

The Auditor-General  
Audit Report No.56 2003-04  
Performance Audit

# **Management of the Processing of Asylum Seekers**

**Department of Immigration  
and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs**

Australian National Audit Office

© Commonwealth  
of Australia 2004

ISSN 1036–7632

ISBN 0 642 80787 6

### **COPYRIGHT INFORMATION**

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the Commonwealth available from the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to the Commonwealth Copyright Administration, Intellectual Property Branch, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, GPO Box 2154 Canberra ACT 2601 or posted at

**<http://www.dcita.gov.au/cca>**



Canberra ACT  
23 June 2004

Dear Mr President  
Dear Mr Speaker

The Australian National Audit Office has undertaken a performance audit in the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs in accordance with the authority contained in the *Auditor-General Act 1997*. I present the report of this audit and the accompanying brochure to the Parliament. The report is titled *Management of the Processing of Asylum Seekers*.

Following its tabling in Parliament, the report will be placed on the Australian National Audit Office's Homepage—<http://www.anao.gov.au>.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. J. Barrett'.

P. J. Barrett  
Auditor-General

The Honourable the President of the Senate  
The Honourable the Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT

## AUDITING FOR AUSTRALIA

The Auditor-General is head of the Australian National Audit Office. The ANAO assists the Auditor-General to carry out his duties under the *Auditor-General Act 1997* to undertake performance audits and financial statement audits of Commonwealth public sector bodies and to provide independent reports and advice for the Parliament, the Government and the community. The aim is to improve Commonwealth public sector administration and accountability.

For further information contact:

**The Publications Manager**  
**Australian National Audit Office**  
**GPO Box 707**  
**Canberra ACT 2601**

**Telephone:** (02) 6203 7505

**Fax:** (02) 6203 7519

**Email:** [webmaster@anao.gov.au](mailto:webmaster@anao.gov.au)

ANAO audit reports and information about the ANAO are available at our internet address

<http://www.anao.gov.au>

### Audit Team

Kelly Schomaker

Vicky Delgos

Greg Watson

Steven Lack

# Contents

---

Abbreviations/Glossary.....	7
<b>Summary and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Summary .....	11
Key Findings.....	12
Compliance with procedures and the integrity of decision-making (Chapter 2).....	12
Support for decision-makers (Chapter 3).....	13
Managing and monitoring program performance (Chapter 4).....	14
Managing stakeholder relationships (Chapter 5) .....	15
Overall conclusion .....	15
DIMIA response.....	16
Recommendations.....	17
<b>Audit Findings and Conclusions .....</b>	<b>19</b>
1. Introduction.....	21
The Refugee Convention and Protocol.....	21
Australia’s Refugee and Humanitarian Program.....	22
Functional and structural arrangements for delivering the program .....	24
Review mechanisms .....	25
Audit objective and scope .....	27
Audit methodology.....	27
2. Compliance with Procedures and the Integrity of Decision-making.....	29
Introduction.....	29
Compliance with procedures.....	29
Conclusion—compliance with procedures .....	34
Quality assurance.....	35
Conclusion—quality assurance.....	37
3. Support for Decision-makers.....	38
Introduction.....	38
Training.....	38
Procedures and guidelines to support decision-making .....	41
Country Information Service.....	44
Information systems .....	46
Conclusion—information systems.....	47
4. Managing and Monitoring Program Performance .....	48
Introduction.....	48
Performance information in Portfolio Budget Statements .....	48
Management reporting .....	51
Conclusion.....	53
5. Managing Stakeholder Relationships.....	55
Introduction.....	55
Refugee Review Tribunal.....	55
Interaction between DIMIA and the RRT .....	56
Conclusion.....	58
Consultation with non-government organisations .....	58
Conclusion.....	60

<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>61</b>
Appendix 1: Sample Design .....	63
Appendix 2: The Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme .....	66
Appendix 3: Agency Response .....	69
Index .....	71
Series Titles .....	72
Better Practice Guides.....	76

## Abbreviations/Glossary

---

AAT	Administrative Appeals Tribunal
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ASA	Asylum Seeker Assistance
CIS	Country Information Service
CISNET	An electronic database to distribute relevant country information to decision makers
IAAAS	Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme
ICSE	Integrated Client Service Environment
IDC	Immigration Detention Centre
IRPC	Immigration Reception and Processing Centre
NGO	Non Government Organisation
OPIPA	Onshore Protection Interim Procedures Advice
PALS	Performance and Learning Scheme
PAM3	Procedures and Advice Manual
PBS	Portfolio Budget Statement
PDSS	Protection Decision Support Section
PV	Protection Visa
PVPM	Protection Visa Procedures Manual
RRT	Refugee Review Tribunal
TPV	Temporary Protection Visa
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees





# Summary and Recommendations



# Summary

---

1. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs' (DIMIA) Onshore Protection Program is an element of Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program. It assists people who have arrived within Australia's migration zone either lawfully (and who have been staying in the Australian community) or unlawfully (by air or sea) who make an application for Australia's protection. These people are often referred to as asylum seekers.
2. Australia provides protection for asylum seekers who meet the United Nations definition of a refugee, as defined in the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. Asylum seekers who are found to be refugees, may be granted a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) in the first instance, if they arrived unlawfully. If they arrived lawfully, they may be granted a Permanent Protection Visa. The grant of a Protection Visa (PV) is subject to the applicant meeting health and character requirements.
3. The environment in which DIMIA manages the Onshore Protection Program is complex. The client base is drawn from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In an increasingly volatile and difficult international environment, it is essential that protection against *refoulement*<sup>1</sup> be provided to those in need through an efficient and speedy decision-making system. The Onshore Protection Program is centrally managed with Regional Offices in three States, NSW, Victoria and Western Australia responsible for the processing of PV applications.
4. The objective of this audit was to assess the extent to which PV applications in Australia are processed in accordance with relevant laws and policies, and whether DIMIA employs appropriate mechanisms to ensure compliance with those laws and policies.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Refoulement* is the act of returning a refugee to a place where there is a real risk to their life or liberty.

# Key Findings

---

## Compliance with procedures and the integrity of decision-making (Chapter 2)

### Compliance with procedures

5. The ANAO undertook compliance testing of a sample of 209 completed Protection Visa (PV) applications to assess the key elements of the decision-making process. The ANAO found the results of the compliance testing relating to the timeliness of the processing of applications were in line with the quality measures outlined in DIMIA's Portfolio Budget Statements that measured the timeliness of internal processing. However, the ANAO found cases where PV applications took longer to process than the times set down in DIMIA's published performance indicators. These were cases where external factors, including factors outside the Department's control influenced the timeliness of processing PV applications. These included clearances and checks processed by police and health officials in other countries.

6. The ANAO also found that the overall standard of record keeping on the case files of PV applicants was high, 99 per cent of files examined contained a record of the decision and in 92 per cent of cases the reasons for the decision were adequately documented.

7. In most cases, the decision record provided a clear and comprehensive assessment of the applicant's claims against the Refugee Convention, and the reasons for the decision. However, the ANAO found a small number of cases in one of DIMIA's three processing offices<sup>2</sup>, where the decision record for a grant, consisted of a two-page document that referred back to the file for information rather than outlining the reasons for the decision in full. In light of the complexities associated with the processing of PV's, there are risks involved with the use of abbreviated decision records for grants. Using an abbreviated decision record, including for grants, provides a lower level of assurance than the detailed analysis that accompanies the majority of PV decisions.

### Quality assurance

8. The ANAO found that DIMIA has adequate formal and informal quality assurance mechanisms in place to monitor and enhance the quality of decision-making for onshore PV's. The results of DIMIA's formal Onshore

---

<sup>2</sup> Three of DIMIA's Regional Offices are responsible for processing Protection Visa applications. These offices are located in NSW, Victoria and Western Australia.

Protection Quality Assurance program are communicated to Regional and Central Office managers and any training issues that are identified, are rectified through the provision of training to decision-makers.

### **Support for decision-makers (Chapter 3)**

9. The ANAO found that the training needs of decision-makers processing PVs are addressed through a Training and Coordination Committee. In addition, an Onshore Protection Training Strategy has been developed that identifies training that has been undertaken, identifies the core competencies required by decision-makers, identifies stakeholders and provides a plan for the implementation of future training programs.

10. Decision-makers have access to a comprehensive and well defined set of procedures and guidelines that are updated to reflect changes to legislation and policy by a dedicated branch in Central Office. However, there were administrative shortcomings. In particular, there was a significant time lag between the announcement of a change in legislation and/or policy and the provision of updated guidance to decision-makers. During focus group discussions with PV decision-makers, staff advised the ANAO that it was difficult, at times, to determine what the current guidance regarding a certain aspect of PV processing was. The ANAO considers that DIMIA's more timely incorporation of policy changes into guidelines would reduce the risk that decisions on PV applications are not in accordance with guidance and legislation.

11. In line with an earlier review undertaken by DIMIA internal audit, the ANAO also identified shortcomings within the Country Information Service (CIS). In particular, the ANAO found that there was a need for an analysis of emerging trends to be undertaken, in addition to historical trends, when assigning priority ratings to countries. This approach would decrease the delays to decision-makers in obtaining up to date and relevant country information. In addition, decision-makers stated that at times the information contained within the CIS did not provide them with the level of detail that they required, and they needed to access other sources of information such as the internet to supplement information gained from the CIS. There is a risk that information gained from sources other than the CIS is not up to date or accurate. One way to mitigate this risk would be to highlight this potential exposure during training sessions.

### **Information systems**

12. The ANAO found that, overall, DIMIA had a number of information systems that supported the Onshore Protection Branch. Central Office primarily uses the Integrated Client Service Environment (ICSE) for reporting,

which allows the analysis of statistical data and reports to provide quantitative information. Regional Offices have developed local systems, which are typically excel spreadsheets. The ANAO notes that locally developed systems require data to be entered twice. This practice carries risks to data quality and has the potential to affect DIMIA's accuracy in management reporting. DIMIA advised that the issue of locally developed and incompatible software will be resolved with the introduction of the Xanadu project later in 2004. The project will introduce a control environment which will not allow for locally developed and incompatible software.

## **Managing and monitoring program performance (Chapter 4)**

13. The ANAO found that the specification of DIMIA's quantity indicators for the Refugee and Humanitarian (Onshore) Program comply with better practice. The quantity indicators specified are good workload indicators that provide DIMIA with targets to work towards, and assist Parliament to assess the outputs it is purchasing. However, the ANAO found DIMIA's quality indicators, measuring the timeliness of processing for detention and community cases, do not provide a complete indicator of the quality of the decision. Processing PV cases are often complex and there are external factors outside of DIMIA's immediate control that impact on timeliness. These factors include new information presented by the applicant and delays while applicants receive overseas penal clearances and other necessary health and character checks.

14. The ANAO notes, as discussed in Chapter 2, the Onshore Protection Branch has a formal quality assurance program in place. The quality assurance program consists of audits of randomly selected cases, and is undertaken twice yearly by senior Onshore Protection managers in each processing state. The quality assurance program examines a number of aspects, including correct citations in decision records, appropriate level of documentation and whether the correct security checks had been undertaken. The ANAO has made a recommendation that incorporating the results of DIMIA's formal quality assurance would provide a more complete measure of the quality of decision-making.

15. The ANAO found that DIMIA management has access to a number of reports that monitor the progress of PV processing. However, the ANAO notes, as discussed in Chapter 2, the audit found cases where applications took longer to process than the times set down in DIMIA's published performance indicators owing to external factors beyond DIMIA's immediate control. The ANAO has made a recommendation that enhanced monitoring of that part of its caseload where processing times are affected by external factors beyond its

immediate control, would enable DIMIA to identify common causes of extended delays and any actions DIMIA could initiate to improve timeliness.

## Managing stakeholder relationships (Chapter 5)

16. The ANAO found that DIMIA has a positive and constructive relationship with the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) at the Regional Office level. There is regular communication with the RRT regarding file transfers and training. Both DIMIA and the RRT include each other in consultative meetings with stakeholder groups. However, at the Central Office level, although formal meetings with the RRT are scheduled quarterly, these meetings do not always go ahead. DIMIA advised that its preference was for these meetings to be held bi-annually. The ANAO suggests that the Refugee and Humanitarian Branch discuss with DIMIA's Visa Framework section and the RRT the frequency of formal meetings.

17. Other stakeholders reported to the ANAO that, on the whole, consultation occurred regularly, DIMIA was willing to listen to suggestions made and, where possible, act upon them. The ANAO notes the importance of DIMIA continuing to hold consultative meetings with stakeholders to maintain a constructive and mutually beneficial relationship that enables a productive flow of information.

## Overall conclusion

18. The ANAO concluded that the Onshore processing of asylum seekers is managed well. The overall standard of record keeping, including the documentation of the reasons for decisions was high. This reflects DIMIA's decision to use higher level and more experienced officers to make decisions in processing PV applications. These officers are also supported with appropriate training and guidelines.

19. Specifically, the training needs of decision-makers are addressed through a Training and Coordination Committee, and decision-makers have access to a comprehensive and well-defined set of procedures and guidelines that are updated to reflect changes to legislation and policy. However, the information contained within DIMIA's CIS does not always provide decision-makers with the level of detail of a situation in a particular country that they required. As a result, decision-makers were required to supplement the information gained from CIS with other sources. This increases the risk that the information is neither up to date nor accurate.

20. The specification of DIMIA's quantity indicators for the Refugee and Humanitarian (Onshore) Program comply with better practice, in that they are good workload indicators that provide DIMIA with targets to work to, and assist Parliament to assess the outputs it is purchasing. However, by only

measuring the timeliness of internal processing, the quality indicators do not provide a complete indicator of the quality of the decision. In addition, the ANAO found cases where applications took longer to process than the times set down in DIMIA's published performance indicators owing to external factors. While outside DIMIA's immediate control, enhanced monitoring of this part of its caseload would enable DIMIA to identify common causes of extended delays and take action to improve timeliness.

21. DIMIA has formed positive and constructive relationships with stakeholders, based on the sharing of information and regular consultation. While the frequency of formal consultative meetings needs to be agreed, stakeholders on the whole were satisfied with their level of consultation with DIMIA.

## **DIMIA response**

22. The processing of asylum claims through the protection visa process is one of the most complex areas of administrative decision making undertaken in the Department. Given the importance of the decisions made in this area, it is understandable that some negative decisions will be contested and that there is continuing public scrutiny of the decision making process. In this context, external reviews, such as this audit by the Australian National Audit Office, can make a useful contribution to the Department's continuing work to maintain the integrity of protection visa processes and to identify any emerging opportunities for improvement.

23. DIMIA welcomes the overall finding of the ANAO that the onshore processing of asylum seekers is managed well and uses experienced officers supported by appropriate training and guidelines. DIMIA notes that the report has identified some opportunities for refinement of existing activity.

24. DIMIA's full response is reproduced in Appendix 3 of this report.



# Recommendations

---

**Recommendation No.1  
Para 4.11** The ANAO recommends that DIMIA expand the quality indicators for its Refugee and Humanitarian program to include a measure that assesses the key indicators of a quality decision against the results of its quality assurance program.

*DIMIA Response:* Agreed.

**Recommendation No.2  
Para 4.18** The ANAO recommends that DIMIA enhance its current monitoring of that part of its caseload where processing times are affected by external factors beyond its immediate control with a view to identifying common causes of extended delay and any actions that could be initiated to improve timeliness.

*DIMIA Response:* Agreed.



# **Audit Findings and Conclusions**



# 1. Introduction

---

*This chapter provides an overview of the Refugee Convention and Protocol and how Australia's international obligations are delivered through the Humanitarian Program. It also details DIMIA's approach to managing the Onshore Protection Program, along with the assistance and review mechanisms that are available to Protection Visa applicants.*

## The Refugee Convention and Protocol

**1.1** On 28 July 1951, the United Nations (UN) adopted the *Convention Relating to the Legal Status of Refugees* (the Refugee Convention)<sup>3</sup> in response to the increasing number of people fleeing one nation to another in the search of protection from persecution, human rights violations, repression or conflict.<sup>4</sup> The Refugee Convention consolidated international treaties relating to refugees and it codified the international rights of refugees.

**1.2** The 1951 Refugee Convention covered only those persons who had become refugees as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951. A protocol was drafted to extend the articles of the 1951 Convention to cover those persons who became refugees as a result of events occurring at any time after 1 January 1951. The UN General Assembly formally adopted the Protocol on 31 January 1967.

**1.3** The Refugee Convention as amended by the 1967 Protocol defined a refugee as

any person who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.<sup>5</sup>

**1.4** Australia is one of 141 signatory countries to the United Nations 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and provides protection for asylum seekers who meet the UN definition of a refugee. Australia's commitment to assisting refugees is longstanding, having resettled over 600 000 refugees since World War II. Each year, the Australian Government's Humanitarian program provides residence in Australia to around 12 000 refugees and others who are in humanitarian need.

---

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR, 1996, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, UNHCR, Geneva, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Martin, S.F., 2001, *Global Migration Trends and Asylum*, Georgetown University, Washington, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR, 1996, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, UNHCR, Geneva, p. 16.

## Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program

1.5 The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) administers the Government's Humanitarian Program. The aim of the program is to assist in alleviating the plight of refugees and others in humanitarian need in accordance with Australia's international obligations.

1.6 Australia has a permanent immigration program that has two components—Migration (non-humanitarian) for skilled and family migrants and Humanitarian for refugees and others with humanitarian needs. The Humanitarian Program comprises two sub-components: an Offshore Resettlement Program<sup>6</sup> for persons overseas and an Onshore Protection Program for those who arrive lawfully on Temporary Visas or in an unauthorised manner and who engage Australia's international protection obligations.<sup>7</sup>

### The Onshore Protection Program

1.7 The focus of this audit is DIMIA's Onshore Protection Program. This program assists people who have arrived within Australia's migration zone either lawfully, (who have been staying in the Australian community) or unlawfully (by air or sea) who make an application for Australia's protection. These people are often referred to as asylum seekers.

1.8 Australia provides protection for those asylum seekers who meet the United Nations definition of a refugee, as defined in the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

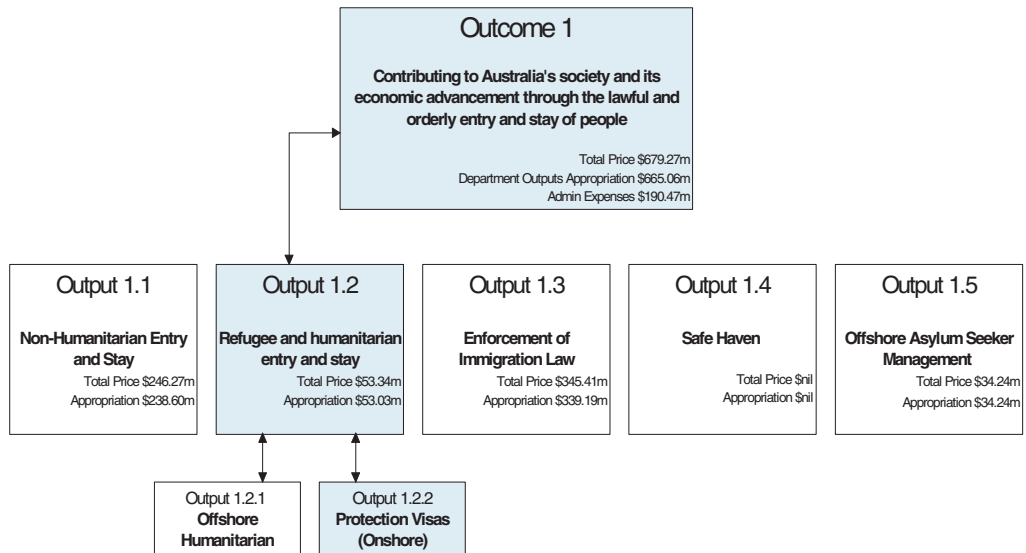
### Outcomes and Outputs

1.9 DIMIA's Onshore Protection Program contributes towards the Department's Outcome 1: *Contributing to Australia's society and its economic advancement through the lawful and orderly entry and stay of people*. Its place in the Outcomes and Outputs framework for the department is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

---

<sup>6</sup> The Offshore Resettlement Program is the main element of Australia's Humanitarian Program. The Offshore Resettlement Program is comprised of two elements; the **Refugee Category** for people outside their home country and who are subject to persecution in their home country, and have been identified in conjunction with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees as in need of resettlement. This includes the Woman at Risk Category; and the **Special Humanitarian Program** for people outside their home country who are subject to substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights in their home country. Their application must be supported by people residing in, or organisations based in Australia.

<sup>7</sup> Section 36 of the *Migration Act 1958* sets out the provisions for allocating a Protection Visa.

**Figure 1.1****DIMIA's Outcomes and Outputs Framework**

Source: Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs Portfolio Budget Statement 2003-04, p. 52

As the above Figure 1.1 illustrates, Output 1.2 has a total costing of \$53.34 million, which has been allocated for the 2003–04 financial year.

## Humanitarian Program intake for 2003–04

**1.10** The size and composition of Australia's Humanitarian Program is decided each year by the Government after wide-ranging community consultations and consideration of the world-wide resettlement needs identified by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

**1.11** The Government has adopted a flexible approach to the allocation of places in the Humanitarian Program. The flexibility allows places to be moved between the onshore and offshore components as the need arises. Unused places may be carried over into the next program year or places may be brought forward from the following program year for use in addition to the annual allocation.

**1.12** The Humanitarian Program for 2003–04 was set by the Government at 12 000 new places (4000 Refugees—Offshore; 7300 Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) Offshore and 700 Onshore Protection Visa places subject to required need). In addition to the 12 000 places the following were included:<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Ruddock, P., 2003, Humanitarian Program Intake for 2003–04 <[http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media\\_releases/media03/r03019.htm](http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media_releases/media03/r03019.htm)>.

- any unused places from the previous program year;
- places from previous years for visas that expire before travel or are cancelled (leakage compensation); and
- places re-credited for Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) holders departing Australia.

**1.13** The total number of places available for the 2003–04 financial year is 12 891. The size and composition of the Humanitarian Program over the past five years is shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1**

**Size and Composition of the Humanitarian Program**

Category	1999–00	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04*
Refugee (Offshore)**	4 454	4 876	4 200	4 376	3 575
Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) (Offshore)	3 048	3 116	4 258	7 280	8 616
Refugee (Onshore)***	2 458	5 741	3 891	869	700
<b>Total</b>	<b>9 960</b>	<b>13 733</b>	<b>12 349</b>	<b>12 525</b>	<b>12 891</b>

\* DIMIA’s nominal allocation of places for 2003–04 financial year.

\*\* Includes Special Assistance Category visas granted offshore.

\*\*\* Includes Temporary Humanitarian Concern visas granted onshore.

Source: DIMIA statistics.

**1.14** The above table shows that over the past five years the Refugee component of the Offshore Program has been steady. The table also illustrates the rapid increase in Onshore Refugee grants (Protection Visas and Temporary Humanitarian Concern visas) between 1999–2000 and 2001–02. However, in 2002–03 and 2003–04 there was a rapid decline in Onshore Refugee grants due to the decline in unauthorised arrivals and a corresponding increase in the number of SHP visas granted.

## Functional and structural arrangements for delivering the program

**1.15** DIMIA is organised around functional processes, where domestic and overseas managers report to DIMIA’s Central Office and Regional Offices. The achievement of the overall Humanitarian Program, as well as corporate policies and procedures, are managed through Central Office. The Onshore Protection Program is centrally managed, with Regional Offices in three States,



NSW, Victoria and Western Australia responsible for the processing of Protection Visa (PV) applications. The DIMIA Regional Offices, together with Central Office, are jointly responsible for the coordination of resources, the effective management of surge capacity, and skill levels among officers to deal with fluctuations in application rates.

## Review mechanisms

### The Refugee Review Tribunal

**1.16** The Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) is an independent merits review tribunal that reviews decisions made by DIMIA to refuse or cancel Protection Visas (PV's) to non-citizens in Australia. The RRT has the power to affirm decisions, overturn decisions or return the case to DIMIA for further processing. When reviewing a decision made by DIMIA, the RRT must apply the relevant law, and can only make decisions as set out in the *Migration Act 1958* and relevant regulations. To be eligible for review, the applicant must apply within a given timeframe.<sup>9</sup>

**1.17** As part of the review process, the RRT considers all evidence, including evidence presented at the time of lodgement or hearing, which may have not been available when the primary decision was made. The RRT does not review the quality of DIMIA's primary decision, rather it looks at all evidence again, including any that may not have been available to the DIMIA decision maker.

### The Administrative Appeals Tribunal

**1.18** The Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) is an independent body that reviews, on the merits, a broad range of administrative decisions made by the Commonwealth (and, in limited circumstances, State) Government ministers and officials, authorities and other tribunals.<sup>10</sup>

**1.19** Under section 443(1) of the *Migration Act 1958*, the Principal Member of the RRT may refer an RRT-reviewable decision to the AAT, if the Principal Member considers that a RRT-reviewable decision involves an important principle, or issues, of general application.<sup>11</sup>

**1.20** If the RRT receives a case that involves Articles 1F, 32 or 33(2) of the Refugee Convention, it cannot be reviewed by the RRT. The AAT must review

---

<sup>9</sup> The timeframes are from when DIMIA notifies an applicant of their decision. For applicants in detention, the timeframe is seven working days and, for community applicants, the timeframe is 28 calendar days.

<sup>10</sup> Introduction to the AAT—Functions and powers <<http://www.aat.gov.au/aat.htm>>.

<sup>11</sup> DIMIA, 2003, Protection Visa Procedures Manual (1), DIMIA, Canberra.

the case.<sup>12</sup> Further, an applicant who has had their application refused or cancelled because of the above Articles can apply to the AAT for a review. The applicant is able to seek an AAT review of a decision only if they would have been entitled to seek review by the RRT, if the decision had been made on another ground.<sup>13</sup>

## Judicial review

**1.21** Judicial reviews evaluate the lawfulness of administrative decisions. In general terms, a decision is unlawful if it is made without authority or if the decision-maker's authority has been exceeded.<sup>14</sup> Applicants who want a judicial review of their case must lodge an application with the Registry of the Federal Court within 28 days of the applicant being notified of the RRT decision.<sup>15</sup>

**1.22** Applications for an appeal to the Federal Court were limited from 2 October 2001 under section 474 of the *Migration Act 1958*. This privative clause provides that decisions made under the Act are final, and cannot be challenged in court. Certain decisions are exempted from the operation of Section 474. The Court is able to look at those decisions where the plaintiff claims "jurisdictional error". This includes such errors as a failure to provide

---

<sup>12</sup> Under section 500(1)(c) of the Act. Article 1F states that: The provisions of this Convention shall not apply to any person with respect to whom there are serious reasons for considering that:

- a) he has committed a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity, as defined in the international instruments drawn up to make provision in respect of such crimes;
- b) he has committed a serious non-political crime outside the country of refuge prior to his admission to that country as a refugee;
- c) he has been guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 32 states that:

1. The Contracting States shall not expel a refugee lawfully in their territory save on grounds of national security or public order.
2. The expulsion of such a refugee shall be only in pursuance of a decision reached in accordance with due process of law. Except where compelling reasons of national security otherwise require, the refugee shall be allowed to submit evidence to clear himself, and to appeal to and be represented for the purpose before competent authority or a person or persons specially designated by the competent authority.
3. The Contracting States shall allow such a refugee a reasonable period within which to seek legal admission into another country. The Contracting States reserve the right to apply during that period such internal measures, as they may deem necessary.

Article 33(2) states that: The benefit of the present provision may not, however, be claimed by a refugee whom there are reasonable grounds for regarding as a danger to the security of the country in which he is, or who, having been convicted by a final judgment of a particularly serious crime, constitutes a danger to the community of that country.

<sup>13</sup> DIMIA, 2003, Protection Visa Procedures Manual (1), DIMIA, Canberra.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

procedural fairness, or a failure to take into account relevant considerations. It does not include minor process failures.<sup>16</sup>

## Audit objective and scope

**1.23** The objective of the audit was to assess the extent to which Protection Visa applications in Australia are processed in accordance with relevant laws and policies, and whether DIMIA employs appropriate mechanisms to ensure compliance with those laws and policies. The audit focused on whether DIMIA:

- decisions on Protection Visa applications are accurate, timely, consistent and in accordance with law and policy;
- manages its relationship with the Refugee Review Tribunal effectively;
- monitors, reviews, and assesses the risks to the decisions in the processing of onshore asylum seekers; and
- consults with relevant stakeholders regarding the processing of asylum seekers.

## Audit methodology

**1.24** The audit fieldwork involved reviewing documents and holding discussions with managers and program staff at Central Office, Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth Regional Offices. Focus groups with decision-makers were conducted by the ANAO in the Regional Offices.

**1.25** The audit methodology also consisted of ANAO compliance testing of a sample of 209 completed Protection Visa cases. To enable the ANAO to undertake the compliance testing, a set of checklists was developed with assistance from DIMIA and based on DIMIA's own quality assurance checklists. The ANAO sought to determine if key documentation necessary for making a decision was on file, such as:

- the correct application form;
- proof of identification;
- necessary checklists;
- records of interview; and
- health and character checks.

---

<sup>16</sup> Decision Of High Court, Plaintiff S157/2002 v Commonwealth of Australia [2003] HCA 2, (4 February 2003).

The ANAO also sought to determine whether DIMIA decisions were:

- transparent; and
- made in accordance with legislation and guidelines.

**1.26** The audit was conducted in accordance with ANAO auditing standards at a cost of approximately \$414 000.

## 2. Compliance with Procedures and the Integrity of Decision-making

---

*This chapter outlines the results of the compliance testing undertaken by the ANAO. It also examines the quality assurance mechanisms DIMIA has in place to monitor the standard of protection visa decision-making.*

### Introduction

**2.1** The existence of strong control structures, within a governance framework, provides assurance to clients and the Parliament that an agency is operating in the public interest, and has established clear lines of responsibility and accountability for its performance.

**2.2** Conformance and compliance control structures are a particularly important element of any governance framework, because of their role in promoting effective performance, and ensuring accountability obligations are appropriately discharged.

**2.3** Key issues that public sector agencies normally consider in a conformance and compliance framework include:

- ensuring legislative compliance as required; and
- quality assurance.<sup>17</sup>

**2.4** Accordingly, the ANAO completed a compliance test of a sample of 209 finalised Protection Visa (PV) cases to assess key elements of DIMIA's decision making process. The ANAO also examined the quality assurance mechanisms DIMIA has in place to monitor the processing of PV's.

### Compliance with procedures

**2.5** Records are required as proof of activity by senior managers, Parliament and members of the public or by anyone with the right to inquire into a decision, a process or the performance of an organisation or an individual. Up to date, accessible, relevant and accurate records can ensure that decisions made by an agency are: consistent; based on accurate information; cost-effective; engender a sense of ownership of decisions throughout the agency; and place the agency in a considerably better position to report to Parliament and the public on any decisions made. It is often not just outcomes that are of concern to Parliament and the public, but also the

---

<sup>17</sup> *Expectation, and Perception, of Better Practice Corporate Governance in the Public Sector from an Audit Perspective*, address by the Auditor-General for Australia, CPA Australia's Government Business Symposium, 20 September 2002.

process of decision-making and the reasons for decisions made. This transparency is achieved by ensuring that the decision-making process, and the reasons for decisions made, are adequately documented by the agency. Transparency through record keeping is an agency's first line of defence against accusations of bias and negative public perceptions.<sup>18</sup>

**2.6** The ANAO undertook compliance testing of a stratified random sample from the population of all PV applications finalised between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2003. From the 3077 cases finalised during this period, the ANAO sampled 209 completed PV cases. The sample of PV applications was not designed to provide statistically significant results and the data obtained cannot be extrapolated to the population. However, the cases represent a cross section of PV applications and the findings are indicative of DIMIA's approach to PV decision-making. A more detailed explanation of the ANAO's sample can be found at Appendix 1.

**2.7** To enable the ANAO to undertake the compliance testing, a set of checklists was developed with assistance from DIMIA and based on DIMIA's own quality assurance checklists. The ANAO sought to determine if key documentation necessary for making a decision was on file, such as:

- the correct application form;
- proof of identification;
- necessary checklists;
- records of interview; and
- health and character checks.

The ANAO also sought to determine whether DIMIA decisions were:

- timely;
- transparent; and
- made in accordance with legislation and guidelines.

In conjunction with the compliance testing, focus groups were conducted by the ANAO in the Regional Offices visited during the audit fieldwork.

**2.8** PV applicants are more likely than others<sup>19</sup> to request review of negative decisions through the review processes, and hence, transparency of

---

<sup>18</sup> *Recordkeeping in Commonwealth Agencies: An audit perspective*, presentation by the Auditor General to National Archives of Australia Advisory Council, 11 August 2000.

<sup>19</sup> In 2002–03, 101 547 family visas were finalised and 3292 applications were lodged at the MRT for review. In comparison, 8247 protection visas were finalised and 4860 applications were lodged at the RRT for review.

decision-making is important to maintain the overall integrity of the program. The ANAO also assessed whether decision makers followed procedures set out in legislation and guidance. An example of these procedures is the requirement for applicants to undergo health and character checking before a PV can be granted.

**2.9** The results of the ANAO compliance testing are outlined in Table 2.1 below.

**Table 2.1**

**ANAO compliance testing results**

Compliance test	% of files that complied with criteria	ANAO Comment
Application processed within performance target timeframes excluding where there were extenuating circumstances	77	The ANAO examined whether applications had been processed within DIMIA's performance target timeframes of 42 days for applicants in detention or 90 days for community applicants. The figure reported is for cases where there were no extenuating circumstances which prevented finalisation.
Record of decision on file	99	The ANAO examined whether the file contained a written record of the decision as per the requirements of s66(2)(c) of the Migration Act (discussed further at paragraph 2.10).
Key documents on file:  Correct application form Proof of identification Health and character checks	100 92 98	The ANAO sought to determine if the key documentation necessary for making a decision was on file. The ANAO found that the overall standard of record keeping on the case files of protection visa applicants was high.
Reasons for the decision adequately documented	92	The ANAO examined whether the decision-maker had adequately documented the reasons for their decision including the use of information gained in the interview and through CISNET.

Source: Analysis of ANAO compliance testing results.

**2.10** The ANAO found (as illustrated in the table above) that the results of the compliance testing relating to the timeliness of the processing of applications were in line with the quality measures outlined in DIMIA's Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS).<sup>20</sup> The ANAO acknowledges the work that DIMIA has undertaken to make sure that applications are processed within a timely manner when all factors are in their control. However, the ANAO found that 40 per cent<sup>21</sup> of applications were not processed within DIMIA's performance target timeframes owing to extenuating circumstances, which prevented finalisation in a timely manner. These factors included new information presented by the applicant and delays while applicants seek overseas penal clearances and other necessary health and character checks.

**2.11** The ANAO notes that the time taken by applicants and agencies in other countries to respond to requests by DIMIA is not within DIMIA's immediate control. The ANAO also acknowledges that DIMIA has a number of processes in place to monitor the progress of these requests including:

- regular reporting and analysis for senior management on timeliness and systemic matters of concern, including case by case analysis of key caseload groups;
- regular contact by decision makers to both DIMIA and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) posts to monitor progress in obtaining penal clearances for applicants; and
- regular monitoring by the Onshore Protection Manager of the time taken by decision makers to process their caseload and the provision of extra resources to assist with delays if required.

**2.12** The ANAO also found that the overall standard of record keeping on the case files of PV applicants was high. The ANAO acknowledges the work that DIMIA has undertaken to ensure that decisions on PV applications are transparent and the reasons for the decision are adequately documented. These results were consistent with the results of DIMIA's formal Onshore Protection Quality Assurance Program results from the May-October 2002 cycle.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> DIMIA's quality measures are: 80 per cent of applications from applicants not in detention to be finalised within 90 days of lodgement, and 60 per cent of applications from applicants in detention to be finalised within 42 days of lodgement, where there are factors not outside DIMIA's control which prevent finalisation.

<sup>21</sup> The figure of 40 per cent was derived from the sample of 209 applications and cannot be extrapolated to the population.

<sup>22</sup> The summary of the 2002 May-October Quality Assurance Review Cycle as reported to DIMIA's Audit and Evaluation Committee in May 2003, stated that 9 per cent of documentation on files was below standard.



## Documentation of decisions

### *Decision records*

**2.13** Decision records provide a structured approach to reaching a decision in respect of applications for PVs. DIMIA's decision record was designed and developed to:

- address the provisions of the Refugees Convention and the domestic legislative framework, necessary to assess protection obligations; and
- meet the requirements of s66(2)(c) of the Act which states that 'notification of a decision to refuse an application for a visa must...give written reasons (other than non-disclosable information) why the criterion was not satisfied or the provision prevented the grant of the visa...'<sup>23</sup>

**2.14** The ANAO found that the standard of decision records varied between the three DIMIA Regional Offices that process PV applications. In most cases, the decision record provided a clear and comprehensive assessment of the applicant's claims against the Refugee Convention, and the reasons for the decision. However, the ANAO found a small number of cases in one Regional Office where the decision record for a grant, consisted of a two-page document that referred back to the file for information rather than outlining the reasons for the decision in full. A team leader or a different decision-maker than the one who had been involved with the case for most of the application period then signed off the decision record. The decision record also did not contain the position number of the person who signed it. In a small number of cases where the abbreviated decision record was on file, the file also contained a more detailed and comprehensive decision record, in draft form, that had been prepared before the completion of the applicant's health and character checks. The decision record had been signed and dated by the decision-maker, and contained their position number.

**2.15** DIMIA advised that abbreviated decision records were prepared in instances where the initial decision-maker had moved to another part of the department, or had left the department before they handed down the decision. In these instances, a team leader or the decision-maker, who had taken over the case, would review the case file and a summary decision record would be prepared. The abbreviated decision record was used to ensure that the case was finalised in a timely manner, as some such cases had not been actioned for a number of months. By undertaking a quick review of the details on the case file and preparing an abbreviated decision record, the risk that new

---

<sup>23</sup> *PAM3: The Protection Visa Procedures Manual*, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 1 July 2003.

information could be introduced, that could change the decision was lessened. DIMIA also advised that the abbreviated decision records were only used in instances where the visa was granted. In these cases, the risks are significantly less, as the audience is primarily internal management, rather than the applicant or their adviser considering the appeal process.

**2.16** The ANAO considers that, in light of the complexities associated with the processing of PV's, there are risks involved with the use of abbreviated decision records for grants. Using an abbreviated decision record provides a lower level of assurance than the detailed analysis that accompanies the majority of PV decisions.

**2.17** The ANAO suggests that, to enhance the integrity of the decision-making process and to provide assurance that decisions are transparent, decision records address in full, the provisions of the Refugee Convention and the domestic legislative framework necessary to assess protection obligations. The decision record should also outline, in a clear and comprehensive way, the claims of the applicant against each of the criteria, and the evidence that has been addressed by the decision-maker in coming to the decision.

## **Conclusion—compliance with procedures**

**2.18** The ANAO found that the results of the compliance testing relating to the timeliness of the processing of applications were in line with the quality measures outlined in DIMIA's Portfolio Budget Statements that measured the timeliness of internal processing. However, the ANAO found cases where PV applications took longer to process than the times set down in DIMIA's published performance indicators. These were cases where external factors, including factors outside the Department's control influenced the timeliness of processing PV applications. The ANAO has made a recommendation that enhanced monitoring of that part of its caseload where processing times are affected by external factors beyond its immediate control, would enable DIMIA to identify common causes of the delay and any actions DIMIA could initiate to improve timeliness.

**2.19** Overall, the ANAO found that the standard of record keeping on the case files of PV applicants was high. In particular, the decision-making process and the reasons for decisions made were adequately documented. However, the standard of decision records varied between processing offices. In cases where an abbreviated decision record was used, the ANAO was unable to determine the rationale behind the decision. The ANAO considers that, to enhance the integrity of the decision-making process and to provide assurance that decisions are transparent, decision records address, in full, the provisions of the Refugee Convention and the domestic legislative framework necessary to assess protection obligations.

## Quality assurance

**2.20** Quality assurance mechanisms enable organisations to monitor the quality of processes and systems. The design and implementation of an organisation's quality management systems are influenced by the various needs and objectives of an organisation. Successful quality management systems are designed to continually improve the effectiveness and efficiency of organisational performance.<sup>24</sup>

**2.21** In the decision-making context, quality assurance can be an effective tool for enhancing the standard of decision-making; diagnosing systemic problems in processing arrangements; identifying better practice; reducing unnecessary processes; and providing assurance to stakeholders of the integrity of the decision-making process.

**2.22** The ANAO examined whether there were quality assurance mechanisms in place for DIMIA's Onshore Protection Program, and whether quality assurance was used to enhance the standard of decision-making. The ANAO found that DIMIA has a number of formal and informal quality assurance mechanisms in place to monitor the processing of PV applications. Onshore Protection Branch also has an Onshore Protection Quality Assurance Plan in place. This outlines the process and procedural measures, program integrity, feedback mechanisms and audit activities that are used to monitor the quality of processes and systems involved in the processing of PV applications.

### Formal quality assurance mechanisms

#### *Onshore protection quality assurance program*

**2.23** DIMIA's Onshore Protection Quality Assurance program has two broad functions:

- to ensure that legal decisions are made for clients in accordance with government policy; and
- to create an environment in which staff who participate in a program have their learning needs identified and met.

**2.24** The program involves a six month cycle, in which Onshore Protection Regional Program managers and team leaders undertake checks of sample cases, return checklists to Protection Decision Support Section for analysis, and provide any necessary feedback to case managers about the quality of Onshore Protection decisions and the quality assurance program itself. A random

---

<sup>24</sup> AS/NZS ISO 9004:2000, Quality Management Systems-Guidelines for performance improvements.

sample of 200 cases<sup>25</sup> completed at the primary decision level is selected and allocated randomly to Regional Offices and Central Office, which results in each Regional Office and Central Office reviewing cases from each Region. A quality assurance checklist is then completed and Onshore Protection Regional Program managers are responsible for providing feedback, as necessary, to case managers during, or at the conclusion of, each Quality Assurance Review cycle. Central Office provides a report on each cycle to the Assistant Secretary-Onshore Protection, and Onshore Protection Regional Program managers.

**2.25** The quality assurance checklist has two parts, A and B. Part A involves administrative checks of the file and of the Integrated Client Service Environment (ICSE),<sup>26</sup> while part B involves qualitative judgements based on a sound knowledge of the Onshore Protection Program. Two cycles of the Quality Assurance program have been undertaken since the program was first trialled in 2001. The ANAO found that DIMIA has an adequate and comprehensive process for reporting the results of its quality assurance program, and using the results to enhance the standard of decision-making. The report provided on the results to the Assistant Secretary-Onshore Protection, outlines training issues identified through the quality assurance review, and how these training issues have been addressed. Training issues identified in the May-October 2002 Quality Assurance review resulted in training in: records management; enhanced Refugee Law; decision record structure; lawful/good decision-making; and ICSE being provided to decision-makers.

#### *Country information quality assurance program*

**2.26** Protection Decision Support Section (PDSS), within the Onshore Protection Branch, undertakes a number of processes to ensure that the Country Information Service provides a high standard of information and service to DIMIA decision-makers. On-going PDSS internal checks of Country Information include:

- feedback from users;
- monthly reviews of CISNET entries by team leaders;
- six monthly reviews of DIMIANet Background Briefs by researchers;
- team leader review of all cables drafted, Country Information Reports and briefs;

---

<sup>25</sup> The total number of cases varies according to the number of arrivals in the period under review.

<sup>26</sup> ICSE is DIMIA's major onshore client recording and application management system. ICSE provides a generic system for recording clients and visa/citizenship processing across the department. ICSE is discussed further in Chapter 3.

- team leader fortnightly review of the latest entries on BACIS, one of the databases that includes country information;
- interchange of ideas between colleagues;
- weekly researchers meetings to discuss issues raised by researchers and team leaders;
- on-going trend analysis to determine and review priority country status;
- reporting from Onshore Protections' Quality Assurance Cycle; and
- monitoring of CISNET quality through the analysis of anomaly results.

**2.27** The responsibilities of staff in the Country Information Service, in relation to monitoring the quality of country information, are outlined in the Country Information Research and Project Planner. The planner outlines the daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and half yearly country information monitoring requirements for researchers.

**2.28** The ANAO found that the Country Information Service has adequate mechanisms in place to ensure quality in the provision of country information. Researchers, are aware of their roles and responsibilities and there are a number of internal and external checks that are undertaken to monitor the quality of country information.

### **Informal quality assurance mechanisms**

**2.29** In addition to the formal quality assurance mechanisms in place for the Onshore Protection Program, there are a number of informal quality assurance mechanisms. The informal mechanisms include peer review of decision records by more experienced decision-makers, and the sharing of information on the processing of PV applications between Regional Offices.

**2.30** In focus group discussions with the ANAO, decision-makers said that the informal quality assurance mechanisms helped them to improve the quality of their decision-making and to implement new processing methods.

## **Conclusion—quality assurance**

**2.31** DIMIA has adequate formal and informal quality assurance mechanisms in place to monitor and enhance the quality of decision-making for onshore protection visas. The results of the formal Onshore Protection Quality Assurance program are communicated to Regional and Central Office managers. Training issues that are identified are rectified through the provision of training to decision-makers.

## 3. Support for Decision-makers

---

*This chapter outlines the guidance and training that DIMIA has in place to facilitate accurate and consistent decision making in the Onshore Protection visa sub-classes.*

### Introduction

3.1 DIMIA staff in the Sydney, Melbourne and Perth Regional Offices undertake processing of onshore protection visa applications. Owing to the diverse and complex nature of visa applicants and the environment in which processing officers work, it is important that processing officers have access to clear departmental policies and guidelines, and that DIMIA has strategies in place to facilitate effective and timely processing of visa applications. The ANAO examined the strategies that DIMIA has in place and, in particular, focussed on:

- training; and
- the procedures and guidance to support decision-making.

The ANAO also conducted focus groups in the Regional Offices during audit fieldwork.

### Training

3.2 Learning and development are important activities in all organisations. New employees need to be trained to perform their jobs and existing employees need to acquire new skills and knowledge.<sup>27</sup> Most organisations distinguish between training for new entrants and ongoing training for existing employees to ensure all staff have the requisite skills to contribute to organisational capability and performance. New entrant training typically consists of induction and socialisation programs for the inculcation of organisational culture and also to provide job-ready employees who are able to integrate into the work environment. Ongoing training is typically provided to enhance or update the core skills of staff in technical or managerial fields that are central to departmental outputs and outcomes.

---

<sup>27</sup> Raymond J. Stone, *Human Resource Management*, Jacaranda Wiley Ltd, Queensland, 1991, p. 180.

### 3.3 The ANAO examined whether:

- responsibility for identifying training needs had been assigned;
- training needs are determined;
- the training needs that are necessary as a result of ongoing changes to policies and guidance are taken into account; and
- results of the training needs analysis are used to guide the development of training.

3.4 The Protection Decision Support Section (PDSS) in the Onshore Protection Branch in DIMIA's Central Office is responsible for coordinating ongoing training and support to decision makers. The ANAO found that the training needs of decision makers processing Protection Visa (PV) applications are addressed through the Training and Coordination Committee, which is chaired by PDSS. The Committee consists of representatives from other sections within DIMIA's Central Office and representatives from DIMIA's Regional Offices. Regional Office committee representatives canvass the training needs of decision makers in their office and feed this information back into the training committee. The training needs of decision-makers are also identified through DIMIA's Performance and Learning Scheme (PALS) and through the formal quality assurance program.

3.5 In addition to the Training and Coordination Committee, PDSS is responsible for developing and providing a strategy to deliver specific training for Onshore Protection decision makers. The Onshore Protection Training Strategy identifies training that has been undertaken, provides an overview of future training programs, identifies the core competencies required by decision-makers, identifies stakeholders and provides a plan for the implementation of the training program.

3.6 The ANAO found that since January 2000 decision makers processing PV applications have been provided with training in the following areas.

- Excised Offshore Places Processing: workshops were held several times a month from October 2001 to September 2002 to train officers in the processing of unauthorised arrivals on an offshore excised place and in declared countries.
- Induction: five-day course conducted internally. Provided to decision-makers who have recently joined DIMIA's Onshore Protection Branch. Designed to provide decision-makers with an overview of Australia's refugee and humanitarian program, the key considerations when making decisions on PV applications and the legal aspects relevant to decision-making.



- Onshore Protection: three-day course conducted internally for experienced DIMIA interviewing officers.
- Investigative Interviewing: two-day course conducted internally by Intelligence Analysis Section and externally by Charles Sturt University.
- Ethical Interviewing: two-day course conducted externally by Charles Sturt University.
- Regular Updates: related to legal and policy issues and carried out by Legal Policy and Protection Policy Sections to ensure decision-makers are kept abreast of policy changes and legislative amendments.
- CISNET: Ad hoc information and training sessions have been conducted as required.
- Country of Origin Workshops: focus on updating country of origin information. Presented in a seminar format with expert guest speakers from Australia and overseas.

**3.7** The ANAO also found that staff that were new to DIMIA's Onshore Protection Branch, in particular the processing of PV applications, were assigned a mentor in addition to their supervisor. Mentors vet the initial decision records of decision-makers and also provide support and advice to decision-makers. During focus group discussions with decision-makers, staff advised the ANAO that the mentoring system provided them with the level of support they required in working through the challenging cases involved in PV and Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) application processing.

**3.8** During ANAO focus groups with decision-makers, staff in the more remote Regional Offices expressed some concern over the level and frequency of Central Office training they received. Traditionally, the standard format for delivering training on all aspects of case assessment has been for all participants to travel to a central location. This method of delivery is costly and as a result the training is limited to a set number of participants in each Regional Office. This has also meant that training courses are only offered when there are enough participants to ensure that it is cost effective to offer the course. As a result, some new starters have had to wait for a number of months to undertake an induction course and in the meantime, have had to rely on the mentor system to ensure they have the necessary skills to process PV applications.

**3.9** The ANAO notes that DIMIA is in the process of reviewing its training methods and delivery for decision-makers. Recently, legal updates have been delivered by sending an experienced officer to the Regional Offices. This has proven to be more cost-effective than bringing all participants together in one office. Regional Offices have also been given the option to provide their own



induction courses in instances where it is not cost-effective for Central Office to offer the course. Proposed future methods of training delivery include the following.

- **E-Learning:** self-paced or real-time learning that is conducted over the Internet, Intranet, extranet or other Internet-based technologies. Areas of the induction course could be made available through this medium.
- **Telephone Conferencing:** could be considered as a tool for resolution of regional or one off issues than as a formal training medium. Would enable decision-makers to participate in question and answer forums with the relevant policy people or other experts as required.
- **Video-Conferencing:** would be a viable alternative to officers travelling to Regional Offices to deliver updates of refugee law and policy and procedures.
- **Informal Methods:** could include on the job training with assigned mentors, and/or the establishment of small focus groups with a single representative from each Regional Office, with the participants passing the information onto other staff using a train the trainer approach.
- **Seminars:** have been used to provide detailed and up to date country of origin information. Could be used to provide refresher training to staff.
- **Group Training:** standard training that has been used for induction courses. Course content attempts to cover as much material as possible in the time available.

**3.10** In addition to the existing methods of delivering training, Regional Offices also develop and deliver training to their staff. This has enabled staff to receive training in a more timely manner and also to receive training in areas specific to their Regional Office.

**3.11** The ANAO acknowledges the work that has been undertaken by DIMIA in assessing and reviewing the training needs of decision-makers. However, to provide assurance that decision-makers have access to adequate and timely training, the ANAO suggests that DIMIA give priority to finalising its review of training methods and delivery for decision-makers.

## **Procedures and guidelines to support decision-making**

**3.12** To ensure that decisions on PV applications are accurate and consistent with legislation and policy, it is necessary to translate the legislation and policy into appropriate guidelines and to provide adequate support for decision-makers.

**3.13** The ANAO examined the procedures and guidelines available to DIMIA decision-makers to support them in assessing Onshore PV applications. This includes (but is not limited to) the following.

- Protection Visa Procedures Manual (PVPM). A part of DIMIA's Procedures Advice Manual (PAM3), which incorporates all relevant legislative and regulation changes impacting on Onshore PV procedures. It also includes proforma documents and guidelines for practical assistance to case officers.
- Onshore Protection Interim Procedures Advice (OPIPA), which formalise and standardise interim procedures. OPIPAs are incorporated into the PVPM on a regular basis after which time the individual OPIPA will cease to apply.
- Refugee Law Guidelines. Provide advice and assistance to Departmental decision-makers on the law relevant to the assessment of whether Australia owes protection obligations to an applicant for a PV under the *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* as amended by the *1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*.
- Country Information Service (CIS). Collects relevant country information from a wide range of sources and distributes it to decision makers via an electronic database (CISNET), available on the network and a central library loan system; undertakes research on behalf of case managers including seeking advice from overseas posts; initiates research on country information issues and prepare in depth reports on topical issues and countries; liaises with counterpart bodies overseas and the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT), to assist information exchange; and provides training and support to CISNET users.
- Process maps/flowcharts that outline the different stages of the PV application process.
- Onshore Protection Help Desk. Provides support to Onshore Protection case managers and overseas officers by responding to questions raised on policy and procedural issues relating to PV applications. A database of questions and answers on topics is maintained to ensure consistency of information provided and to be used in the development of seminars and training programs.

- Migration Advising Help Desk and Legal Opinions Help Desk are available to all staff who wish to enquire about particular criteria or seek advice on how to process a particular application. These help desks are generally only consulted by Onshore Protection staff after ensuring all other avenues and options have been explored.
- The Internet.

**3.14** The ANAO also examined the method of delivery of guidance to decision-makers and the mechanisms DIMIA has in place for updating this guidance and communicating these changes to staff. The five main methods for the delivery of guidance are listed below.

- LEGEND, an interactive toolkit available on the internal intranet or on CD-Rom, that encompasses the Migration Act 1958, Migration Regulations, Ministerial Directions, Migration Series Instructions, and the PAM.
- CISNET, designed for the use of decision-makers in Onshore Protection and members and research staff of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT). Maintained by CIS, it comprises research undertaken by CIS, databases provided by the Canadian government, US State Department Reports, Newspaper clippings and a database of the CIS library holdings.
- Bulletin boards on DIMIA's internal intranet.
- Training.
- Conferences.

**3.15** The ANAO examined whether the procedures and guidance described above provided decision-makers with:

- consistent;
- up-to-date; and
- accessible technical and product knowledge to all relevant staff.

**3.16** The ANAO found that decision-makers have access to a comprehensive and well defined set of procedures and guidelines that are updated to reflect changes to legislation and policy by a dedicated branch in Central Office. However, the ANAO also found that there can be a significant time lag between the announcement of a change in legislation and/or policy and the provision of updated guidance to decision-makers. During focus group discussions with decision-makers, staff advised the ANAO that it was difficult, at times, to determine what the current guidance regarding a certain aspect of PV processing was. The processing of further PV's for Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) holders that commenced recently has also highlighted the need for

accurate and up to date guidance for decision-makers due to the complex nature of the cases and legislation.

**3.17** The ANAO notes that the majority of changes to legislation and regulations originate from the department. There is scope to reduce the amount of time taken to issue new guidelines, once the legislation comes into effect. The ANAO considers that DIMIA's more timely incorporation of policy changes into guidelines would reduce the risk that decisions on PV applications are not in accordance with guidance and legislation.

## Country Information Service

**3.18** As discussed earlier, the ANAO examined the range of procedures and guidance decision-makers have access to support them in making decisions on PV applications. The CIS is one of the tools available to decision-makers. The ANAO examined the CIS to determine whether it provides decision-makers with relevant, accurate and up to date information.

**3.19** The CIS within the Protection Decision Support Section (PDSS), was established in 1992 to provide PV decision-makers with up to date and reliable country information and training and support to facilitate decision-making. The services that the CIS provides were discussed earlier.

**3.20** The CIS is staffed by a team of researchers who collect relevant country information on particular countries which are identified as priority for information collection, from a wide range of sources and distribute it to decision makers. A country is allocated a priority rating after an analysis of trends in caseload statistics, including: on-hand and previous PV applications both Onshore and Offshore; feedback from decision-makers; and directions from the Executive. To make sure the priority country list remains responsive to changes in country situations, the list is regularly reassessed so that research is effectively targeted. Priority countries are allocated to research officers and all relevant information is entered on CISNET. Non-priority countries are provided with a watching brief only. Researchers are responsible for entering comprehensive reports or summaries where available onto CISNET. Background briefs are also kept on these countries.

**3.21** Ernst and Young, DIMIA's internal auditors, undertook a Review of Country Information in May 2002. The audit made 11 recommendations relating to the provision of a broader range of country information, and implementing a more proactive approach to the provision of country information.

**3.22** The ANAO notes the work that the CIS has undertaken to analyse trends and assign priorities to specific countries. However, the ANAO found, in line with the findings of the Review of Country Information, that there is a need for an analysis of emerging trends to be undertaken in addition to

historical trends when assigning priority ratings to countries. This approach would decrease the delays to decision-makers in obtaining up to date and relevant country information. The ANAO notes that the Protection Integrity Teams located within the Onshore Protection section in the Sydney Regional Office, and the Compliance section in the Perth and Melbourne Regional Offices, have undertaken monitoring of their caseload to identify trends. They have liaised with the Intelligence Analysis Section and the Offshore compliance network in identifying the trends. The ANAO considers that the CIS could benefit from similar links into the Intelligence Analysis Section, Offshore Compliance network and the Protection Integrity Teams.

**3.23** In focus group discussions with decision-makers, the ANAO found that the CIS was generally not the only source of country information that decision-makers referred to. Decision-makers stated that at times the information contained within CIS did not provide them with an analysis of the current situation in a particular country at the level of detail that they required. Decision-makers advised that they were then required to look at other sources of information, such as the internet, to supplement the information gained from CIS. The ANAO considers that DIMIA could mitigate the risk that information gained from sources other than CIS is not up to date or accurate. One approach could be via training that highlights the risks involved in sourcing information from unregulated fora. DIMIA advised that they have risk mitigation strategies in place that include:

- the training of case managers in the appropriate use of country information and the assessment of information sources;
- management supervision and review of decision records as part of the quality assurance process; and
- the requirement that all items referred to in decision records be placed on CISNET, which involves review and if appropriate suggestion of alternative sources, by experienced researchers.

**3.24** The ANAO notes the work undertaken by CIS to arrange Country of Origin workshops to supplement the information they already provide to decision-makers. During focus group discussions with the ANAO, decision-makers reported that the workshops were extremely useful to them and that they gave them a greater understanding of the situations in the countries discussed. DIMIA also records workshops, and this information is kept in the CIS database and available to all PV decision-makers. The ANAO suggests that CIS continue the Country of Origin workshops and look for opportunities to increase the number of workshops they provide to staff.

## Information systems

**3.25** Information systems play an important role in the collection of accurate information, and effectively reporting that information. Information systems also provide management with the tools necessary to monitor and manage the performance of the program. The ANAO sought to determine if the IT systems used for collecting and recording data for the Refugee and Humanitarian program adequately support decision makers and managers to monitor and manage the performance of the program.

**3.26** DIMIA's primary information system for processing of PV applications is the Integrated Client Service Environment (ICSE). For the Onshore component of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, ICSE records the dates of key milestones, date of application and decision. ICSE also records other key information such as which Regional Office is processing the application.

**3.27** DIMIA Central Office use ICSE data, as well as other qualitative data provided by Regional Offices to compile their management reports (discussed in Chapter 4—Managing and Monitoring Program Performance). However, the ANAO noted that while staff in Regional Offices enter information into ICSE, it does not have the level of functionality required by Regional Offices to track and monitor processing of applications. It also does not hold the level of reporting information required by team leaders and managers in Regional Offices to allow them to monitor cases.

**3.28** To overcome the lack of reporting functionality of ICSE, the ANAO found that each Regional Office tracked its caseload by using locally developed systems. All three processing offices used excel spreadsheets to track cases. In these offices, the excel spreadsheets were kept on the shared drive and updated regularly by decision-makers. In one Regional Office, team leaders were able to collate information from individual decision makers in their team into one report and also to analyse and cross reference the report. Excel spreadsheets were particularly used in Regional Offices to monitor the reprocessing of TPV expiries.

**3.29** In focus group discussions held with decision makers, staff expressed concern that data was entered twice, once into ISCE and also into the locally developed system. The use and development of local databases in Regional Offices requires the investment of staff resources, and there are a number of risks associated with the development of local databases. These risks include an inconsistent approach in the software used and the data collected and recorded across Regional Offices. One Regional Office used a stand alone case management system which provides a number of different reports. However, the software used to run the system is not compatible with standard DIMIA software and it is difficult to use. Therefore, staff have had to develop excel spreadsheets to monitor the TPV and East Timorese caseloads which has

further increased the amount of data entry required. The ANAO found that due to the differences in systems, Regional Offices are recording the information that they believe to be most important. There is also the potential for data integrity issues arising from multiple systems. Any data integrity issues with ICSE would affect the reports produced by Central Office, and therefore the information supplied to DIMIA management.

**3.30** DIMIA advised that the issue of locally developed and incompatible software will be resolved with the introduction of the Xanadu project later in 2004. The project will introduce a control environment which will not allow for locally developed and incompatible software.

## **Conclusion—information systems**

**3.31** The ANAO found that overall DIMIA had a number of information systems that supported the Onshore Protection Branch. Central Office primarily uses ICSE for reporting, which allows the analysis of statistical data and reports to provide quantitative information. Regional Offices have developed local systems, which are typically excel spreadsheets. These spreadsheets allow Regional Offices to record extra data that ICSE does not have the capacity to record, including qualitative data regarding specific cases. The ANAO notes that locally developed systems require data to be entered twice. This practice carries risks to data quality and has the potential to affect DIMIA's accuracy in management reporting. The multiple systems also mean that staff resources are taken away from their core business of processing PV applications.



## 4. Managing and Monitoring Program Performance

---

*This chapter examines the performance information and reporting framework in place for the Protection Visa (Onshore) output of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.*

### Introduction

**4.1** Performance information is important for the internal management of programs, as it allows management to routinely monitor program performance to establish if the program is delivering its outputs and achieving its outcomes.<sup>28</sup> Performance information is also used for external reporting and accountability purposes, including reporting to government and to other stakeholders.<sup>29</sup>

**4.2** The ANAO assessed the performance information framework in place for the Protection Visa (PV) (Onshore) output of DIMIA's Refugee and Humanitarian Program to determine if it was consistent with better practice. In particular the ANAO assessed:

- performance indicators in DIMIA's Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS);
- the internal management reporting for the program; and
- information systems that support the program.

### Performance information in Portfolio Budget Statements

**4.3** The outputs of the Refugee and Humanitarian program form part of DIMIA's Outcome One: *'Contributing to Australia's society and its economic advancement through the lawful and orderly entry and stay of people.'* Performance information contained in DIMIA's PBS specifies the quantity, quality and cost paid by government for an output, which contributes to the overall outcome.

**4.4** The ANAO examined the performance indicators contained in DIMIA's 2002–03 and 2003–04 PBS to assess whether the performance indicators contained measurable information and were aligned with better practice.

**4.5** To adequately measure performance, both quantity and quality indicators are required. Quantity indicators specify the number of units being produced for a given price. For example, in 2003–04 the Government is

---

<sup>28</sup> Australian National Audit Office Audit Report No.18, 2001–02, *Performance Information in Portfolio Budget Statements*.

<sup>29</sup> Australian National Audit Office, *Performance Information in Portfolio Budget Statements: Better Practice Guide*, May 2002.



purchasing the finalisation of 7650 onshore protection applications. Quality indicators enable judgements to be made on service delivery and the appropriateness of a product or service. Better practice states that quality indicators should relate to tangible and objective criteria. Examples of quality measures include timeliness, coverage, accuracy, peer review, conformity to specifications and client satisfaction.<sup>30</sup> Quality indicators also allow stakeholders and Parliament to assess the capacity of a department or agency to deliver the required services to the standards that are agreed.

**4.6** The performance information contained in DIMIA’s 2003–04 PBS specifies quantity and quality indicators used to assess the onshore component of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. Table 4.1 below details the performance indicators in DIMIA’s 2003–04 PBS.

**Table 4.1**

**Refugee and Humanitarian Performance Indicators (2003–04)**

Output	Quantity Targets*	Quality
Output 1.1.2	7,650 onshore protection (persons) finalised	80% of applications from applicants not in detention to be finalised within 90 days of lodgement, where there are not factors outside DIMIA’s control which prevent finalisation.
Protection Visas (onshore)	8,980 Intervention assessment of which 5,123 are post review assessment	
	45 matters relating to complaints to and assessments for U.N. treaty bodies	
	250 (persons) in detention assisted under the Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme (IAAAS)	60% of applications from applicants in detention to be finalised within 42 days of lodgement, where there are not factors outside DIMIA’s control which prevent finalisation.

\* These are DIMIA’s processing targets for the program. The actual numbers can be found in Table 1.1 of this report. If DIMIA does not meet these targets, it could mean that other measures to stem the flow of Asylum Seekers are working.

Source: DIMIA 2003–04 Portfolio Budget Statements.

**Quantity measures**

**4.7** The ANAO assessed DIMIA’s performance indicators, as specified in Table 4.1 above. The ANAO found that, overall, the specification of DIMIA’s quantity indicators for the Refugee and Humanitarian (Onshore) program comply with better practice. The quantity indicators specified are good workload indicators that give DIMIA targets to work to, and allow Parliament to assess the outputs it is purchasing.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

**4.8** The ANAO notes that the introduction of measures to stem the flow of asylum seekers, and the decline in community applications has reduced the number of applications received by DIMIA and, in response to the reduction in workload, DIMIA has reduced the target number of applications to be finalised. For example, in 2001–02, DIMIA’s target for the program was 13 908 applications to be finalised. In 2003–04, this number has been revised downwards to 7650.

## **Quality indicators**

**4.9** The ANAO also examined DIMIA’s quality indicators. The ANAO found that DIMIA’s quality indicators measure the timeliness of processing for detention and community cases. The ANAO considers, in the visa processing context, measuring only the timeliness of internal decision making does not provide a complete indicator of the quality of the decision. In the processing of PV’s, cases are often complex and there are many factors outside of DIMIA’s control that impact on timeliness. These factors include new information presented by the applicant and delays while applicants receive overseas penal clearances and other necessary health and character checks.

**4.10** In addition to measuring timeliness as an indicator of quality, the results of peer reviews can also provide an indicator of quality. The ANAO notes, as discussed in Chapter 2, the Onshore Protection Branch has a formal quality assurance program in place. The quality assurance program consists of audits of randomly selected cases, and is undertaken twice yearly by senior Onshore Protection managers in each processing state. The quality assurance program examines a number of aspects, including correct citations in decision records, appropriate level of documentation and whether the correct security checks had been undertaken. The ANAO considers, that incorporating the results of DIMIA’s formal quality assurance would provide a more complete measure of the quality of decision-making.

## **Recommendation No.1**

**4.11** The ANAO recommends that DIMIA expand the quality indicators for its Refugee and Humanitarian program to include a measure that assesses the key indicators of a quality decision against the results of its quality assurance program.

### ***DIMIA Response***

**4.12** Agreed. As reflected in the recommendation and the body of the audit report, the Department has internal mechanisms to monitor and manage the quality of protection visa decision making. The Department accepts the audit recommendation and will explore appropriate opportunities to adjust its performance measures, noting that any adjustments to the Department’s

formal performance measures may need to be discussed with the Department of Finance and Administration.

## Management reporting

### Internal program reporting

**4.13** Management reporting allows senior management to monitor program performance and outcomes to review and develop strategies and procedures. Management reporting should be up to date and relevant to allow senior management to make informed decisions on programs. The ANAO examined the reporting framework in place for the Refugee and Humanitarian program to assess whether it provides DIMIA management with adequate information on the program.

**4.14** The ANAO found that DIMIA's Onshore Protection Branch supplies a number of reports to senior management within the Department and to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. These reports are tailored to cover the areas of risk to the program, and include the following.

- **The Sensitive Case Register**—decision-makers report fortnightly on the progress of cases that could be expected to arouse media interest, affect foreign relations or otherwise be cases about which the Minister or Executive may require a briefing. The reports inform DIMIA senior management and the Minister when decisions on these cases will be handed down.
- **Primary Applications Onhand**—this report lists all primary applications on hand in all regions. This allows Central Office to monitor the overall caseload, and also allows Regional Offices to monitor their onhand primary caseload.
- **Weekly list of detainees with PV records**—this report lists applicants who are in detention (not in Immigration Reception and Processing Centres and non boat arrivals). The report outlines the applicants' status, including what stage of appeal their case is at. This report is disseminated to managers and team leaders in the regions, and allows them to monitor cases and request information from decision makers.
- **Further Protection Visa Processing Report**—this report informs a fortnightly teleconference held between Central Office and the regions, which is chaired by the Deputy Secretary. This report allows Central Office to track the overall workload by nationality of applicant and expiry date of their current visa. It also allows the regions to monitor their processing workload.

**4.15** While the above reports are of a more specific nature, DIMIA's Outcomes Reporting Section, on behalf of the Onshore Protection Branch produces a Monthly Summary. The Monthly Summary is distributed to senior management in Central Office and Onshore Protection staff in both Central Office and Regional Office, and allows them to track overall trends in the program. The Monthly Summary provides 12 months of data and covers all aspects of the Onshore protection casework, including the number of applications received each month and the number of cases finalised each month. The ANAO did not assess the quality of the data provided.

**4.16** Onshore Protection Branch also contribute to reports for the Detention Review Committee. These reports track all people in detention and Onshore Protection Branch report on the cases of PV applicants that are in detention.

**4.17** The ANAO acknowledges that DIMIA management has access to a number of reports that monitor the progress of PV processing. However, the ANAO notes, as discussed in Chapter 2, the audit found cases where applications took longer to process than the times set down in DIMIA's published performance indicators owing to external factors beyond DIMIA's immediate control. The ANAO considers that enhanced monitoring of that part of its caseload where processing times are affected by external factors beyond its immediate control, would enable DIMIA to identify common causes of the delay and any actions DIMIA could initiate to improve timeliness.

## **Recommendation No.2**

**4.18** The ANAO recommends that DIMIA enhance its current monitoring of that part of its caseload where processing times are affected by external factors beyond its immediate control with a view to identifying common causes of extended delay and any actions that could be initiated to improve timeliness.

### ***DIMIA Response***

**4.19** Agreed. As reflected in the recommendation and in the body of the audit report, DIMIA has internal arrangements to monitor application processing to identify external factors which prevent protection visa decisions from being made, including factors which are outside of Department control. These arrangements enable the Department to identify, and to the extent possible deal with, any common issues which might be preventing decisions from being made. Nevertheless, the Department agrees with the ANAO that it is important to maintain, and where feasible strengthen, the focus of this monitoring work to ensure that, as changing caseloads come before the Department, the influence of external factors on processing times is kept to a minimum.

**4.20** DIMIA notes that in relation to the protection visa applications lodged in 2002–03, processing times exceeded the published performance standards.

For those applications, before adjusting for factors beyond our control, over 80% of community applications were decided within 90 days and well over 70% of detention applications were within 42 days. DIMIA notes that these figures relate to a different cohort of cases and use a different methodology than the cohort and methodology used in the audit caseload sample analysis.

## Annual reporting

**4.21** Annual reports are the primary vehicle for reporting program performance to Parliament and other stakeholders. ANAO better practice suggests that the focus of annual reports has been moving away from just reporting administrative detail, to also providing more information regarding program performance.<sup>31</sup>

**4.22** DIMIA's 2001–02 and 2002–03 Annual Reports detail the performance of the Department that financial year and, in particular, they report on the performance of the Onshore Refugee and Humanitarian program. DIMIA's Annual Report also includes an analysis of the program, including why DIMIA met, and in some cases over-exceeded their targets. In previous years, DIMIA's Annual Reports have specified why DIMIA did not meet their processing targets, which included a higher number of applications, and boat arrivals. In line with better practice, the reporting for the Refugee and Humanitarian Program provides stakeholders and Parliament with a good understanding of how the program has performed during the year, and also outlines major changes that have occurred.

## Conclusion

**4.23** The Onshore Protection Branch has a comprehensive reporting framework in place to report on the Refugee and Humanitarian program. These reports inform DIMIA management on different aspects of the program according to risk and sensitivity. While the Primary Applications Onhand report offers a summary report of all cases, the Sensitive Case Register offers more detail.

**4.24** The ANAO concluded that appropriate reports were produced and disseminated to senior management within DIMIA in a timely manner. These reports provided management with data on the overall caseload, cases submitted by applicants in detention and sensitive cases.

---

<sup>31</sup> Australian National Audit Office, *Performance Information in Portfolio Budget Statements: Better Practice Guide*, May 2002.

**4.25** The Annual Reporting for the Refugee and Humanitarian Program advises stakeholders and Parliament about how the program has performed, and includes detailed information regarding changes in policy and the external environment, and how these have impacted on the program.

## 5. Managing Stakeholder Relationships

*This chapter outlines DIMIA's approach to managing its relationship with external stakeholders. In particular, the communication between DIMIA and the RRT, and DIMIA's mechanisms for communicating with other stakeholders such as community and Refugee Advocacy groups, is examined.*

### Introduction

5.1 The management of stakeholder relationships is important for programs where there are many external interest groups involved. Recent initiatives to stakeholder management in the public sector indicate that managers are taking greater interest in their relationships with stakeholders. Better practice examples have included:

- appointing relationship managers and establishing protocols; and
- consulting representatives from community groups and other relevant agencies.<sup>32</sup>

5.2 DIMIA has a number of stakeholders with an interest in the Refugee and Humanitarian program. Some stakeholders, such as the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) have a formal relationship with DIMIA defined by legislation, or under contractual arrangements. Other stakeholders such as Refugee Advocacy groups have an informal relationship with DIMIA.

5.3 The ANAO sought to assess whether DIMIA consulted with relevant stakeholders regarding the processing of asylum seekers. In particular, the ANAO examined the communication between DIMIA and the RRT, as well as DIMIA's mechanisms for communicating with other stakeholders including community or Refugee Advocacy groups.

### Refugee Review Tribunal

5.4 On July 1st 1993, the RRT was established as an independent merits review mechanism for Protection Visa (PV) applicants who have had their applications refused by DIMIA.<sup>33</sup> Refused PV applicants must apply to the RRT within either 28 days (for community cases) or 7 days (for detention cases) of being notified of the decision by DIMIA.

5.5 Cases that are reviewed by the RRT are done so by a Tribunal Member. Once an application has been received by the RRT, the Tribunal Member must

---

<sup>32</sup> Wood, Douglas, *Trends in Stakeholder Management and Measurement in the Public Sector*, <[www.nagivate.co.nz/newsreti.htm](http://www.nagivate.co.nz/newsreti.htm)>.

<sup>33</sup> The Tribunal was established under Part 7 of the *Migration Act 1958*.

review the case 'afresh'. In reviewing the case, the Tribunal Member can take into consideration the information and decision made by the DIMIA case manager and any other information gained by the Tribunal Member at the time of the review. The Tribunal has the statutory power to affirm, vary, set aside or change the decision that has been made by the DIMIA case manager.

**5.6** Importantly, the Tribunal Member must make a fair, just, economical, informal and quick decision.<sup>34</sup> The RRT is not adversarial, rather it is inquisitorial by nature and Tribunal Members must use whatever information they need to make a decision. Decisions made by the RRT are not required to be in legal form and rules of evidence do not apply. However, Tribunal Members must make their decision in accordance with substantial justice and the merits of the case.<sup>35</sup>

## Interaction between DIMIA and the RRT

**5.7** Interaction between DIMIA and the RRT occurs at both the Central Office and Regional Office level. Central Office liaise with the RRT on matters regarding the management of the Refugee and Humanitarian program, Country Information, trends in RRT decision making, litigation matters and case specific issues. Regional Offices interact with the RRT on a more administrative basis regarding file transfers, training and Country Information.

### Central office level of interaction

**5.8** At the Central Office level, DIMIA interacts with the RRT regularly. Discussions regarding individual cases and Country Information updates are relatively informal. More formal interaction is co-ordinated by DIMIA's Visa Framework section.

#### *Informal interaction*

**5.9** DIMIA's Protection Services Section interacts with the RRT on individual cases as required. The interaction is not formal, and its frequency varies based on need. The Onshore Protection Branch in DIMIA's Central Office monitors decisions made by the RRT, and trends that may arise in RRT decision-making.

**5.10** DIMIA's Country Information Service in Central Office also liaises regularly with the RRT's Country Information Service. Each week, the Country Information Service in both DIMIA and the RRT compile a list of publications that have been made available to their users that week. This helps to ensure

---

<sup>34</sup> Refugee Review Tribunal <<http://www.rrt.gov.au/about.htm>>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



that DIMIA and the RRT have access to the same Country Information for making decisions.

### *Formal Interaction*

**5.11** DIMIA's Visa Framework section is responsible for managing the formal relationship between DIMIA and the RRT, and it liaises with the Onshore Protection Branch on issues regarding the program. The Visa Framework section organises regular meetings between the Onshore Protection Branch and the RRT. These meetings give DIMIA an opportunity to assess and analyse why decisions may have been set aside, and examine whether poor decision-making was a factor in cases being overturned.

**5.12** In discussions with the ANAO, both the RRT and DIMIA stated that these meetings are useful and productive. However, the RRT expressed concern that although the meetings were scheduled quarterly, they did not always go ahead. DIMIA advised that their preference was for the meetings to be held bi-annually, recognising that other forms of communication, such as e-mail are available to discuss issues between bi-annual meetings. The ANAO suggests that the Refugee and Humanitarian Branch discuss with DIMIA's Visa Framework section and the RRT their preference for bi-annual meetings.

### **Regional office level interaction**

**5.13** DIMIA Regional Offices interact with the RRT on a number of different matters, including the transfer of files and training and consultation with non-government organisations (NGOs).

#### *File transfers*

**5.14** When reviewing a case, the RRT will request DIMIA's file on the applicant, which will include the original application, documents provided by the applicant and DIMIA's decision. According to legislation, DIMIA must provide these files to the RRT within 10 working days. During interviews with the RRT in both Melbourne and Sydney, the ANAO found that DIMIA and the RRT have processes in place to make sure files are received by the RRT in a timely manner. A list of files is provided to DIMIA by the RRT each day, and a courier bag goes from DIMIA to the RRT and back again each day. In discussions with the ANAO, the RRT stated that in nearly every instance, DIMIA supplied files within two days. While delays could occur when files were being sent from remote Regional Offices, or when other areas within DIMIA held files, DIMIA and the RRT have tracking and follow up mechanisms in place to make sure that these delays are minimal.

#### *Training and information sessions*

**5.15** DIMIA Central Office and Regional Offices in Melbourne and Sydney invite the RRT to any specialised training or Country Information sessions that

are organised. The RRT also invites DIMIA to any Country Information sessions or training held for RRT members. In discussions with the ANAO, both DIMIA and the RRT commented that these arrangements assisted DIMIA decision-makers and RRT members to have a better understanding of their decision-making processes. The RRT is invited to attend DIMIA's consultative meetings, and the RRT invites DIMIA to its consultative meetings. The effectiveness of these consultative meetings is discussed in later sections of this chapter.

## Conclusion

**5.16** The ANAO concluded that DIMIA has a positive and constructive relationship in place with the RRT at the Regional Office level. There is regular communication with the RRT regarding file transfers and training, and both DIMIA and the RRT include each other in consultative meetings with stakeholder groups.

**5.17** At the Central Office level, informal communication between the Protection Services Section and the RRT occurs as required, while the Visa Framework section is responsible for managing the formal relationship between DIMIA and the RRT. Formal communication occurs through regular meetings coordinated by DIMIA's Visa Framework section. However, the RRT expressed concern that although the meetings were scheduled quarterly, they did not always go ahead. DIMIA advised that its preference was for meetings to be held bi-annually. The ANAO suggests that the Refugee and Humanitarian Branch discuss with DIMIA's Visa Framework section and the RRT the frequency of formal meetings.

## Consultation with non-government organisations

**5.18** There are a number of non-government organisations (NGOs) that have an interest in the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. These stakeholders include peak refugee groups, ethno-specific community groups, not-for-profit community groups, Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme (IAAAS) providers<sup>36</sup> and the Asylum Seeker Assistance (ASA) Scheme contractor.<sup>37</sup>

**5.19** The ANAO notes that during its discussions with stakeholders most were able to distinguish between DIMIA's management of the Onshore

---

<sup>36</sup> When applying for a Protection Visa, applicants may need assistance in completing application forms and giving details of their claim for asylum. In recognising this and to help with the quality of the application, the government implemented the IAAAS. See Appendix 2 for more information.

<sup>37</sup> The ASA Scheme gives financial assistance to eligible Protection Visa applicants living in the community who are unable to meet their most basic needs for food, accommodation and health care. DIMIA administers the scheme through contractual arrangements with the Australian Red Cross.

Protection Program, including timeliness of processing, and interaction with stakeholders and the Governments' policy measures to stem the flow of asylum seekers.

**5.20** In considering feedback from stakeholders, the ANAO focused on stakeholders' comments that related to DIMIA's management of the Onshore Protection Program, the interaction stakeholders have with the department, and whether DIMIA consults with stakeholders regularly.

## **Regional consultation**

**5.21** The ANAO found that each Regional Office has adopted their own strategies for regular stakeholder consultation. These strategies include quarterly consultative forums that allow DIMIA to discuss trends and new developments in the program, and stakeholders to raise concerns and issues they may have. Most stakeholders, in discussions with the ANAO, stated that they found these forums useful, and that DIMIA was willing to act upon the feedback given to them. Another strategy adopted by Regional Offices, where there were a small number of stakeholders, involved the stakeholders meeting directly with the Regional Onshore Protection manager and the DIMIA State Director, to raise concerns and issues they may have. In discussions with the ANAO, stakeholders said that this approach enabled them to have a close working relationship with DIMIA.

## **Central office consultation**

### *Consultations with NGOs*

**5.22** The ANAO found that DIMIA Central Office holds meetings with NGOs to discuss issues relating to the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. These meetings commenced in 1994. Stakeholders who attended these meetings stated that they were very productive and valuable, as they included robust discussions of issues. However, these meetings ceased in August 2001, and did not recommence until February 2003. In discussions with the ANAO, DIMIA stated that feedback from stakeholders on the meetings held thus far has been positive. The ANAO notes the importance of DIMIA Central Office continuing to hold consultative meetings with stakeholders to maintain a constructive and mutually beneficial relationship that enables a productive flow of information.

## Conclusion

5.23 The ANAO concluded that at a Regional level, consultation between DIMIA and its stakeholders does occur. Stakeholders on the whole reported to the ANAO that consultation occurred regularly and that DIMIA was willing to listen to suggestions and, where possible, has acted upon them.

5.24 At a Central Office level, forums are held with peak refugee groups. DIMIA stated that feedback from stakeholders on the meetings held thus far has been positive. The ANAO notes the importance of these meetings in maintaining a constructive and mutually beneficial relationship that enables a productive flow of information.

---

Canberra ACT  
23 June 2004



P. J. Barrett  
Auditor-General

# Appendices



## Appendix 1: Sample Design

### Reference population

1. The audit examined a stratified random sample from the population of all Protection Visa applications finalised between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2003. The examination was aimed at identifying and measuring the extent of errors in the application assessment process over this period.

### Sample constraints

2. The ANAO decided to audit around 200 visa application files. It was anticipated that around 20 per cent of files requested from DIMIA would not be obtained within the audit fieldwork period and hence 250 visa application files were selected for audit. The ANAO identified the following four groups (or 'strata') of visa applications:

- applications granted for asylum seekers who were previously detained;
- applications refused for asylum seekers who were either currently or previously detained;
- applications which were granted for asylum seekers who were not detained (community cases); and
- applications which were refused for asylum seekers who were not detained (community cases).

3. Based on the composition of the visa application population (see Table 1 below), the audit sample was designed so as to equate the expected statistical precision for the primary error rates<sup>38</sup> across these four strata.

### Sample design

4. The sample design implemented for this audit was a stratified sample with random selection of claims. Stratification is the process of dividing the population into exhaustive, mutually exclusive groups called strata. The sample is then selected independently from within each stratum. This allows the sample designer to control the expected accuracy of estimates for each stratum.

5. Using information provided by DIMIA, the ANAO determined the population in each of the four strata to be:

---

<sup>38</sup> A 'primary error' relates to criteria that apply to all visa applications—such as whether decisions were made in accordance with legislation. The audit also produced estimates of a range of 'secondary errors' that only applied to a subset of applications—such as whether the correct application form for dependants had been used. However, these secondary error rate estimates were not considered crucial to the audit exercise and were ignored for the purposes of the sample design.

- granted and previously detained—22;
  - refused and either currently or previously detained—147;
  - granted community case—317; and
  - refused community case—2591.
6. A stratified sample of these files was then selected for audit in the following numbers:
- granted and previously detained—22;
  - refused and either currently or previously detained—63;
  - granted community cases—76; and
  - refused community cases—89.
7. From this sample allocation and assumptions about the anticipated error rates and the proportion of files that would not be obtained<sup>39</sup>, it was expected that the 90% confidence interval widths surrounding the strata error rate estimates would be around + / - 10 percentage points (pp) and the confidence interval widths surrounding population error rate estimates would be around + / - 7 pp. A 90% confidence interval width of + / - 7 pp means that there is a 90% probability that the true percentage of applications processed incorrectly (i.e. the percentage that would have been obtained if all claims in the population were audited) lies within 7 pp of the estimate of the proportion of claims processed incorrectly obtained from the sample.
8. Examination of the selected files revealed that several files classified by DIMIA as 'Granted community cases' were actually 'Granted and previously detained' cases. Accordingly, the number of files obtained for the sample in each strata were as follows:
- granted and previously detained—41;
  - refused and either currently or previously detained—54;
  - granted community cases—39; and
  - refused community cases—75.
9. Table A1.1 summarises the population and sample data discussed above.

---

<sup>39</sup> The error rates of interest were assumed to be around 50%, this is a conservative assumption when calculating confidence intervals. It was assumed that around 20% of files in each stratum would not be obtained within the audit fieldwork period.



**Table A1.1****Selection of finalised visa applications for audit**

Decision Outcome	Detention Status	Estimated number of applications in population*	Number of applications selected	Number of applications audited
Granted	Community	213	76	39
	Detained	126	19	41
Refused	Community	2591	95	75
	Detained	147	60	54
<b>Total</b>		<b>3077</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>209</b>

\* based on sample evidence of DIMIA's classification practice.

Source: ANAO analysis of DIMIA data.

## Appendix 2: The Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme

### Background

1. When applying for a Protection Visa (PV), applicants may need assistance in completing application forms and giving details of their claim for asylum. In recognising this and to help with the quality of the application, the Australian Government implemented the Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme (IAAAS).

2. The IAAAS was established in 1997 to provide application assistance to PV applicants who are in immigration detention and community applicants who are eligible for the service. DIMIA is responsible for the administration of IAAAS. However, the department contracts registered migration agents to provide application assistance.

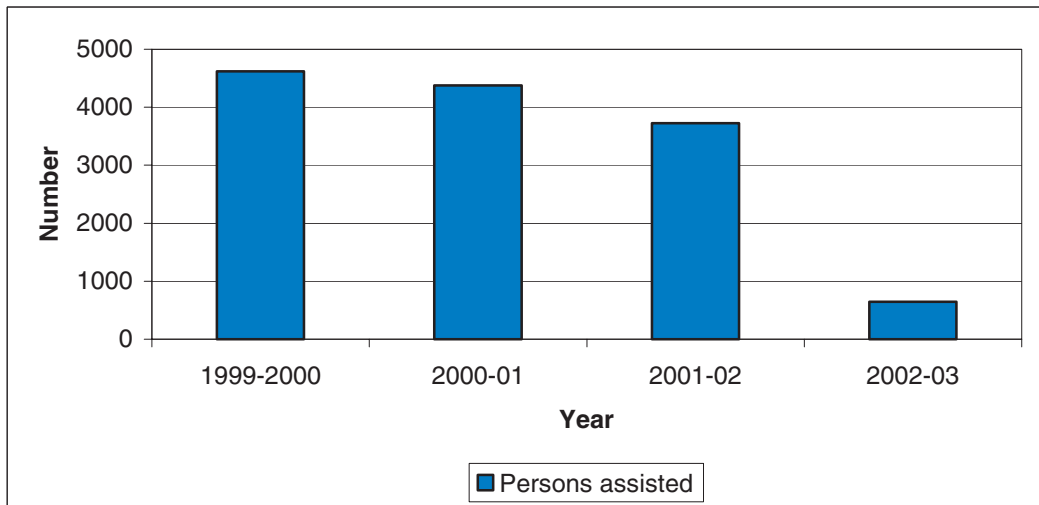
3. Under these contracts, IAAAS providers must make available to eligible PV applicants the following:<sup>40</sup>

- application assistance, at both the primary and review stages, to protection visa applicants in Immigration Detention Centres (IDCs) and in Immigration Reception and Processing Centres (IRPCs);
- application assistance, both at the primary and review states, to eligible (ie disadvantaged) protection visa applicants in the community;
- application assistance to eligible (ie disadvantaged) non-protection visa applicants in the community; and
- immigration advice to eligible (i.e. disadvantaged) persons in the community either individually or as a group.

4. The graph below details the number of applicants who have received full application assistance under the IAAAS. The Government's policy to excise islands around Australia from the migration zone, introduced in September 2001 has contributed to the decreased number of boat arrivals and, as a result, there has been a decrease in the number of PV applicants in detention, which is consistent with an overall decline in PV applications.

---

<sup>40</sup> External Reference Group, Briefing Paper no.1—Background, p. 3.

**Figure A2.1****Persons assisted by IAAAS**

Source: ANAO analysis of DIMIA data.

**Contractual arrangements for IAAAS***IAAAS contract and schedule*

5. The IAAAS contract sets out what DIMIA expects from its contractors, including reporting requirements and expectations regarding the quality of work performed. The contract also specifies the quality of customer service that contractors will provide to PV applicants. These provisions include responding to queries from their clients in a timely manner, and explaining the complex processing procedures

6. There are two separate contracts, one for organisations providing assistance for community applicants and the other for organisations providing assistance to applicants in detention.

*Contract management*

7. Protection Services Section within Onshore Protection Branch in DIMIA's Central Office is responsible for the management of IAAAS contracts, while Regional Offices allocate referrals for clients in detention.

8. Regional Offices offer PV application cases in detention to IAAAS service providers on a rotational basis. The provider has three days in which to accept or decline the offer to provide assistance to the PV applicant. If the IAAAS service provider accepts the cases, they must give assistance according to their contract with the department. If an individual from the community wishes to apply for a Protection Visa and they need assistance in completing their application, then it is up to that individual to enlist the IAAAS provider's

assistance. Potential applicants usually gain knowledge of service providers through word of mouth or community groups, as the department and individual service providers do not actively advertise the assistance program.<sup>41</sup>

9. The funding arrangements with IAAAS service providers are demand driven and provided in two forms. For giving assistance to those in detention, service provider funding is variable, meaning that funding is allocated for each service that is provided under the contract with the service provider. For application assistance and advice given to those in the community, the IAAAS provider is provided with funding according to the community services provided in the previous year and according to the area in which applications are mainly made.<sup>42</sup>

### *IAAAS evaluation*

10. In 2003, the Minister established an External Reference Group to oversee an evaluation of the IAAAS. The Group is responsible for examining and reviewing current IAAAS arrangements, providing advice on appropriate arrangements for the continuation of the IAAAS, and making recommendations for future IAAAS policies and/or service delivery. To assist the group, DIMIA has hired a contractor to undertake research and consult with stakeholders. The evaluation is examining complex issues, including future policy directions for IAAAS. In early December 2003, the ANAO was advised that the findings of this evaluation were still preliminary, and when the draft findings were more advanced, a copy would be provided to the ANAO.

---

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*, p.4.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, p. 4–5.

## Appendix 3: Agency Response

The processing of asylum claims through the protection visa process is one of the most complex areas of administrative decision making undertaken in the Department. Given the importance of decisions made in this area, it is understandable that some negative decisions will be contested and that there is continuing public scrutiny of the decision making process. In this context, external reviews, such as this audit by the Australian National Audit Office, can make a useful contribution to the Department's continuing work to maintain the integrity of protection visa processes and to identify any emerging opportunities for improvement.

DIMIA welcomes the overall finding of the ANAO that the onshore processing of asylum seekers is managed well and uses experienced officers supported by appropriate training and guidelines. DIMIA notes that the report has identified some opportunities for refinement of existing activity.

### **Recommendation No.1 Para 4.11**

The ANAO recommends that DIMIA expand the quality indicators for its Refugee and Humanitarian program to include a measure that assesses the key indicators of a quality decision against the results of its quality assurance program.

#### *DIMIA Response: Agreed*

As reflected in the recommendation and the body of the audit report, the Department has internal mechanisms to monitor and manage the quality of protection visa decision making. The Department accepts the audit recommendation and will explore appropriate opportunities to adjust its performance measures, noting that any adjustments to the Department's formal performance measures may need to be discussed with the Department of Finance and Administration.

**Recommendation  
No.2  
Para 4.18**

The ANAO recommends that DIMIA enhance its current monitoring of that part of its caseload where processing times are affected by external factors beyond its immediate control with a view to identifying common causes of extended delay and any actions that could be initiated to improve timeliness.

*DIMIA Response: Agreed*

As reflected in the recommendation and in the body of the audit report, DIMIA has internal arrangements to monitor application processing to identify external factors which prevent protection visa decisions from being made, including factors which are outside of Departmental control. These arrangements enable the Department to identify, and to the extent possible deal with, any common issues which might be preventing decisions from being made. Nevertheless, the Department agrees with the ANAO that it is important to maintain, and where feasible strengthen, the focus of this monitoring work to ensure that, as changing caseloads come before the Department, the influence of external factors on processing times is kept to a minimum.

DIMIA notes that in relation to the protection visa applications lodged in 2002–03, processing times exceeded the published performance standards. For those applications, before adjusting for factors beyond our control, over 80% of community applications were decided within 90 days and well over 70% of detention applications were within 42 days. DIMIA notes that these figures relate to a different cohort of cases and use a different methodology than the cohort and methodology used in the audit caseload sample analysis.

# Index

---

## A

asylum seekers, 11, 15, 16, 21, 22, 27, 50, 55, 59, 63, 69

## C

CISNET, 7, 31, 36, 37, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45

compliance testing, 12, 27, 29, 30-32, 34

Country Information Service (CIS), 7, 13, 15, 42-45

## D

decision record, 12, 14, 33, 34, 36-37, 40, 45, 50

## I

Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme (IAAAS), 49, 58, 66

Information systems, 13, 46

Integrated Client Service Environment (ICSE), 7, 13, 36, 46-47

## M

management reporting, 14, 47-48

## N

non-government organisations (NGOs), 57-58

## O

Onshore Protection Program, 11, 22, 24

Onshore Protection Quality Assurance program, 13, 35, 37

## P

performance indicators, 12, 14, 16, 34, 48, 49, 52

Performance information, 48

Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS), 7, 32, 48-49

Protection Visa (PV), 11, 12, 25, 29, 39, 48, 55, 66

Protection Visa Procedures Manual (PVPM), 42

## Q

Quality assurance, 12, 35

quality indicators, 14, 16-17, 48-50, 69

## R

record keeping, 12, 15, 30, 31-32, 34

refugee, 11, 21-22, 26, 39, 41, 58, 60

Refugee Advocacy groups, 55

Refugee and Humanitarian Program, 11, 22, 46, 48, 49, 53-54, 58-59

Refugee Convention, 12, 21, 25, 33-34

Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT), 7, 15, 25-26, 30, 42-43, 55, 56-58

## T

Temporary Protection Visa (TPV), 7, 11, 24, 40, 44, 46-47

Training and Coordination Committee, 13, 15, 39

# Series Titles

---

Audit Report No.55 Performance Audit  
*Management of Protective Security*

Audit Report No.54 Performance Audit  
*Management of the Detention Centre Contracts—Part A*  
Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

Audit Report No.53 Performance Audit  
*The Implementation of CrimTrac*

Audit Report No.52 Performance Audit  
*Information Technology in the Department of Veterans' Affairs—Follow-up Audit*

Audit Report No.51 Performance Audit  
*HIH Claims Support Scheme—Governance Arrangements*  
Department of the Treasury

Audit Report No.50 Performance Audit  
*Management of Federal Airport Leases*

Audit Report No.49 Business Support Process Audit  
*The Use and Management of HRIS in the Australian Public Service*

Audit Report No.48 Performance Audit  
*The Australian Taxation Office's Management and Use of Annual Investment Income Reports*  
Australian Taxation Office

Audit Report No.47 Performance Audit  
*Developing Air Force's Combat Aircrew*  
Department of Defence

Audit Report No.46 Performance Audit  
*Client Service in the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Magistrates Court*

Audit Report No.45 Performance Audit  
*Army Individual Readiness Notice Follow-up Audit*  
Department of Defence

Audit Report No.44 Performance Audit  
*National Aboriginal Health Strategy Delivery of Housing and Infrastructure to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities Follow-up Audit*

Audit Report No.43 Performance Audit  
*Defence Force Preparedness Management Systems*  
Department of Defence

Audit Report No.42 Business Support Process Audit  
*Financial Delegations for the Expenditure of Public Monies in FMA Agencies*

Audit Report No.41 Performance Audit  
*Management of Repatriation Health Cards*  
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Report No.56 2003–04  
Management of the Processing of Asylum Seekers



Audit Report No.40 Performance Audit  
*Department of Health and Ageing's Management of the Multipurpose Services Program and the Regional Health Services Program*

Audit Report No.39 Performance Audit  
*Integrity of the Electoral Roll—Follow-up Audit*  
 Australian Electoral Commission

Audit Report No.38 Performance Audit  
*Corporate Governance in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation—Follow-up Audit*

Audit Report No.37 Performance Audit  
*National Marine Unit*  
 Australian Customs Service

Audit Report No.36 Performance Audit  
*The Commonwealth's Administration of the Dairy Industry Adjustment Package*  
 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry—Australia  
 Dairy Adjustment Authority

Audit Report No.35 Business Support Process Audit  
*Compensation Payments and Debt Relief in Special Circumstances*

Audit Report No.34 Performance Audit  
*The Administration of Major Programs*  
 Australian Greenhouse Office

Audit Report No.33 Performance Audit  
*The Australian Taxation Office's Collection and Management of Activity Statement Information*

Audit Report No.32 Performance Audit  
*'Wedgetail' Airborne Early Warning and Control Aircraft: Project Management*  
 Department of Defence

Audit Report No.31 Business Support Process Audit  
*The Senate Order for Department and Agency Contracts*  
*(Financial Year 2002–2003 Compliance)*

Audit Report No.30 Performance Audit  
*Quality Internet Services for Government Clients—Monitoring and Evaluation by Government Agencies*

Audit Report No.29 Performance Audit  
*Governance of the National Health and Medical Research Council*  
 National Health and Medical Research Council  
 Department of Health and Ageing

Audit Report No.28 Audit Activity Report  
*Audit Activity Report: July to December 2003*  
 Summary of Outcomes

Audit Report No.27 Performance Audit  
*Management of Internet Portals at the Department of Family and Community Services*

Audit Report No.26 Performance Audit  
*Supporting Managers—Financial Management in the Health Insurance Commission*  
Health Insurance Commission

Audit Report No.25 Performance Audit  
*Intellectual Property Policies and Practices in Commonwealth Agencies*

Audit Report No.24 Performance Audit  
*Agency Management of Special Accounts*

Audit Report No.23 Performance Audit  
*The Australian Taxation Office's Management of Aggressive Tax Planning*  
Australian Taxation Office

Audit Report No.22 Financial Statement Audit  
*Audits of the Financial Statements of Australian Government Entities for the Period Ended 30 June 2003*  
Summary of Results

Audit Report No.21 Performance Audit  
*Special Employee Entitlements Scheme for Ansett Group Employees (SEESA)*  
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations  
Department of Transport and Regional Services

Audit Report No.20 Performance Audit  
*Aid to East Timor*  
Australian Agency for International Development

Audit Report No.19 Business Support Process Audit  
*Property Management*

Audit Report No.18 Performance Audit  
*The Australian Taxation Office's Use of AUSTRAC Data Follow-up Audit*  
Australian Taxation Office

Audit Report No.17 Performance Audit  
*AQIS Cost-recovery Systems Follow-up Audit*  
Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Audit Report No.16 Performance Audit  
*Administration of Consular Services Follow-up Audit*  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Audit Report No.15 Performance Audit  
*Administration of Staff Employed Under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984*  
Department of Finance and Administration

Audit Report No.14 Performance Audit  
*Survey of Fraud Control Arrangements in APS Agencies*

Audit Report No.13 Performance Audit  
*ATSIS Law and Justice Program*  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services

Audit Report No.12 Performance Audit  
*The Administration of Telecommunications Grants*  
Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts  
Department of Transport and Regional Services

Audit Report No.11 Performance Audit  
*Annual Performance Reporting*

Audit Report No.10 Performance Audit  
*Australian Defence Force Recruiting Contract*  
Department of Defence

Audit Report No.9 Performance Audit  
*Business Continuity Management and Emergency Management in Centrelink*  
Centrelink

Audit Report No.8 Performance Audit  
*Commonwealth Management of the Great Barrier Reef Follow-up Audit*  
The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Audit Report No.7 Business Support Process Audit  
*Recordkeeping in Large Commonwealth Organisations*

Audit Report No.6 Performance Audit  
*APRA's Prudential Supervision of Superannuation Entities*  
Australian Prudential Regulation Authority

Audit Report No.5 Business Support Process Audit  
*The Senate Order for Departmental and Agency Contracts (Autumn 2003)*

Audit Report No.4 Performance Audit  
*Management of the Extension Option Review—Plasma Fractionation Agreement*  
Department of Health and Ageing

Audit Report No.3 Business Support Process Audit  
*Management of Risk and Insurance*

Audit Report No.2 Audit Activity  
*Audit Activity Report: January to June 2003*  
Summary of Outcomes

Audit Report No.1 Performance Audit  
*Administration of Three Key Components of the Agriculture—Advancing Australia (AAA) Package*  
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry—Australia  
Centrelink  
Australian Taxation Office

# Better Practice Guides

---

AMODEL Illustrative Financial Statements 2004	May 2004
Better Practice in Annual Performance Reporting	Apr 2004
Management of Scientific Research and Development Projects in Commonwealth Agencies	Dec 2003
Public Sector Governance	July 2003
Goods and Services Tax (GST) Administration	May 2003
Managing Parliamentary Workflow	Apr 2003
Building Capability—A framework for managing learning and development in the APS	Apr 2003
Internal Budgeting	Feb 2003
Administration of Grants	May 2002
Performance Information in Portfolio Budget Statements	May 2002
Life-Cycle Costing	Dec 2001
Some Better Practice Principles for Developing Policy Advice	Nov 2001
Rehabilitation: Managing Return to Work	Jun 2001
Internet Delivery Decisions	Apr 2001
Planning for the Workforce of the Future	Mar 2001
Contract Management	Feb 2001
Business Continuity Management	Jan 2000
Building a Better Financial Management Framework	Nov 1999
Building Better Financial Management Support	Nov 1999
Managing APS Staff Reductions (in Audit Report No.49 1998–99)	Jun 1999
Commonwealth Agency Energy Management	Jun 1999
Cash Management	Mar 1999
Security and Control for SAP R/3	Oct 1998
Selecting Suppliers: Managing the Risk	Oct 1998
New Directions in Internal Audit	Jul 1998

Controlling Performance and Outcomes	Dec 1997
Management of Accounts Receivable	Dec 1997
Protective Security Principles (in Audit Report No.21 1997–98)	Dec 1997
Public Sector Travel	Dec 1997
Audit Committees	Jul 1997
Management of Corporate Sponsorship	Apr 1997
Telephone Call Centres Handbook	Dec 1996
Paying Accounts	Nov 1996
Asset Management Handbook	Jun 1996