



Palmer Report – two years of progress – College of Immigration

The College of Immigration was established on 3 July 2006 with innovative industry certified training programs to address deficiencies in staff training and support, especially in the areas of compliance and detention training. The college focus is to develop individuals for key roles, which are themselves subject to external validation and, where appropriate, accreditation.

The college concept was developed through close examination of other models operating within the Australian Public Service. There were consultative visits to each of these organisations and they provided considerable advice and guidance on the nature of corporate colleges and partnership arrangements between government agencies and educational institutions. Consultation included:

- Australian Customs Service and the relationship with the University of Canberra
- Australian Taxation Office and its relationship with the University of New South Wales
- NSW Police and its relationship with Charles Sturt University.

The college centralises consistent training across priority areas – leadership, compliance and detention and client service. The priority areas initially cover six streams – compliance, investigations, detention, border and case management, and immigration intelligence, with a combined reach of around 1000 staff.

The college's national learning programme also focuses on lifting the performance of senior and middle managers around leadership and promoting acceptable standards and behaviours. A new executive leadership programme has trained more than 60 per cent of all executive level staff, creating a critical mass of middle managers with reinforced supervision skills who understand their role in the change process.

The development of a comprehensive programme for compliance field officers will immediately address the findings of the Palmer and Comrie reports. This work is a key instrument in changing the behaviour and supervision practices of compliance field officers and middle management. The first of these courses was completed in September 2006 and a further two courses have been completed since. Also, the college commenced pilot courses for detention officers in September 2006 and investigation officers in April 2007. Other programmes are progressively being developed.

Expressions of interest are being sought from educational institutions to form an alliance to expand to full college curricula.

Compliance and detention were two key areas identified as requiring cultural change and greater skill development. A total of 75 of these officers have undergone training with a further 150 undergoing on-the-job skill assessment.

Acknowledging that training is only one input into cultural change, early evaluation data suggests the college courses are clearly assisting with this process. Participants returning to their teams are regarded by the managers as having the up-to-date knowledge on how to do the job. A critical mass of college-trained staff is assisting in leading cultural change.

Additionally, interstate cooperation and coordination has been a by-product of bringing regionally based staff together for training to the point that two of the department's state offices are undertaking joint operations in some areas.