

Committee Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

12 August 2011

RE: Submission from International Health and Medical Services

International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network Inquiry. This submission addresses those issues on which IHMS believes it is in a position to assist the Inquiry.

IHMS is the contracted health services provider for people in immigration detention. We are proud to provide these essential services to the Commonwealth, represented by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, and to its clients in Immigration Detention.

I understand the Committee members are planning to interview representatives at three locations during August and September. The following personnel are appropriate representatives from IHMS:

Canberra	Mr Michael Gardner Regional Managing Director
	Mr Ian Gilbert General Manager
	Dr Dick Hooper Regional Medical Director, Medical Services
Christmas Island	Mr Jeff Whittaker General Manager, Christmas Island
	Ms Lyn Baczocha Health Services Manager, Christmas Island
Curtin	Mr Russel Hutchings Regional Operations Manager
	Helen Lonergan Director of Nursing



As your program for interviewing witnesses develops, please feel free to contact our Director of Corporate Affairs, Melissa Lysaght, to coordinate appointments. Melissa can be contacted at or by telephone on

Yours faithfully,

Michael Gardner
Regional Managing Director

Terms of Reference

(c) the resources, support and training for employees of Commonwealth agencies and/or their agents or contractors in performing their duties;

IHMS reviews the requirements of each site based on information provided by the Department. It then develops a service delivery model which addresses the staff profile, clinical infrastructure, equipment and consumables required.

Staff are recruited against the professional qualifications and registrations required. A detailed induction training program covers:

- IHMS company background and mission statement;
- Immigration detention values;
- Delivery of services;
- Site specific information including the profile of the client population;
- Health information system;
- Clinical and management oversight; and
- Interactions with the Department and Serco.

IHMS operates an ongoing education program for staff including e-learning modules and on-site learning.

Our Regional and Site Health Services Managers participate in quarterly conferences for peer support and professional development. Operational staff are also supported by Regional Operations Managers who provide guidance, mentoring and supervision.

Staff are further supported through a clear management structure with both administrative and clinical reporting lines. An Employee Assistance Program is well established, providing telephone based support at all times, and in-person support for significant events.

(d) the health, safety and wellbeing of asylum seekers, including specifically children, detained within the detention network;

IHMS is contracted to provide health services to people in detention. This includes:

- the provision of primary and mental health services within immigration detention facilities
- the coordination of specialist and allied health services by providers outside the facilities
- the credentialing of healthcare providers for those in community detention
- the operation of a Nurse Triage and Advice Service for Department and contractor personnel to call when clinic services are not available
- Reporting functions to support the Department and Ombudsman requirements.

IHMS provides these services within the context of the Immigration Detention Key Values and the terms of the Health Services Contract.

We note that conditions have changed considerably from the time when the Health Services Contract was executed by IHMS and the Commonwealth on 14 January 2009. The ever changing composition of the client base in immigration detention has resulted in more complex health needs. There has been considerable growth in the population and the number of sites. IHMS has always aimed to respond to the changing needs of the Department and its clients, using interim contract arrangements to achieve the required outcomes.

Over and above our contractual obligations, IHMS is committed to providing professional, respectful patient care. Our staff have a strong medical ethos which is reflected in the mission statement for IHMS:

IHMS will provide a level of healthcare to people in immigration detention consistent with that available to the wider Australian community, taking into account the diverse and potentially complex health needs of people in detention.

These services will be provided in a professional manner that is clinically appropriate, without any form of discrimination, with appropriate dignity, humanity, cultural and gender sensitivity, and respect for privacy and confidentiality.

This mission is instilled in staff through induction and ongoing training, through performance management and recognition processes.

IHMS provides standard and ad-hoc reporting on individual clients and on health in aggregate. These reports are provided to the Department and to the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

(f) the effectiveness and long-term viability of outsourcing immigration detention centre contracts to private providers;

The contract for health services with IHMS is a practical approach to the management of integrated health services to a population with complex, changing health needs.

With the dynamic nature of sites, the arrangement with IHMS allows the Department to activate and de-active services. This ensures that services are available as needed, without having to pay for a standing infrastructure and excess capacity.

Under the contract, IHMS provides strong reporting capabilities to the Department, supporting responses to parliamentary and senate questions, media, freedom of information requests and other matters. The IHMS reporting team also provides standard and ad-hoc reporting to the Immigration Ombudsman. With resources dedicated to this function, IHMS is able to support transparency around the delivery of health services and the health of people in detention.

Contracting health services to an external provider reduces the impact on the public health system. With many services being provided within the detention centres, referrals to the public health system are only made where clinically indicated.

With contract surety, IHMS is able to recruit and retain high calibre staff, ensuring the long term viability of the services. Appropriate supervision, career pathways, and continuing medical education means that staff progress in their profession and continue to improve the services.

A key tenet of the health services contract is the provision of advice and counsel on the healthcare of people in detention. This means senior medical advice on how services should be structured, emergency response planning, integration with the public health services, emerging health issues and preventative measures. Again, this contributes to the effectiveness and long-term viability of the services.

(i) the performance and management of Commonwealth agencies and/or their agents or contractors in discharging their responsibilities associated with the detention and processing of irregular maritime arrivals or other persons;

The performance and management of IHMS in discharging its responsibilities is measured against key indicators as per the Health Services Contract.

To ensure that the delivery of health services is consistent with the expectations of the Department, IHMS maintains daily communication with DIAC personnel within Canberra and at sites. This communication takes place by telephone, email and in-person meetings.

(j) the health, safety and wellbeing of employees of Commonwealth agencies and/or their agents or contractors in performing their duties relating to irregular maritime arrivals or other persons detained in the network;

IHMS is a responsible and concerned employer; the safety and wellbeing of our staff is our first priority. Services are provided only when its staff can be sure of a safe working environment.

In consideration of staff health, IHMS arranges immunisations for staff before they are deployed to site.

Site security is the responsibility of the Detention Services Provider (DSP). The IHMS Regional and Site Health Services Managers liaise with the DSP and with the Department to ensure appropriate measures are in place for staff safety.

At new sites, the security of the work place is reviewed before IHMS will commission services.

If the security of staff can no longer be assured at any time, staff are withdrawn from the site in cooperation with the Department as well as the DSP and/or the Australian Federal Police.

IHMS has established protocols, tested on several occasions, to ensure communication and cooperation during incidents. Staff have been withdrawn from sites as needed, and re-deployed only when the incident has been resolved.

The mental health of our staff is also a key concern. As mentioned above, an Employee Assistance Program is well established, providing telephone based support at all times, and in-person support for significant events. IHMS Regional Operations Managers liaise with site staff to monitor the wellbeing of staff during times of tension.

(k) the level, adequacy and effectiveness of reporting incidents and the response to incidents within the immigration detention network, including relevant policies, procedures, authorities and protocols;

IHMS has clear procedures for the reporting of and response to incidents. The Health Services Contract specifies the reporting and timeframes required by the Department. Different requirements are in place for reporting “critical incidents” and “other incidents”. IHMS procedures detail the internal reporting requirements.

The procedures for response include assessment of client condition, treatment and escalation protocols. These procedures reference state health requirements and the involvement of external service providers as appropriate.

(m) any issues relating to interaction with States and Territories regarding the detention and processing of irregular maritime arrivals or other persons;

While many health services are delivered within the detention centre environment, emergency, specialist and some allied health services are provided by the relevant state health authorities. IHMS coordinates those services, through referrals, appointments and commercial arrangements.

The protocols for accessing these state health services are agreed with the authorities, and Memoranda of Understanding currently being developed by the Department with each state health authority are designed to formalise those protocols.

IHMS acknowledges the demands on the state health services, and seeks to minimise the impact to the broader community through referring clients only when clinically indicated, and through cooperation with the Department on modelling service utilisation.

(p) the expansion of the immigration detention network, including the cost and process adopted to establish new facilities;

As new sites are being developed, IHMS seeks involvement as early as possible to give comment on the location of new facilities and the scope of health services surrounding, as well as the placement and design of the health centre.

IHMS has a well-established process for the design and commissioning of health services at new sites including staff models, health infrastructure and systems, procurement and start-up. This has enabled IHMS to ramp up services quickly for new sites as needed.