



## Australian Government

### Migration Review Tribunal · Refugee Review Tribunal

## Improving access to justice: MRT-RRT Stakeholder Engagement Plan 2010-11

*“Citizen engagement brings us back to basics. It brings us to the very purpose of government and public sector institutions.” Jocelyne Bourgon, 2008*

### 1. Objectives

The objectives of the Tribunals’ Stakeholder Engagement Plan are to:

- enable better access to justice in the conduct of merits review of migration and refugee decisions by improving our communication with stakeholders and the information we provide about the Tribunals’ procedures;
- inform our strategic direction, policy and operations through an improved understanding of our stakeholders’ perspectives and needs; and
- shape the Tribunals’ knowledge, attitudes and behaviours through communication with our stakeholders.

### 2. Stakeholders

The Tribunals’ **stakeholders** include, but are not limited to:

- Clients (i.e. the people who use our services)
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship
- The Minister
- The Australian community
- MPs and Senators
- The Parliament
- Practitioners/migration agents
- Interpreters and interpreting service providers
- The Migration Institute of Australia
- The Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority
- The Administrative Appeals Tribunal
- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- The Ombudsman
- The Australian Human Rights Commission
- Other government agencies
- Advocacy and client representation groups
- The Refugee Council of Australia
- The Federal Court, Federal Magistrates’ Court and the High Court
- Legal Aid Commissions, Law Institutes, Law Societies
- Law Council of Australia
- Our international counterparts
- The International Association of Refugee Law Judges
- Ethnic community organisations
- The media
- Academics and universities

### **3. Issues for engagement**

The Tribunals would like to engage more fully in relation to issues that are of interest to our stakeholders, while avoiding any issues that might compromise the independence of our decision making. We will identify clearly when we are seeking stakeholder input and when we are seeking to provide more or better information. When we invite input, we will provide feedback about how we are using the input we receive.

The Tribunals would like to discuss:

- Tribunal processes;
- changes to the way we work;
- the Caseload and Constitution Policy (including priorities for constitution or processing);
- the conduct of hearings;
- the way applicants are dealt with;
- how Members do business;
- our (published) decisions;
- our research products and resources;
- our guidelines and policy documents; and
- how we can make it easier for clients and practitioners to do business with us.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan does not provide for discussing individual cases, beyond the current arrangements for raising case-related issues with Registry case officers, with the Presiding Member at hearing and through the Tribunals' complaints handling procedures.

### **4. Roles and responsibilities**

Formal stakeholder engagement activities will be carried out by the Principal Member, the Deputy Principal Member, the Registrar, Senior Members, Members and Senior Managers, as directed by the Principal Member and the Registrar. Members and staff will continue to engage with individual stakeholders on case-related matters. The Tribunals' Management Board and Senior Management Group will consider stakeholder engagement at their monthly meetings.

### **5. Engagement strategy**

The Tribunals' engagement activity for 2010-11 will be underpinned by four key strategies:

- increased community outreach;
- increased and improved use of the internet;
- enhanced Community Liaison arrangements; and
- improved literature and information products.

These strategies are designed to support activities which will align with the Plan's four themes:

- *Outreach*: talking to more stakeholders, being more accessible
- *Education*: providing more and better targeted information about our processes and purpose

- *Listening*: listening to and learning from our stakeholders about what is important to them
- *Liaison*: communicating effectively and maintaining critical relationships.

## **6. Engagement activities**

The engagement activities to be undertaken in 2010-11 and beyond are set out below.

- Enhanced and more frequent Community Liaison Committee activities, including Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and other interstate participants, which are more interactive in nature and allow for more input from participants and the inclusion of different participants from time to time.
- Liaison with Department of Immigration and Citizenship, including the biannual national meetings, quarterly local liaison meetings in both Melbourne and Sydney, including other stakeholders and less formal liaison at a national and local level, including information sessions.
- Refugee Week Open days held annually in both NSW and Victorian Registries. Development of a Tribunals Open Day event. Expand activities to include Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth representation.
- Information seminars for staff of Members and Senators' offices.
- Speakers including the Principal Member, Deputy Principal Member, Senior Members and Registrar addressing various external forums, such as the Migration Institute of Australia.
- Ongoing investigation of and response to complaints.
- Visiting speakers attending the Tribunals to address Members and staff.
- Promote engagement in professional development activities for interpreters.
- Observation programs for students.
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade briefings.
- Regular liaison with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal at a national level and locally between MRT-RRT registries and the AAT registries providing MRT-RRT registry services in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth..
- Focus groups with ethnic communities and other interest groups managed by Country Advice and Information Service and designed to feed information into the Tribunals' research processes.
- Completion of a stakeholder survey.
- Review of the Tribunals' Service Charter.
- Review of all literature and information products;
- Review of the MRT-RRT website to provide information targeted at different groups, including a practitioners' page and information for clients in easy to understand language.
- Creation of a subscription "What's new at the MRT-RRT" email service, to include information such as legislative and policy changes, movement of key personnel, forthcoming meetings or events, summary statistical reporting, hearing schedules etc.

## **7. Risk and risk mitigation**

The principal risk associated with enhanced stakeholder engagement activity and increased promotion and visibility for the activities undertaken is the creation of unrealistic

expectations. There is also risk inherent in inviting stakeholders to provide input if they do not see any result or receive any response.

Both of these risks can be mitigated by ensuring that the parameters for engagement are clearly defined, so that stakeholders understand what the Tribunals are seeking to achieve, what is negotiable and what is not and what, if anything, is expected of them. For activities requiring stakeholder input, providing feedback to those who take part about how their ideas have been used, or why they could not be, will reduce the likelihood that stakeholders will either view the process negatively or decide against taking part in the future. Making the finished Stakeholder Engagement Plan public will allow interested stakeholders to gain a broad appreciation of the Tribunals' approach and understand what other options may exist for them to pursue specific issues.

## **8. Measurement and review**

The impact and effectiveness of the Tribunals' stakeholder engagement activity will be measured through monitoring the number of complaints and representations received and the receipt of feedback, positive or negative, about the engagement activities themselves. The stakeholder survey will provide a valuable opportunity to ask questions aimed at eliciting feedback in relation to the way in which we engage with our stakeholders, while repeating the survey, say eighteen months later, would provide a clear indication of stakeholder perceptions.

Details of stakeholder engagement activities will be recorded in a centrally maintained Stakeholder Engagement Register, including comment on the perceived value of the activity or event by those involved in its planning and execution.

## **9. Reporting**

Stakeholder engagement activity will be reported in the Tribunals' Annual Report and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and updates about particular initiatives will be published on the Tribunals' website. Some activity may be accounted for under headings other than stakeholder engagement as many of the activities will speak for themselves.

Stakeholder engagement will also be reported regularly in meetings of the Tribunals' Management Board and Senior Management Group. Information about particular activities or initiatives will be provided to staff and Members through news items on *express*, and reporting in staff and Members' meetings.

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*“Public goods result from the contribution of multiple partners working together inside and outside government to achieve common results ... No one controls all the tools or possesses all the levers to address the complex issues that people really care about. In the process, government gains strong allies and greater reach.”* Jocelyne Bourgon, 2008