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Opening Statement to Senate Estimates
Parliament House, Canberra'

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Secretary, Department of Immigration and Citizenship

Mr Chairman, members of the Committee

Congratulations *Madam Chair on your appointment as*
Thank you for the opportunity to deliver an opening statement. I have provided this at each Senate Estimates Hearing over the past two years to highlight key elements of the progress on the department's significant change agenda initiated by the Palmer and Comrie Reports. Over the period the reforms themselves have attracted a good deal of interest and scrutiny from external agencies.

Chair of this important Comm. Hcs of the Senate;

In the eight months since the last Senate Estimates hearings (May 2007) there has been considerable progress and some encouraging external comment.

→ to Senator Barnett on his appointment as deputy chair.

- External scrutiny, particularly by the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, continues and is welcomed.
- In 2007 the Commonwealth Ombudsman published a number of specific reports on the results of the 247 cases referred to him in 2005 and a separate report which derived a number of lessons learnt applicable to all areas of government.
- In January 2008 the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) published a Summary of Observations following the Inspection of Mainland Immigration Detention facilities 2007.
- While these reports by external scrutineers continue to identify areas where our processes or capacity need to be improved or where policy changes are recommended, there has also been positive comment. The Ombudsman noted the "substantial improvement in the quality of administrative activity and efficiency on the internal systems within immigration. There is no doubt the substantial reform programme that has been underway since the cases of Cornelia Rau and Vivien Alvarez has made a major difference to immigration administration"¹.

I → my department look forward to working very cooperatively with you over the period ahead.

At the end of 2007 almost 80% of the separate initiatives under the 'Palmer Plus' Program had been integrated into the department's ongoing business. The other 20% of projects, representing the longer term and more complex work, are still in the development phase.

- The improvements are nowhere more apparent than in the area of health services for immigration detainees where they have been achieved working with key external stakeholders who are professionals in the field, and with our service providers.

¹ Professor John McMillan, ABC AM Program, 2 July 2007

- Bob Corry
1/8/08
- This work has been lead by Dermot Casey who was recently awarded the Public Service Medal for his contributions.
 - Progress has continued within the *Systems for People* Program, especially in supporting the key areas of compliance, detention and border operations.
 - The changes in detention and compliance have not been restricted to information technology and infrastructure. Staff are now well supported by training (some of which is externally accredited) revised policy and procedural instructions and the case management system.
 - The department is nearing the conclusion of a significant revision of its entire holdings of immigration instructions, including bringing all instructions into the one format and developing a number of new ones. As well as being updated, the instructions in key areas more directly reflect the operational processes to make them more useable. A rigorous process of ongoing review will be put in place.
 - We continue to invest in good governance at all levels. Following an independent review of the department's governance arrangements in 2007, improvements have been made to the governance framework, including the functioning and strategic focus of the highest level committees. Information about values, standards and accountabilities has been expanded and there are robust frameworks in place for better managing stakeholder and client relationships, and departmental performance generally.
 - In 2007 the second staff survey was conducted. The surveys are a mechanism to monitor cultural change and to identify areas for ongoing effort. A major effort was, and continues to be, put into the follow up activity to pursue that reform.

While considerable progress has been made, there is more work needed including on IT improvements, records management, further enhancements to training and in advancing the outcomes from our community care pilot.

We have systematically worked to improve our engagement with key external stakeholders and clients. In the 2007 client satisfaction survey, 80% of clients were satisfied or very satisfied with the service. Key stakeholder feedback has been similarly positive as outlined in the 2006-07 Annual Report.

These business and cultural changes position the department well to support the policy agenda of the new government.

In conclusion I would like to record my appreciation of the efforts of the deputy secretaries and all departmental staff in continuing to provide effective services while implementing a significant change agenda.

Thank you