compliance and border operations under our *Systems for People* programme. This ambitious \$495 million programme is on track and on budget
- the establishment of a Stakeholder Engagement Taskforce to implement the associated strategy to build community and stakeholder confidence
- the finalisation of our inaugural client satisfaction survey in which 80 per cent of the clients surveyed reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service provided by DIAC.

This progress report indicates the department is now well advanced in the reform and improvement programme initiated two years ago. It is my view the department has been successful in its extensive work to ensure our powers are exercised lawfully, fairly and reasonably. There is also a clear understanding throughout the department that our business and cultural transformation is an ongoing and dynamic process.

Andrew Metcalfe  
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