

## **Introduction**

- 1.1 This report presents findings and recommendations in relation to the proposed fitout of new central office accommodation for the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA).

## **Report structure**

- 1.2 Chapter 1 provides an overview of DIMA and outlines the conduct of the Committee's Inquiry. Chapter 2 explains the need for the proposed work and Chapter 3 provides details of the proposed fitout. Issues arising from the Committee's Inquiry are set out in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 contains general comments and recommendations.

## **The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs**

- 1.3 The core business of DIMA is the managed entry of people to Australia, the successful settlement of migrants and refugees enabling them to participate equitably in society, and promotion of the benefits of citizenship and cultural diversity.
- 1.4 The outputs and services provided by the Department overseas and in Australia include:
- visa services for migrants, temporary entrants, business visitors, students and tourists including identifying those entitled to lawful entry into Australia, prior to arrival;

- processing people moving into and out of Australia through Australian air and sea ports;
- assessing the character, health and bona fides of applicants for entry into Australia;
- identifying those entitled to the protection of Australia on humanitarian or other grounds and helping Australia fulfil its international obligations towards refugees and other humanitarian needs;
- locating, detaining and removing unlawful non-citizens;
- identifying and reducing people smuggling and other immigration malpractice and fraud;
- increasing the ability of migrants, particularly the recently arrived, to participate in Australian life, through settlement programs including English language tuition and translating and interpreting services;
- administering the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*; and
- contributing to maintaining and further enhancing appreciation of Australia's cultural diversity within a framework of national unity.

1.5 In addition to overseas offices, DIMA has 19 offices in Australia - one main office in each State and Territory capital city and additional regional offices in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. The Department's Central Office is located in the Benjamin Offices complex in Canberra suburb of Belconnen.<sup>1</sup>

1.6 In February 2000 the Benjamin Offices were sold by the Commonwealth to Benjamin Nominees Pty Ltd, which proposes to redevelop the complex. It is this redevelopment which gives rise to the fitout proposal.

## Conduct of the Inquiry

1.7 On 4 April 2001, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration moved in the House of Representatives in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works consider and report on a proposal for the fitout of a new central Office building for DIMA at Belconnen, ACT.<sup>2</sup>

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1 For more information on Central Office functions see Submissions, p. 23.

2 Extract from Votes and Proceedings No. 179, 4 April 2001.

- 1.8 The Committee advertised the Inquiry in *The Canberra Times* on 14 April 2001 and invited submissions.
- 1.9 The Committee also sought submissions from organisations, peak bodies and individuals that may have an interest in the inquiry. The Committee wrote to Senators representing the Australian Capital Territory and to the Federal and local Members of Parliament, in the whose electorates the work is located, seeking submissions and inviting them to attend the inspection of the works site and the public hearing.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.10 On 21 May 2001 the Committee inspected the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs' current accommodation and the proposed building site and was briefed by representatives of DIMA about the proposed fitout. Following the inspection, the Committee held a public hearing at Parliament House, Canberra.<sup>4</sup>

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3 A list of Submissions is at Appendix A.

4 A list of witnesses is at Appendix B.