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The future of our immigration and citizenship systems

11/04/2019

Colleagues,

Now that we are in the caretaker period, I should like to share with you my views about what needs to be done with our aging visa and citizenship systems. The Government is committed to the solution represented by the Global Digital Platform, which is currently the subject of a [tender process](#).

The Opposition has stated publicly that it strongly opposes the privatisation of Australia's visa processing system.

As public servants, we are strictly neutral and we will implement the policy of the Government of the day. Here is my view on some basic facts, which independently exist, irrespective of which party is in power. The volumes of visas that we issue each year continues to increase, as a result of the growth in the numbers of people coming here for tourism, temporary work, study and to make Australia their home. This increasing volume, coupled with our changing risk environment, places increasing pressure on our aged systems, which will not be able to keep up with that growth.

Whether the capital to fund a new immigration and citizenship system is privately-financed or otherwise, is not a matter for me or the Department. The Government of the day will decide that issue, as it will the final form and design of the future system.

As I said at the Senate Estimates hearing on Monday 8 April 2019, my preference as Secretary, subject of course to the final view of the Government of the day, is to automate our manual processes wherever we can, reduce the administrative cost entailed in processing each visa, and – most importantly – concentrate the same number of staff (or

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preferably an increased number of staff) on higher value-added roles, such as status resolution of people in the legacy caseload; dealing with human trafficking and migrant exploitation; and working with other departments on the economic and social benefits of migration. Our people, who are our key asset, should be focused on decision-making, risk assessment and complex case engagement where human engagement with applicants is crucially important.

Working together, across the Department and the ABF, we will put a range of options to the government of the day, regarding the funding of a major capital upgrade of our systems, where we have the same number of officers, or preferably more, engaged on those higher value tasks, while at the same time automating wherever possible more manual administrative tasks, such as data entry.

I look forward to the ongoing contributions from staff into the design of our future systems, processes and practices, drawing on their deep knowledge and experience.



Michael Pezzullo
Secretary



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