



Australian Government
**Department of Immigration
and Border Protection**

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SECRETARY

**DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION AND BORDER
PROTECTION**

**Opening statement to Legal and Constitutional Affairs
Legislation Committee**

23 February 2015

I have been Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection since 13th October 2014, a little over nineteen weeks. I will be joined today at various points by my colleague, Mr Roman Quaadvlieg, the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, as we are increasingly working together in partnership, ahead of the integration of the Department and the Service, on 1st July 2015, subject to the passage of relevant legislation in the meantime.

As you know, that the Government intends to bring together the Department and the Service, and create the Australian Border Force. The ABF will act as a single, frontline operational agency to enforce customs, immigration and maritime laws and protect our border.

To this end, from 2nd March 2015, the Immigration and Border Protection Portfolio will begin operating in a fully-integrated structure that delivers on this intention, short of the ABF being created by law. On that day, we will move to the following six Group structure:

- **Policy**, led by newly appointed Deputy Secretary Rachel Noble, who commenced in that role on 16th February 2015;
- **Corporate**, led by Chief Operating Officer Marion Grant;
- **Intelligence and Capability**, which will be led by soon to be appointed Deputy Secretary Maria Fernandez, who will join us from the Department of Defence (where she is currently the Director of the Australian Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation) on 27th April;
- **Visa and Citizenship Services**, led by Deputy Secretary Michael Manthorpe;
- **Immigration Status Resolution**, led by newly appointed Deputy Secretary Cindy Briscoe, who also commenced in that role on 16th February 2015; and
- **Border Operations**, to be led by newly appointed Deputy Chief Executive Officer Michael Outram, who will join us on 9th March 2015 from the Australian Federal Police (where he is currently serving as an Assistant Commissioner).

Additionally, Deputy Secretary Peter Vardos will from 2nd March 2015 lead a major review of how we might best improve our visa and citizenship decision making processes, and the tools, powers and capabilities that our staff will need to use in future to facilitate the flow of more than five million visitors and migrants, while at the same time better protecting the community.

We need to re-examine how we make these decisions, so we can deal with the expected increase in the number of visa applications, as well as prevailing global trends in migration, labour mobility, transnational crime and national security - bearing in mind our Portfolio's twin imperatives of facilitating legitimate travellers, migrants and citizenship applicants, while protecting the Australian community.

This Review will include recommendations on how to strengthen the legal and policy framework to support visa and citizenship decision making, how to support client services staff through the increased use of intelligence and data analytics, and a workforce strategy to invest in and build the capability of our staff.

Let me make abundantly clear to the Committee that we want to empower our staff to make better informed decisions on visa and citizenship applications. We will empower our officers to say 'no' more often, where circumstances warrant and within the law, through better use of information, intelligence and data analytics, as well as ensuring they have the training and support to make defensible adverse decisions.

As these structural changes come into effect, we continue to engage with our staff. Last week the CEO and I released our *Plan for Integration*, providing detailed information about how and when activities and

changes will affect our staff as we progress towards the milestone of 1st July, and beyond.

In addition, we are consulting staff to develop the suite of policies that will form the Integrity Framework for the Department. These policies are designed to protect our people, property, systems, and information from infiltration and corruption.

This firmer stance on integrity is not a reflection on the trustworthiness or dedication of our people. Rather, it reflects that the mission of the Department has broadened, and that all our staff face a broader range of threats. Further, the Department holds privileged place at the border and on behalf of the Australian community. Every day, we make decisions that affect the safety, rights and freedoms of people, as well as Australian trade and commerce. Our staff exercise considerable, and often coercive powers, with wide discretion under often limited supervision. We must do everything we can to ensure we exercise these powers reasonably, lawfully, impartially and professionally.

Mr Quaedvlieg will provide you with more detail about integrity matters particularly relating to the Service, as well as work under way to establish the Australian Border Force.

I would like to briefly reflect on the Department's mission, as it undergoes its most significant transformation since it was established in July 1945. Australia will always be a 'settler nation'. Whether we are speaking of indigenous settlement in time long distant past, the British foundation of our modern social and political order from 1788, or the diversity of our contemporary society, 'settlement' will always be a part of who we are as a nation.

But we have to go beyond a focus on 'settlement'. As Australia changes, so must the Department. In future, while respecting our history as the Department which delivered the successful post-war mass managed migration programme, we will change our focus and mission: looking to the future, we aspire to become Australia's trusted gateway to the world, and the world's gateway to Australia, in an increasingly inter-connected world. This gateway function will embrace the entirety of the border spectrum – travel, trade, migration, maritime activity, encompassing people and goods, Australians and foreign non-citizens.

As the Department and the Service work together to build a new agency of state, we are acutely conscious of our historical legacy – and our new role.

Bringing together two such large and complex organisations remains a large and complex task; however, we are confident that we are well on the way towards creating one Department that will deliver against three principal outcomes: strong national security; a strong economy and a prosperous and cohesive society.

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