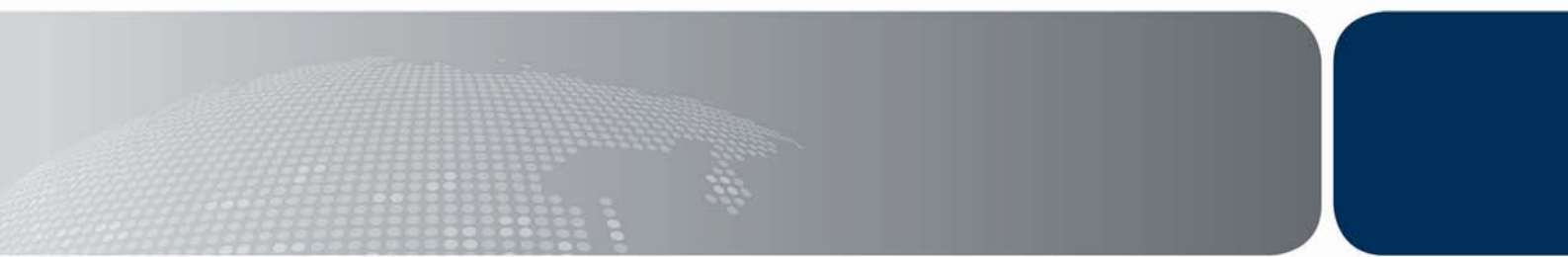




Australian Government
Department of Immigration
and Citizenship

Submission on ‘Reform of Australian Government Administration—*Building the world’s best public service*’

November 2009



1. Introduction

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the Australian Public Service (APS) reform process. As a larger Commonwealth department with a diverse range of policy and service delivery responsibilities, DIAC agrees that the APS is faced with a range of highly challenging issues. Many of these issues are complex, with local, national and international dimensions. To respond effectively to the issues of climate change, population and demographics, increasing public expectations, technological change, globalisation and financial pressures will require strategic partnerships across all layers of government, in addition to active collaboration with civic society, private enterprise and non-government organisations.

While Australia has a very robust public service system committed to the Westminster traditions of impartiality and integrity, it does not mean there is no room for improvement or that we should not strive for world's best practice in public service. As the Prime Minister has said, 'The task of contemporary public service is to protect those enduring values, while transforming itself to meet the great challenges of our time'.¹ The Prime Minister is asking the APS to stay the same but also to change – it needs to draw from the strength of our public service traditions and embrace new innovative approaches to tackle complex contemporary issues.

DIAC is well-positioned to make a very positive and practical contribution to this broader reform process. Over the past few years the department has faced its own set of challenges that have required the department to look closely at all aspects of its performance – leadership, governance, training, systems support, the relationship between policy development and implementation, client service delivery and organisational culture. Following the release of the Palmer and Comrie reports in 2005² and related reports from the Commonwealth and Immigration Ombudsman³, DIAC has undertaken an extensive cultural and business reform program that sought to reposition the department as an open and accountable and service and client-orientated organisation. The department has made substantial progress in this reform process, as reported by Ms Elizabeth Proust in her independent review of the department's reform agenda⁴. Indeed, DIAC is now seeking to transform the way we work through a concentrated focus on innovative

¹ K Rudd, Sir Robert Garran Oration to the Institute of Public Administration Australia, 20 November 2009, Brisbane. <http://www.pm.gov.au/node/6341>

² MJ Palmer, *Inquiry into the circumstances of the immigration detention of Cornelia Rau*, July 2005 <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/pdf/palmer-report.pdf> and N Comrie, *Inquiry into the circumstances of the Vivian Alvarez matter*, Report under the Ombudsman Act 1976 by the Commonwealth Ombudsman, Report No 03/2005, September 2005 http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/pdf/alvarez_report03.pdf

³ A full list of all Commonwealth Ombudsman reports on immigration detention matters can be found at <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/reports/immigration-detention-review/>

⁴ E Proust, *Evaluation of the Palmer and Comrie Reform Agenda – including Related Ombudsman Reports*, November 2008 <http://www.immi.gov.au/about/department/perf-progress/evaluation-report/proust-report.pdf>

client-centric service delivery, strengthened strategic policy capability and efficient and specialised internal business services.

We believe some of DIAC's experiences over the past few years, and our proposed transformation strategy, may serve as a useful case study to inform the broader APS reform agenda. Throughout this paper, we have tried to highlight some of the key common areas of our reform process and have given particular focus to three specific topics in the discussion paper:

- Chapter 4 – A values driven culture that retains public trust
- Chapter 5 – High quality, forward looking and creative policy advice
- Chapter 6 – High quality, effective programs and services focused on the needs of citizens.

The submission concludes with some comments about other aspects of the discussion paper, notably collaboration, creativity and innovation. We see these as key values public sector organisations need to embrace to ensure the APS is well-positioned to address the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Immigration and citizenship issues have many cross-portfolio dimensions and play a critical role in building Australia's future. They are about Australia's people, our population, our society and our economy. Indeed, immigration as a policy concept intersects with economic, social, national security and foreign policy objectives and has far-reaching impacts on individuals and Australian society as a whole. For these reasons, we see the immigration and citizenship portfolio as being uniquely positioned to pioneer innovative approaches to whole-of-government collaboration. We look forward to playing an active role in developing and implementing the ambitious APS reform agenda.

Andrew Metcalfe
Secretary
Department of Immigration and Citizenship
30 November 2009

2. Overview

Who are we and what do we do?

DIAC is a department that operates at a high operational tempo in a demanding and changing global environment. We are an organisation that is responsible for policy development, program delivery and client service operations in more than 80 countries worldwide and all states and territories in Australia. This includes applications for temporary visas to visit Australia briefly right through to permanent migration and citizenship, and the promotion of social cohesion.

We are the only immigration department in the world to operate across such a broad spectrum which gives us unique advantages, but which also makes our business quite complex.

We have almost 65 years experience in this work—the department was originally formed in July 1945 to help Australia’s post-WW2 population building. The seven millionth post-war migrant arrived in Australia in late 2009.

A year in the life of DIAC

In 2008–09 DIAC had 7027 Australian-based staff and 1016 locally engaged employees overseas who:

- facilitated 26.1 million passenger and crew arrivals and departures
- helped around 170 000 people migrate to Australia
- resettled another 13 507 refugees under the Humanitarian Program
- issued a total of 6.3 million visitor and other temporary entry visas
- conferred Australian citizenship on more than 86 000 people and approved a further 118 196 people as Australian citizens by conferral, descent and resumption
- answered 2.5 million calls to our immigration contact centres and citizenship Information Line
- answered inquiries through 735 185 telephone interpreting calls
- administered a variety of programs relating to border security, immigration status resolution, settlement support for refugees and community cultural diversity.

The department’s purpose statement is ‘building Australia’s future through the well-managed entry and settlement of people’. This statement reflects an increased focus on the department’s contribution to nation building and the ongoing economic and social benefits that flow from the department’s activities.

The nation-building work of DIAC makes a significant contribution across the entire breadth of government activity, including the economic, social, national security and foreign policy spheres:

1. **Economic**—our administration of the migration and settlement programs makes a significant contribution to Australia’s economic prosperity, through the lasting economic contributions of skilled migrants, students and other temporary entrants and ensuring new humanitarian entrants are given a strong start in Australia.
2. **Social**—our administration of the citizenship program and the Diverse Australia Program contributes to Australia’s social wellbeing through the promotion of Australian identity and values and the benefits of a united and diverse society, encouraging respect in the community for the cultural associations of all Australians.
3. **National Security**—our management of the border facilitates the entry of genuine travellers and prevents entry to Australia of those who pose a threat to national security.
4. **Foreign Policy**—the operation of our humanitarian program meets Australia’s international protection obligations and our work with international organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and bilateral capacity building work with other governments assists Australia to meet its foreign policy objectives and migration interests internationally.

In working across these broad policy spheres we are also assisting government in addressing some of the key, long-term policy challenges. We are currently working with a range of other Commonwealth and state and territory agencies on the critical policy issues of the future—economic recovery and future prosperity through targeted skilled migration programs; ensuring Australia is able to respond to the potential migration effects of climate change; and responding to the economic and social impacts of demographic change and an ageing population through the use of planned migration.

Where have we come from?

Much of the department’s work in recent years has been to respond to major problems identified some years ago. The Palmer and Comrie reports of 2005 and a series of reports by the Commonwealth and Immigration Ombudsman identified some serious short-comings in the way the then Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs worked. The report identified that serious mistakes were made affecting Cornelia Rau, Vivian Alvarez and many other people held unlawfully and commented on a departmental culture that required critical reform.

In his report, Mr Palmer noted a ‘culture that is overly self-protective and defensive, a culture largely unwilling to challenge organisational norms or to

engage in genuine self-criticism or analysis'.⁵ More broadly, the Palmer and Comrie reports focused on the need to reform many aspects of the department's functionality, including leadership, governance, training, systems support, the relationship between policy development and implementation, client service delivery, records management and organisational culture.

The department's response had to address the specific reasons why these mistakes had occurred. However, we also had to institute much broader cultural change within the department. We made some key strategic changes in our approach to organisational culture, values, leadership and client service which are set out in more detail in parts three and five of this paper. We sought to anchor the cultural change, by institutionalising new approaches to the way we work, through a range of major initiatives across the organisation, but especially in the areas of business planning, staff training, resourcing and risk management.

In July of 2008, Ms Elizabeth Proust was asked by the department's secretary to evaluate the department's reforms in response to the Palmer and Comrie reports, and to 10 reports by the Ombudsman on immigration matters. Ms Proust's report confirmed that DIAC had substantially implemented the Palmer and Comrie recommendations and that where they were not yet complete, plans existed for their implementation. Ms Proust recommended that the time had come for the department to move on from the focus on the Palmer and Comrie reports and to now focus on building and maintaining a high performance culture.

Where are we going?

At the close of 2009, preparations are well underway to chart a new direction for the department. We recognise that having addressed some major cultural and business challenges, improvement is a continual process and we must review and adjust to also face new challenges such as the global economic crisis and the need for increased efficiencies, increased levels of displaced people globally, climate change, and population and demographic change.

A new organisational structure groups responsibility for all policy and program management functions under one deputy secretary, thereby increasing our strategic policy and evaluation focus in response to the government's forward agenda.

A new client services transformation strategy will clearly put our clients at the centre of our work, while seeking to deliver significant efficiencies. Our vision is that all client interactions will be managed in a globally integrated way, through greater use of electronic and self help services, risk tiering of work, smart centres and service delivery partners. The blueprint for this part of our transformation is set out in part five of this paper.

⁵ Ibid Palmer, July 2005

Corporate and business services are also being grouped to provide strategic advice, streamlined and efficient services, and an enhanced focus on risk, program integrity and fraud. The new Business Services Group will be responsible for the provision of highly professional and specialised services to the department's internal clients. The Business Services Model, which is still under development, will see a greater emphasis placed on subject matter experts partnering with business to provide these services.

This transformation strategy underscores our challenge to work as a globally integrated organisation, dedicated to continuously improving our performance and productivity, so that we deliver better migration and citizenship outcomes for our clients and Australia, now and into the future.

3. A values driven culture that retains public trust

Ongoing relevance of APS Values

We believe the APS Values still have great relevance but they need to be streamlined to ensure they retain their resonance with APS employees in a 21st century public administration environment.

Several parts of the APS Values could be streamlined because they are either similar in nature or already covered by other legislation and policy applicable to employment within the Australian Public Service.

For example, we suggest that values (a) and (f)⁶ which address how the APS should interact with government could be streamlined into one value that addresses the nexus between an apolitical APS and one that is responsive to government. Value (f) may also benefit from some further clarification as it currently covers both providing advice and implementing policies and programs. Incorporating these two elements within the same value dilutes the clarity of value (f) as different considerations can come into play when 'providing advice' versus 'implementing policy and programs'.

Similarly values (b), (c), (l) and (m) which collectively address how an Australian is selected to work in the APS and what kind of workplace they can expect to work in, could also be streamlined into one value with a sharper focus.

The values could also be strengthened and made more relevant by including references to the role of public servants in providing high-quality, evidence-based policy advice drawing on a broad evidence base. We also believe that the values need to incorporate a reference to whole-of-government collaboration and they need to encourage innovation and engagement with risk.

Finally we feel that all staff across the APS could benefit from further guidance on the different roles of APS and ministerial staff and appropriate interactions. The discussion paper notes the introduction of a code of conduct for ministerial staff⁷. This could be included in a general code of conduct training package undertaken by departments for APS employees.

⁶ As outlined in Figure 4.1 on page 14 of the discussion paper.

⁷ Australian Public Service Commission Circular 2008/7 *Code of Conduct for Ministerial Staff*, <http://www.apsc.gov.au/circulars/circular087.htm>

Agency-specific values

The discussion paper raises the issue of the development of agency-specific values and asks if their existence indicates that local rather than core APS values are becoming the guiding philosophy within individual organisations.

DIAC believes there is an ongoing place for an overarching set of APS-wide values that define how all public servants, irrespective of agency or rank, are not only expected to behave but also what they can expect of the institution that employs them. Revising the APS values to give them more currency in today's public sector environment, including simplification, will assist in ensuring their continuing relevance.

From a DIAC perspective, we would like to acknowledge, as an example, the important role the APS Values play in educating our locally engaged staff in overseas posts in the actions and behaviours we expect of people working in an Australian Government context. DIAC actively promotes APS Values education as part of the learning and development agenda of our locally engaged staff overseas.

However, all agencies, regardless of the public policy subject matter they work in, deal with a range of issues specific to their workplace that will impact on staff values and conduct and for which staff may require more specific guidance. Agency-specific values can provide this additional guidance while also remaining consistent with the APS-wide values. This has been a particular issue for DIAC in addressing some of the cultural challenges and barriers to high performance identified in the Palmer and Comrie Reports of 2005.

DIAC and cultural change

Following the publication of the Palmer and Comrie reports, the department embarked on an ambitious cultural change agenda. We articulated very clearly for staff the things that we value as an organisation and the behaviours we expect of them, taking into consideration that many DIAC staff work in a diverse range of demanding and complex environments. We felt that if we didn't constantly reinforce appropriate behaviour and values for our staff that staff would simply develop their own value set based around the very difficult work they do.

At the start, we had to develop a collective understanding across the organisation of where we were and where we were going. We developed a very clear statement of what we do through the client-centric motto—'**people** our business'. We added another level of detail by developing our 'strategic triangle' that featured three strategic themes for the organisation to guide every aspect of our work. These were to:

- be an open and accountable organisation
- have fair and reasonable dealings with clients
- ensure staff are well-trained and supported.



We then developed a list of things that we valued at DIAC and reflected the nature of our work but we did this by ensuring that the DIAC-specific values also reflected the APS Values and Code of Conduct. The values we developed were as follows:

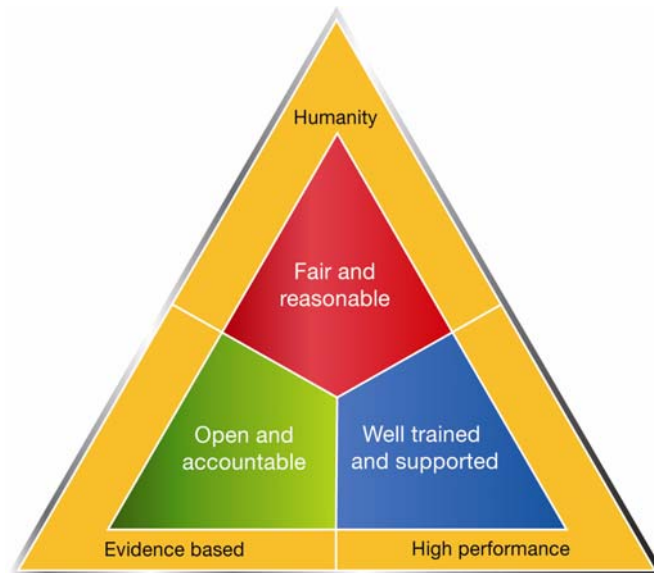
1. **Teamwork**
In DIAC we work collaboratively with each other to achieve our business outcomes. We value diversity, actively seek contributions and commit to open discussion.
2. **Service Excellence**
We strive for excellence in the delivery of services. We listen to our stakeholders and customers and develop service solutions that meet their needs. We commit to being responsive and accessible and deliver services to prescribed and publicly available standards.
3. **Respect**
We show respect for our clients, stakeholders and each other. We are approachable and listen to ensure we understand the individual's needs.
4. **Openness**
We are an open organisation, providing visibility and transparency of our processes. We listen and change how we do business based on feedback from clients and stakeholders.

5. Commitment

We are committed to delivering government policy in a fair and reasonable way and constantly strive to improve policy and program performance. We are committed to each other and support each other in times of crisis—we always go the extra mile. We are also committed to a balanced work and personal life, respecting the needs of our staff.

As our cultural change reform program matured, we have continued to use these values but have added another layer to our ‘strategic triangle’ that further articulates how we want to approach our work:

- We want humanity to guide our interactions with our clients.
- We want to be an organisation that formulates policy from a sound evidence base.
- We want to be a high performing organisation.



These values are set out in the department’s strategic plan⁸ and our ‘strategic triangle’ is used as a visual aid throughout the department to constantly remind staff of what we value and how we work.

Values training

To ensure we were able to fully embed the values across DIAC we developed an agency-specific values training package entitled *Immigration Dilemmas: Ethics, APS Values and Leadership* (IDEAL) to assist our leaders in creating and sustaining cultural change in the department.

⁸ DIAC Strategic Plan 2009-12 <http://www.immi.gov.au/about/department/diac-plan/diac-strategic-plan-2009-12.pdf>

IDEAL does this by encouraging and facilitating discussions between leaders and their team members on appropriate responses to ethical dilemmas using a range of scenarios in national office, state and territory offices and overseas office environments. All departmental leaders, whether based in Australia or overseas, have a responsibility to facilitate IDEAL discussions with their teams.

IDEAL helps leaders and their teams to:

- distinguish between rules-based approaches and values-based approaches to decision-making in the workplace
- understand what constitutes a quality decision in the context of the APS Values
- understand the effect of good and poor decisions on clients, team members, stakeholders and other departmental staff
- develop a shared language of ethics and common understanding of the APS Values
- distinguish between personal values and the APS Values
- emphasise, acknowledge and support cultural, environmental and linguistic diversity
- appreciate the complexity of ethical issues by using the layered approach employed in the department's specific scenarios
- understand the benefits of the REFLECT decision-making model for solving problems that arise in everyday work.

The role of leaders in promoting APS and agency-specific values

Agency heads and SES employees have a particular obligation under the *Public Service Act 1999* to uphold and promote the APS Values. Staff surveys both across the APS and within DIAC have consistently shown that, on the whole, staff do not think that members of the APS leadership team perform this aspect of their roles well.

In working to instil a new culture of behaviour and values we believed it was essential, initially, for this change process to be led from the top. The challenge for DIAC was linking leadership with both values and outcomes.

We developed a range of leadership initiatives to assist with this process:

- a DIAC leadership model to give concrete focus to our leadership activities. The leadership capabilities included:
 - Providing vision and meaningful direction.
 - Operating consistently within our values.
 - Communicating constantly and meaningfully.
 - Creating the environment for success.
 - Functioning as team players.

- Persisting to achieve good outcomes.
- formal and informal leadership engagement programs, including having members of the executive committee travel to onshore and offshore sites on a regular basis and SES members to visit service delivery parts of our network
- sessions for EL and SES officers to come together to find ways to breach any real or perceived leadership gaps
- regular two-day SES forums where the department's extended leadership group discuss and plan for the department's future
- weekly messages from the Secretary to senior leaders about current issues and their own leadership, and meetings between the Secretary and each SES officer individually at least once per year.

The role of all staff in promoting APS and agency-specific values

While senior leaders play a key role instilling organisational values, as our reform program progressed, it became clear that we also needed to actively engage leaders at all levels of our organisation in the task of building a values-centred culture. Every person with supervisory or project management roles needed to also consider themselves to have a leadership role. We needed every employee to be willing to step up to the mark and take responsibility for not only getting the job done and done well, but in the right way, demonstrating strong leadership values and behaviour appropriate to their level—whether they were chairing an interdepartmental committee or serving a client on the front counter.

We have attempted to foster this leadership role throughout the department through ongoing communication between the department's leadership team and staff and through learning and development and performance management processes. We have embedded the core values and behaviours in the department's performance capabilities at all levels, included development in these behaviours in employee development plans and we assess progress against these core capabilities through the department's performance agreement/appraisal process.

External views on our cultural change program

Lastly, one of the other tools we used to help embed our value system within the organisation was a Values and Standards Committee.

The role of the committee was to provide an independent and community-based perspective on the department's cultural change program and how the APS Values were applied in DIAC.

The committee was made up of four external members—a deputy Commonwealth Ombudsman, the Deputy Australian Public Service Commissioner and two community members. The committee has advised us on:

- client service
- recruitment
- leadership behaviours
- the DIAC Plan
- complaints handling
- trends of Code of Conduct investigations
- the staff survey.

4. High quality, forward looking and creative policy advice

The immigration policy environment

DIAC is one of only a few Commonwealth agencies that has an integrated responsibility for policy development, program management, service delivery, and investigation and enforcement functions. The department also deals with complex issues across the economic, social, security, and foreign policy areas in both the domestic and international arenas.

We are addressing complex policy issues with long-term implications for Australia's growth and prosperity, including demography, skills shortages, ageing, social cohesion, climate change and border protection. All of these highly complex issues are interrelated and have significant impact on Australia's migration and humanitarian programs, in addition to citizenship and multicultural policies.

There are a multitude of international, state and local players in the operations of the department. Governments, businesses, regional councils, academics, international intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, and other members of the 'third sector' are all active stakeholders in the department's activities.

During the policy development process the department also consults closely with stakeholders in making crucial decisions such as the size and composition of the migration and humanitarian programs. Due to the nature of the portfolio having responsibility for policy development, program management and service delivery, we are in a unique position to constantly evaluate policies and programs, taking advantage of our internal policy to program feedback loop. This allows for constant improvement and high performance in our service delivery.

Immigration and citizenship issues have traditionally attracted significant media and public interest which has led to a high level of scrutiny of the department's programs and operations. These elements all contribute to a dynamic environment that presents both challenges and exciting possibilities.

Agency investment in strategic thinking and policy development capabilities

It is essential for the APS to invest in strategic thinking, long-term policy development, and a sound research and evidence base, along with building evaluation capabilities.

DIAC is committed to the provision of high quality, forward-looking and creative policy advice. Structural reforms have been introduced to champion

policy development, innovation, research and evaluation across all areas of DIAC. These involve significant financial and organisational commitments to position the department as an innovative and forward-thinking department.

We acknowledge that research and policy development were once strengths of the department. The department's Bureau of Immigration Research was considered to be an APS leader in policy development up until its abolition in 1996. DIAC is again fully committed to investing in research, evaluation and evidence-based driven policy development. DIAC has made three senior executive appointments to drive these capabilities through the organisation. A First Assistant Secretary has been appointed to head up the Policy Innovation, Research and Evaluation Unit (PIREU) and we have appointed a Chief Economist, and a Principal Advisor Migration Strategies.

The discussion paper raises the concept of establishing strategic policy hubs across the APS. While these are not currently in operation, PIREU plays a similar role within DIAC, in fostering strategic policy links across the department and with external stakeholders. The unit works with other areas of the department, a range of APS agencies and overseas organisations as well as engaging heavily with academics and the third sector on research and policy development.

PIREU is part of DIAC's change management reform agenda to foster strategic and innovative strategies to enable staff to plan for the long-term and not just focus on immediate tactical priorities. The unit conducts in-house research, commissions external research and works with other government agencies to promote innovative approaches to policy development. Eight high level strategic research projects were commissioned in the 2008-09 financial year, on wide-ranging cross-portfolio issues. PIREU undertook research and analysis of the major policy challenges facing the portfolio over the next decade, providing advice to the executive on the key policy priorities for the portfolio to help inform future investment decisions. It also plays an important role in strategic policy planning, working with areas across DIAC on short and long-term planning frameworks.

The Chief Economist was appointed in November 2008 to strengthen capability in this critical area of government policy and decision-making and support an improved understanding among staff and externally of the economic impacts and benefits of immigration and citizenship policy.

The Chief Economist's unit works closely with the Principal Advisor Migration Strategies. The Principal Advisor's key responsibilities include the development of long-term migration strategies and programs to support the government's migration reform agenda, including improving the contribution of migration to Australia's economic prosperity and advancing Australia's global and bilateral trade interests.

DIAC examples of the way we work

The department recognises the value of external viewpoints in the process of policy development and works with a number of advisory bodies including the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council, the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Committee, and the newly established Council for Immigration Services and Status Resolution. These external bodies provide valuable insights and advice on their respective issues, and allow leaders in the Australian community to formally communicate views and insights on particular issues.

Annual migration and humanitarian programs are decided in consultation with international organisations, and engagement with other public and private stakeholders. For example, we engage closely with the UNHCR in formulating Australia's yearly humanitarian program.

The department has found benefit in utilising trials and pilots for new policy initiatives. Following the recommendations of the Palmer and Comrie reports, a Community Care Pilot was introduced in 2006 to test early intervention strategies and assist unlawful non-citizens with complex needs to reach an immigration outcome and avoid detention. In 2007 the new approach was expanded (Status Resolution Pilot) to bridging visa clients who did not have health or welfare vulnerabilities. The pilots provided a strong evidence base to develop innovative new approaches to the management of unlawful non-citizens and to support the government's *New Directions in Detention* policy.

Our work over several years enabled us to develop an innovative new policy proposal underpinned by a strong evidence base. The strong business case showed that the new status resolution approach was a more cost effective way to manage and resolve the compliance caseload promptly, fairly and with integrity, resulting in better client outcomes.

Overcoming systemic APS-wide challenges

Driving high quality, forward-looking and creative policy throughout the APS means that systemic APS-wide challenges must be faced. Issues such as the promotion of innovation throughout the public service, overcoming a risk-averse culture, and building strategic policy development capabilities for staff are all challenges that must be faced in the process of reforming Australian government administration.

Fostering a culture of innovation within the APS means that agencies must actively engage with risk. Risk-averse structures, systems, policies and processes that provide safeguards to ensure 'fail-safe outcomes' have been built into the sector over many decades. This has created a culture of risk aversion. Innovation represents a paradigm shift for the APS but it will also provide valuable opportunities to tackle other long standing problem areas (for

example, 'silos' within a single department and between APS agencies). Realistically, meaningful changes will need to be phased in over several years. It will require new APS frameworks to deal with the risks and ensure there is adequate protection for agencies and staff. Agencies will require substantial support to assist them in introducing changes.

The core capabilities of high performing APS staff of the future are strong policy development, innovation, research and evaluation skills. Investing in staff training, learning and development in these areas will allow a cycle of continuous improvement of staff knowledge, and superior capabilities in policy formulation. Programs and courses that encourage staff to build their knowledge base of relevant program and policy areas will foster workforce capabilities in policy formulation and implementation. Concurrently, they will empower decision-makers to resolve issues in a well-informed manner.

In broadening the wider APS strategic policy capability, instituting a system of shared learning across all agencies would assist this process. Utilising experience from across the APS can benefit a departmental policy development process. For example, within DIAC there is an Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) outposted officer. This officer is able to share their high level of understanding of statistic collection and data analysis across the department. DIAC also engages in exchanges at the international level, through cross-posting arrangements we have with other foreign governments such as Canada and through participation in multilateral forums such as the Five Countries Conference and the Inter-Governmental Consultations on Asylum, Migration and Refugees.

5. High quality, effective programs and services focused on the needs of citizens

Client service reforms 2005–2009

The reform process that commenced in 2005, while addressing organisational culture, also worked systematically to improve our engagement with key stakeholders and clients. We effectively set about making **‘people our business’** by re-orienting our approach to client service—we would no longer be process rich and outcomes poor and the client would now be the focal point of service delivery design.

DIAC needed to re-define its relationship with its client base—we needed to rebuild trust and respect and we needed to ensure that our services more effectively delivered for our clients. We did this by directly re-engaging with our clients and listening to them. In 2006 we developed a Client Service Improvement Program that included three key elements—Hearing You, Helping You and Our Commitment.

Hearing You involved:

- Value creation workshops to obtain feedback from clients, stakeholders and staff about what was important to them.
- Regularly conducting client service satisfaction surveys to determine satisfaction levels with DIAC services.

Helping You involved:

- Establishment of a Global Feedback Unit to collect, analyse and report on all forms of feedback which enabled the department to continually enhance its services and increase community confidence in our operations.
- Establishment of a case management model to facilitate the resolution of exceptional cases involving clients who had complex circumstances and/or are vulnerable.

Our Commitment involved:

- Development and publication of a client service charter that set out what clients could expect from DIAC and how to provide the department with feedback.
- Establishment of the Secretary’s Award for Client Service Excellence to recognise and reward staff who strive for distinction in their day-to-day activities and raise the bar for service standards.

Since 2006, the department has continued to identify and drive strategies to improve client service in approximately 100 offices across our Australian and overseas networks. Some of the additional client service initiatives include:

- Use of Client Service Intercept Polls in addition to client surveys:
 - The 2008 results indicated that 91 per cent of clients surveyed were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with the in-person service they received at a number of state and territory locations.
 - About 98 per cent of surveyed clients visiting an office reported being treated with courtesy along with 99 percent who telephoned the department.
- Finalisation of reviewed External Client Service Standards⁹ which guide service delivery planning.
- Launch of the Visa and Citizenship Wizards in September and December 2008 respectively. These online self-service tools simplify the process of obtaining information about visas and citizenship and recently won the Australian e-Awards for Excellence in e-Government in May 2009 and the International FutureGov Government Technology Awards in Bali in October 2009.
- A refresh of the department’s website in 2008 with improved navigation and greater access to information and online services.
- Institution of the annual Secretary’s Client Service Challenge to acknowledge teams delivering outstanding client service.

DIAC transformation strategy

While the client service reforms put in place since 2005 have reformed DIAC’s approach to client service, the department recognises that there is still a long way to go in developing a truly globally integrated client-at-the-centre service delivery system.

As such, on 13 October 2009, the Secretary announced a blueprint for the department to transform the way it does business and achieve greater levels of efficiency to meet the Government’s fiscal objectives. The *DIAC Transformation Strategy* is an evidence-based, innovative and ambitious forward-looking program that builds on the reforms of the past four years and the new technology platform known as *Systems for People*. The key drivers of the strategy are integrity, efficiency and client service. The strategy aims to deliver sustainable, ongoing annual efficiencies, embed a client-at-the-centre service philosophy through an integrated global service delivery network and enhance DIAC’s ability to deliver on future government policy objectives.

The *Client Services Transformation Strategy* is a major component of the strategy. In considering our long-term challenges and sustainability, we have identified a number of key opportunities to further optimise the department’s service delivery network.

We have commenced progressive implementation of four new long-term strategies over the coming years to (a) deliver globally consistent streamlined

⁹ <http://www.immi.gov.au/about/dept-info/standards/external-client-service-standards.pdf>

services to our clients, (b) allow us to re-balance activity across and within channels and (c) focus DIAC staff on value-adding:

1. Implement improved channel management, backed up by better Internet self-help tools, to provide seamless service to clients through simplifying lodgement processes, providing more choice and better integration of channels (phone, web, email and paper) and removing restrictions on where and how clients may lodge an application.
2. Expand the role of the contact centres. Transition from contact centres to 'smart centres' that can support and interact with clients seamlessly across a variety of channels - phone, web, email and paper. Highly trained generalists and specialists in the smart centres would handle the bulk of client queries not catered for by the website. They would also provide on-the-spot processing of applications for simple visas. This will greatly enhance the client experience and also allow dedicated visa processing officers to concentrate on performing higher value processing activities.
3. Enhance the role of Service Delivery Partners (SDPs) to expand the department's footprint both onshore and offshore. SDPs will support a key pillar of the Client Services Transformation Strategy, which is that all processing will be done electronically. Part of their role will be to receive and digitise paper applications and supporting documents, thus enabling better integration across channels and allowing work to be undertaken in the most appropriate location, regardless of where the application was lodged, in addition to greater data capture for the department. SDPs could also be used to capture biometrics.
4. Take a fresh approach to location of work decisions where we will centralise processing of lower risk products and cases for efficiency and decentralise higher risk case loads requiring proximity to clients and/or local knowledge for integrity. This will see low-risk, high-volume caseloads processed at Centres of Excellence in Australia and lower volume, high-risk caseloads processed around Australia and overseas. This arrangement will maximize economies of scale and improve consistency, while maintaining a keen focus on integrity.

The strategy has been developed to closely align with broader, whole-of-government policy objectives, including:

- placing the client/citizen at the centre of service delivery
- bridging the nexus between policy development/program design and service delivery implementation
- realising efficiencies in costs and benefits through better utilisation of technological innovations in e-business and online access, as set out in the Government's Gov 2.0 technology agenda.

Lastly, we believe the development of this entire transformation strategy has also been a positive example of cross-portfolio collaboration. Not only have

we examined what other departments and organisations in the private sphere are doing in the areas of enterprise architecture, policy development and service delivery but we have also actively consulted with secretaries and other senior officers from the Departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Finance and Deregulation and the Treasury on our approach to transforming how we work, how much it costs to do our work and how we deliver services and programs to our clients and the government.

We will also continue to seek external views as our transformation agenda progresses. We will establish a reference group, drawn from the department's key stakeholders, to provide expert advice and feedback on the roll-out of the transformation strategy.

6. Conclusion

While our paper has focused on three key aspects of reform – values, policy development and client service delivery – in concluding, there are two other aspects of the reform discussion paper that we would like to comment on.

Flexibility and agility—the need for mobility

Chapter seven of the discussion paper asserts that the public service must be able to respond rapidly and effectively to changing realities and government priorities and, to do this, two increasingly vital characteristics for the APS are flexibility and agility. The paper also states that one of the attributes of a flexible and agile APS would be ‘mobility’. That is, ensuring that people can easily move into and across the APS.

DIAC considers there is substantial potential to increase the level of mobility across the APS. Some agencies foster mobility better than others and traditionally DIAC had not been an agency that has embraced mobility. Prior to 2005, mobility, particularly at the SES level was very low. However, as part of the reform process that commenced in 2005, DIAC took a broader view to staffing, making a concerted effort to both build on the internal strengths of existing staff as well as recruit new staff.

Drawing on external skills and expertise and facilitating skills transfer through the employment and promotion of people from outside both the department and government has now become a fundamental part of our work planning processes. At the SES level alone, which has totalled been between 70–80 officers over the past four years, 48 people have been promoted or transferred into DIAC. This sharing of staff, skills and experience from other departments and organisations, while strongly valuing expertise developed within the department, has been critical to revitalising and improving the department’s culture and performance.

We support the possible reform directions suggested on page 41 of the discussion paper, with particular support for:

- the development of a work placement program across agencies and across layers of government, including state and territory and local governments. Where relevant a formal program of international exchanges with like-minded countries could also be considered. This could be at the entry/graduate level or at certain promotion points, such as entry to the executive levels and senior executive levels.
- the development of an internship-type work placement program that places APS staff with third sector partners such as NGOs, community groups, private organisations and academic institutions and third sector employees with relevant APS agencies.
- a review of the entire APS recruitment system that relies on complex capability frameworks that vary considerably across agencies. We

need to ask ourselves the question, 'why does recruitment to bureaucracy need to be so different from that of private enterprise'?

Realising efficiencies

The government has clearly set expectations that the APS must apply a strong focus on continuing to work more efficiently and on providing the government with innovative, evidence-based policy and client-centred service delivery. But it is important for these objectives to be considered together in a complementary way. The department considers that while there will always be opportunities to identify smaller, more immediate efficiencies, there is the potential to deliver more sustainable and substantial longer term efficiencies through greater upfront investment by government in innovation within and between portfolios.

Department of Immigration and Citizenship
30 November 2009