

Background to the visit

- 1.1 The current Joint Standing Committee on Migration was established by resolution of the House of Representatives and the Senate on 18 November 2004. Under the Committee's Resolution of Appointment, the Committee is to inquire into and report on regulations made or proposed to be made under the *Migration Act 1958*, proposed changes to that Act or any related Acts, and other matters relating to migration referred to it by the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. In monitoring developments within the immigration portfolio, the Committee also has an interest in the administration of that portfolio, including the custodial services operating at detention centres under the control of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA).
- 1.2 Early in the current parliament, the Committee sought to update itself on the operations of the immigration detention centres and the conditions for detainees. The Committee proposed to conduct inspections of the Baxter detention facility and the Port Augusta Residential Housing Project on 19 April 2005 and then inspect the detention facility on Christmas Island. The visit was supported by the Minister for Immigration, Senator the Hon Amanda Vanstone, and assistance was provided by DIMIA in facilitating arrangements for the inspections.
- 1.3 Due to travel difficulties the visit to Christmas Island did not proceed. However the Committee will inspect the facility on Christmas Island at a later date.

The Committee's approach and report structure

- 1.4 While the Committee met with a group of detainees in the course of its visit to the Baxter detention facility and found that to be very informative, the primary focus of the visit was on the operation of the facility and the services provided for detainees rather than consideration of the general policy in relation to detention.
- 1.5 Chapter 1 of the report provides background information to the Committee's visit. The physical structure and administrative arrangements of Baxter detention facility and the Port Augusta Residential Housing Project are detailed in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 discusses the Committee's inspection in detail before drawing some general conclusions about the operations of the two facilities.