



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

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

**Supplementary Budget Estimates**  
**Parliament House, Canberra**

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**Secretary, Department of Immigration and Border Protection**

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I should like to thank the Committee for this opportunity to address you. It is an honour to appear before the Committee for the first time in my capacity as Secretary of the Department. It is also a privilege to have taken over leadership of the Department and of the portfolio at this time of profound change.

At the outset I should like to pay tribute to my predecessor in this role, Mr Martin Bowles PSM. I wish him all the very best in his challenging new role as the Secretary of the Department of Health.

I would also like to acknowledge today Mr Roman Quaedvlieg APM, who on Monday 13th October took up his appointment as the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. I congratulate him on his appointment. We intend to work together, with our Deputies, as we bring the Department and the Service ever closer to full integration on 1st July 2015, when our agencies will become a new, single organisation, with one mission and one purpose.

Performing the immigration and citizenship function well is crucial to preserving our nation's sovereignty; protecting our borders; and contributing to the prosperity of our economy, the vitality of our community and the cohesion of our nation. After a week in the role, I have already been impressed by the dedication, and professionalism of my officers. It is evident in everything that they do. I have been struck by the resilience and positivity of so many of the people that I have met, who have had to cope with the strains and pressures of recent years, and have done so with good grace and humour, diligence and competence.

As someone who comes from a migrant background, as a first generation Australian, whose parents migrated to Australia from Italy in the early 1960s, and who took up citizenship in 1971, I have an instant affinity with the mission and ethos of the Department. It will be important, as we move into the next crucial

phase of integrating the Department and the Service to not lose our sense of mission and ethos. The same of course can be said for the strong sense of mission, ethos and history that exists in the Service, which can trace its roots back to Federation as the Department of Trade and Customs, and indeed to the customs administrations of the Australian colonies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As we work over the next nine months, to create what will be a **new department, incorporating the Australian Border Force**, it will be crucially important to preserve and honour both of these historical traditions, and to build on their strength.

The new department will be one that is still of course focused on the immigration and citizenship function, but it will also take on the trade and customs function, as well as the operation of Australia's general system of border controls and our offshore maritime security system. As we broaden our remit and focus, we will touch every part of Australian life— industry and commerce, trade and travel, our national security, the protection of our community and the enforcement of our laws, and the security of our offshore maritime resources and environment.

Last week, we held the first ever portfolio-wide SES conference, bringing together the SES leadership of the Department and the Service. It was a decision-making forum to flesh out a high-level organisational design that former Secretary Bowles and I had distributed to our officers in September.

Integration will be a challenging exercise. It will in my view rank with other fundamental changes to administrative arrangements at the Commonwealth level that have occurred in recent decades – such as the establishment of the contemporary Defence organisation in the 1970s, which saw the abolition of the military departments and the creation of the Australian Defence Force; the establishment of the Australian Federal Police in the late 1970s; the integration of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 1987; the consolidation of social service agencies during the course of recent years in the form of the Department of Human Services; and the integration of foreign affairs, trade, development assistance and investment after the 2013 election.

The scale of the change will be significant. It will challenge the staff of the Department and the Service, especially as they confront the inevitably mixed feelings that will come with the sense of the end of an era in the case of each agency. The CEO and I are determined to go about this purposefully and sensitively, without of course compromising on the ultimate objective that has been set for us by the Government.

I intend to keep the Committee fully apprised of the progress of the integration programme and to provide regular updates at its hearings. I commend the

Committee for allotting dedicated time during the course of these proceedings to focus on the integration programme, which will go well beyond the establishment of the Australian Border Force.

In closing, I look forward to engaging with the Committee in the years ahead.

Thank you.