



**Australian Government
Department of Immigration and Citizenship**

Minutes

Meeting of the Client Reference Group for Queensland
10.30am Tuesday 1 December 2009

In attendance:

Chair:

Ms Joanne Lumb
Acting Deputy State Director

Mr David Nelson
Deputy Director, Institute of Continuing
and TESOL Education

Members Attending:

Mr Geoffery Airo-Farulla
State Director, Queensland
Commonwealth Ombudsman

Mr David Liddell
Policy Officer, Queensland Tourism
Industry Council

Ms Sharon Harris
Qld State President, Migration Institute of
Australia

Ms Agnes Whiten
Chair, Ethnic Communities Council of Qld

Ms Kerrin Benson
CEO, Multicultural Development
Association

Mr Greg Goebel
Executive Director, Australian Red Cross,
Queensland

Superintendent Kerry Dunn
Metropolitan South Region, Queensland
Police Service

Ms Megan Lewis
Policy and Public Affairs Adviser,
Commerce Queensland

**DIAC (Queensland) Members
Attending:**

Mr Glyn Tomlinson
Deputy State Director

Also in Attendance:

Ms Glenda Hutch
Industry Outreach Officer

Mr Troy Sokoloff
Regional Operations Manager,
Detention Management

Ms Julie Garrett
Manager, Queensland Integrity Unit

Ms Liz Kerrish
Manager, General Skilled Migration

Mr Wayne Riddle
Manager, General Client Services

Mr Paul McCarthy
Manager, Citizenship

Mr Italo Oriolo
Acting Manager, Settlement Programs and
Planning

people our business

Ms Anh Nguyen
Acting Manager, Multicultural Affairs

Minutes:

Ms Anh Nguyen
Manager, Multicultural Affairs

Apologies:

Mr Alan Grummitt
Dean, Queensland Consular Corps

Ms Raquel Aldunate
Director, Refugee and Immigration Legal
Service

Ms Christine Bundesen
Director, Institute of Continuing and TESOL
Education

Mr Daniel Gschwind
CEO, Queensland Tourism Industry Council

Mr Greg Kelly
State Director

Mr Adrian McCabe
Associate State Director

Ms Jasmine Newman
Deputy State Director

Ms Danielle Marcovich Smith
Deputy State Director

Ms Fiona Gillies
Deputy State Director

Ms Nicola Thompson
Queensland Public Affairs Officer

Ms Sia Miller
Executive Assistant, State Director

Agenda:

1. **Welcome; Apologies; Acceptance of Minutes** Ms Joanne Lumb
2. **Business Arising** Ms Anh Nguyen
3. **Departmental Update**
 - Transformation process Ms Joanne Lumb
 - Citizenship Changes Mr Paul McCarthy
 - Council for Immigration Services and Status Resolution Ms Joanne Lumb
 - Christmas Island arrivals and settlement in Queensland Mr Italo Oriolo
 - New directions in Integrated Humanitarian Settlement strategy Mr Italo Oriolo
 - Update on 2008-2009 humanitarian program Ms Joanne Lumb
 - Migration program consultations Ms Liz Kerrish
 - Student peak Mr Wayne Riddle
 - Update on Diverse Australia Program funding Ms Joanne Lumb
 - Tender for Adult Migrant English Program Ms Joanne Lumb
4. **Feedback from Members**
 - Update on International students Ms Agnes Whiten
 - Update on allegations of fraud in relation to employment of students Ms Sharon Harris
 - Update on concerns expressed by regional employers following amendments to subclass 457 visas Ms Sharon Harris
 - Seeking comment on whether there should be requirement for registered migration agents to undergo IELTS testing Ms Sharon Harris
5. **Other Business**
 - Topics of interest and feedback on value of CRG forum
 - Proposed dates for 2010:
 - 2 March 2010
 - 1 June 2010
 - 7 September 2010
 - 7 December 2010

1. Welcome

Ms Lumb welcomed members to the meeting and noted the apologies. The Minutes of the last meeting were accepted.

2. Business Arising

Action Arising:	DIAC to ascertain progress on the pamphlet drafted by RAILS for the Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation
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Mr Sokoloff advised that the pamphlet is now finalised and available in the BITA.

Action Arising:	Mr Tomlinson to discuss the practice of New Zealand citizens with criminal histories changing their names by deed poll in New Zealand and re-entering Australia on new passports with Superintendent Dunn and National Office.
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Mr Tomlinson and **Superintendent Dunn** discussed the issue of name changes and the matter has been raised in the relevant area in National Office.

Action Arising:	Mr Tomlinson will advise the taskforce working on the implementation of the streamlined travel arrangements for New Zealand citizens of the recommendation to provide advice in relation to the position of New Zealand passport holders entering on visas that do not give them an entitlement to access social security benefits.
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Mr Tomlinson contacted the relevant policy areas in National Office and was advised that Centrelink and FaHCSIA will set up an independent working group early in 2010 to discuss issues around New Zealand passport holders. Centrelink will take leadership for this working group. **Mr Tomlinson** noted that information needs to be circulated to New Zealand passport holders well in advance to their move to Australia.

Action Arising:	Ms Whiten to forward contact details of Mr Nick Hurley, New Zealand Consul, to CRG Secretariat
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Action completed.

Action Arising:	Mr Kelly, Ms Marcovich Smith and Ms Harris to discuss a possible model for migration agents to lodge applications
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Ms Marcovich Smith and **Ms Harris** agreed to put the discussion on hold until the transformation has taken place.

Action Arising:	All members to forward suggestions for future topics of interest and feedback on the value of the CRG forum to Ms Lumb at joanne.lumb@immi.gov.au
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Ms Lumb will draft some targeted questions for CRG members to consider for future topics.

3. Departmental Update

Transformation process

Ms Lumb advised that the Department has commenced a transformation process, which will involve a fundamental reorganisation of the way the Department operates. The driver for this transformation is the government's expectation of improved performance with strategic policy linked to service delivery. It is anticipated that greater levels of efficiency and savings will be made through the transformation process.

The transformation process will be a 7 year phased process, and it will create three groups:

- Policy and Program management, bringing together all policy areas
- Client Services, bringing together all visa processing and client service areas
- Business Services, centralising all enabling functions such as human resources, corporate resources, communications, governance and legal, IT

The Client Services Transformation has commenced with goals of reducing the number of interactions clients have with the Department and the time taken for resolution of their case. This will be achieved by providing an e-lodgement capability for all products, expanding client self-help tools, and establishing smart centres with trained generalist staff to handle 80% of all enquiries with specialist staff for the remainder of the enquiries.

One of the other major changes as part of the Client Services Transformation is the new role of Global Managers, who will be responsible for specific products or services. This will provide simplified accountability and a single point of contact for the business lines within the network.

Ms Lumb noted that **Mr Kelly** is currently offline as the first Global Manager, namely Visas (Skilled and Family) and is establishing a pilot of the process. **Mr McCabe** is currently the Associate Queensland State Director. **Mr Kelly** will continue as the Queensland State Director once he completes the pilot process and he will then manage dual roles.

Ms Benson expressed concern about the manageability of the dual roles and noted that the State Director role is a full time role. **Ms Lumb** noted that this process is currently a pilot and the model is still being worked out.

Mr Goebel asked how better client service and cost saving would work in reality. **Ms Lumb** noted reducing the number of client interactions and providing self help tools to the client should create greater efficiency and provide streamlined interactions. **Mr Tomlinson** noted that the intention is for the smart centre to provide pre and post lodgement advice and potentially finalise applications over the telephone.

Mr Airo-Farulla queried the level of training provided to people responding to telephone inquiries. There was concern that organisations such as Centrelink have inadequate training to respond to callers and calls are often escalated. **Mr Airo-Farulla** was interested to hear further on how the Department will manage this process.

Citizenship changes

Mr McCarthy advised that the new Citizenship test was introduced on 19 October 2009. The pass mark for the test increased to 75 per cent, however there are no mandatory questions. The test is based on democratic beliefs and the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship. Assisted testing is available on a needs basis and a citizenship course will be developed for migrants and refugees whose level of literacy may prevent them from taking the computer based test.

The citizenship application process for permanent residents changed on 9 November 2009. Applicants will now need to lodge their citizenship application prior to sitting the citizenship test.

The citizenship test booking acknowledgement letter has been enhanced to better explain the process and what documents are required. **Ms Benson** and **Ms Whiten** noted that the letter was now too long and complex. **Ms Benson** further noted that MDA has just developed a form filling and reading service as many refugees cannot understand bureaucratic language and an enhanced letter will increase this work.

Ms Benson acknowledged that funding for the Citizenship Support Grants Program finished in June 2009 and was concerned about clients who still required support through the citizenship process. **Ms Benson** further noted that the cost of the Citizenship Support Grants Program was reasonably small and questioned whether the new model would be more cost effective than the previous program. **Mr McCarthy** advised that a teleconference was to be held to discuss potential options to support clients who require assistance.

Council for Immigration Services and Status Resolution

The Council for Immigration Services and Status Resolution was established on 9 October 2009 to provide independent advice on the implementation of measures associated with the government's immigration policy initiatives including *New Directions in Detention* and the national rollout of the Community Status Resolution Service.

Ms Lumb congratulated **Ms Benson**, who is a member of the Council.

Christmas Island arrivals and settlement in Queensland

Ms Lumb noted that the arrivals to Christmas Island has put a strain on the Department's resources and acknowledged the service providers in their responsiveness with recent arrivals in Queensland.

Mr Oriolo noted that managing the arrival from Christmas Island is a challenge as the Department only receives a couple of days notification of future arrivals. This can make the settlement process difficult to manage as there is little lead time to prepare. It is anticipated that there will be a steady flow of Christmas Island arrivals for some time.

Queensland has accepted most unlinked arrivals from Christmas Island and almost 200 people have arrived in Queensland since June 2009. The retention rate for Queensland to date has been less than 50 per cent, with arrivals from Sri Lanka having a higher retention rate than arrivals from Afghanistan.

The Department has taken suggestions from service providers to increase the retention rate and forwarded them to National Office. The Department is looking at the possibility of sending a settlement officer to Christmas Island to talk to the groups about the settlement process. It was noted that the arrivals from Christmas Island are very mobile and have different expectations to other humanitarian groups. There are high expectations on employment and migration information, with many arrivals highly motivated to bring their family to Australia as soon as possible.

Ms Benson wished to congratulate the Department for its policy direction and the support the arrivals are provided under the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy. **Ms Benson** acknowledged that this was a change to the previous practices around detention and boat arrivals.

Ms Benson further noted that there is need to consider how community groups are engaged with arrivals from Christmas Island. It was noted that the Tamil community in Brisbane is divided and that more leadership was required in terms of community contact.

Mr Oriolo advised that there are only 2 Rohingya interpreters Australia wide. If any potential interpreters are identified the Department would appreciate advice as funding can be provided to train interpreters of high demand languages. The Department has also notified overseas posts to identify potential interpreters. **Ms Benson** noted that the need for interpreters should not override humanitarian needs.

New directions in Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS)

Mr Oriolo advised that the current IHSS program is in its 10th year of operation. The second 5 year contract will cease in June 2010. The new tender document will go out in January 2010. In the event that the new contracts are not in place by 1 July 2010, the

Department will negotiate with existing service providers to extend their contracts to ensure service delivery to clients.

Mr Oriolo observed that the Department has learnt some lessons during this contract period, and noted that extensive consultations and focus groups were held to discuss issues for consideration in the new contract. A new model will be developed which will have a greater emphasis on tailoring case management for individual needs, with a greater emphasis on pathways to education and employment. Cultural orientation training programs will extend onshore to provide information about Australian social and cultural norms, laws, finance and budgeting, tenancy training and more. The new model will also include an emphasis on youth, as 70 per cent of the current intake is under 30 years of age.

Update on 2008-2009 humanitarian program

Please refer to Minister Chris Evans media release dated 1 September 2009:

Australia delivers on refugee commitments

Migration program consultations

Ms Kerrish advised that the Department will be holding a migration program consultation session in Brisbane on 13 December 2009. The consultations will be held Australia wide and information gathered from the consultations will inform the Government in the lead up to the 2010-2011 migration program.

Discussion will be around the need to strike a balance between safeguarding Australian jobs and the ongoing demand for migrants with skills in critical shortage, family reunion, prevailing economic conditions, and a balanced population growth.

Student peak

Mr Riddle advised that there has been an increase of approximately 20 per cent in the student caseload, and there has been no apparent downturn due to the economic crisis. **Mr Riddle** further advised that there has been outreach to universities and agents to encourage students to lodge applications online. 80 per cent of the onshore case load are able to lodge online, and will produce faster processing times.

Mr Goebel expressed concern over housing issues and potential overcrowding. **Ms Hutch** advised that this issue is being looked at by the State Government in liaison with the Local Government Association. **Ms Hutch** suggested requesting a report from the State Government for the next CRG meeting about this issue.

Action Arising:	Ms Hutch to contact the relevant State Government stakeholder and request a report/update on issues around housing.
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Update on Diverse Australia funding

Parliamentary Secretary Laurie Ferguson announced the outcome of the small grants component of the program – please see media release for more information.

Small grants to support a diverse Australia

It is hoped that the outcome of the large grants will be announced before Christmas 2009.

Tender for Adult Migrant English Program

Please see media release for more information.

New tender for migrant English

4. Feedback from Members

Update on international students

Ms Whiten advised that an Indian international student forum was held by the Indian community in Brisbane on 18 October 2009, and noted that many questions were directed at **Mr Kelly**, who attended the function. **Ms Whiten** observed that many students who come to Australia to study believe that there is a pathway to permanent residence after completing their degree/course.

Mr Riddle advised that significant outreach is conducted to universities, colleges, and agents and they have been requested not to provide advice about permanent residence pathways due to consistent changes in the migration program.

Update on allegations of fraud in relation to employment of students

Ms Harris raised an article from the Courier Mail which discussed allegations around fraudulent offers of employment to students to gain permanent residence. **Ms Kerrish** confirmed that there is an investigation currently underway in relation to this case.

Update on concerns expressed by regional employers following amendments to subclass 457 visas

Ms Harris asked whether members of the CRG had heard feedback from regional employers about the changes to the 457 visa program.

Ms Hutch advised that the Department is in the process of engaging with regional employers and have fed back any concerns to National Office. Some employers have expressed concerns around the changes and it has been a priority to provide context around the changes and discuss what other options may be available to the employers.

Seeking comment on whether there should be requirement for registered migration agents to undergo IELTS testing

Ms Harris sought feedback from CRG members about this issue as the Migration Agent Registration Authority (the MARA) is currently discussing the use of IELTS for newly registered agents. The MARA is also considering the use of IELTS for existing agents, unless they meet exceptions such as from an English speaking country or university trained.

Ms Benson advised that she will ask her networks and provide feedback at the next CRG meeting.

Action Arising:	Ms Benson to seek feedback in relation to the use of IELTS for registered agents and report back to the CRG.
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Ms Benson also noted that while migration agents need to be competent in conveying their client's case, agents also need to be competent in the use of interpreters.

5. Other Business

Topics of interest and feedback on value of CRG forum

Ms Lumb will send out a short survey to CRG members in relation to future topics of interest.

Action Arising:	Ms Lumb to send out a short survey about topics of interest.
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Proposed dates for 2010

Proposed dates were noted by CRG members.

Christmas period office hours

It was noted that the Department will be closed on Monday 28, Tuesday 29, and Thursday 31 December 2009.

Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ)'s new initiative

Ms Whiten advised that ECCQ have launched a new initiative called 'Linking Leaders Lunch'. The objective of the lunch is to bring together a mix of community leaders from more established communities and from newly emerging communities to discuss topics of interest in a non threatening manner. It also provides opportunity to share knowledge and experience, and create stronger networks across various cultural community groups.

Multicultural Development Association (MDA)'s end of year function

Ms Benson invited all CRG members to attend MDA's end of year function being held on Friday 4 December 2009. Please contact **Ms Benson** for further details.

Pro Bono Migration Agents

Ms Benson noted that there are significant delays in accessing pro bono migration agents in Queensland. The Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS) are booked up to March 2010 and they are no longer providing after hours advice for humanitarian program applications.

Re-election of Chair of Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland

The CRG members congratulated **Ms Whiten** on her election as the Chair for ECCQ for a second term.

Next meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Client Reference Group for Queensland is scheduled for Tuesday 2 March 2010.

There being no other business the meeting concluded at 12.30pm.