

# CHAPTER 05

**OUR ORGANISATION  
AND OUR PEOPLE**

# OUR ORGANISATION AND OUR PEOPLE

This part of the report sets out information relating to the governance and administration of the Tribunal, including human resource management. It also provides information on actions undertaken during the reporting period to meet Goals Two and Three in the Tribunal's Strategic Plan 2011–2014 which relate to our organisation and our people:

- to manage our resources strategically and effectively
- to maintain a professional, productive, rewarding and safe workplace.

## CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

The Tribunal has structures, policies and practices in place that contribute to sound corporate governance. See pages 13 to 19 in Chapter 2 for information on the Tribunal's senior leaders and their responsibilities, as well as the committees comprising Tribunal members and staff that provide advice and assistance in relation to the management of the Tribunal. Information relating to the Tribunal's Audit Committee is set out below.

## CORPORATE PLANNING

The Tribunal undertook a planning process in 2010–11 which culminated in the adoption of the Tribunal's Strategic Plan 2011–2014 in August 2011. The plan set out revised vision and mission statements for the Tribunal as well as the Tribunal's core values and behaviours. Strategic priorities were identified in relation to our users, our people, our organisation and our relationships and the plan specifies a range of actions associated with these priorities.

The Tribunal has developed work plans for specific actions to achieve these priorities which have been monitored and reviewed periodically. Key actions completed during the reporting period are noted in Chapter 1 of this report.

On 15 November 2012, the Tribunal held a strategic planning meeting involving the President, the Executive Deputy Presidents and Senior Member, the Registrar and senior staff to review the Tribunal's Strategic Plan and prioritise our activities in light of changes in the environment in which the Tribunal must operate. The outcome was the AAT Plan on a Page 2011–2014, a summary version of the Tribunal's headline planning document. It sets out the AAT's agreed vision, mission, core values and behaviours, key relationships, opportunities and challenges.



# AAT PLAN ON A PAGE 2011-2014

## VISION

To be widely recognised as an accessible, expert and innovative organisation that ensures administrative justice for individuals and organisations and improves the quality of government decision-making.

## MISSION

To undertake high quality independent merits review of administrative decisions in a manner that is fair, just, economical, informal and quick through the use of effective alternative dispute resolution processes and hearings.

## CORE VALUES & BEHAVIOURS

We value:

- Accessibility
- Effective and courteous communication
- Efficiency and accountability
- Fairness and professionalism
- Quality, consistency and independence of decision-making

## KEY RELATIONSHIPS

In delivering on its mission and vision the AAT will involve all members, conference registrars and staff and engage with:

- applicants and respondents, and those who represent them
- the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department
- key government and non-government organisations
- the Federal Court and its judges
- other tribunals

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

The planning process identified several major opportunities and challenges including:-

- To build on its achievements and become a nationally and internationally recognised, highly innovative dispute resolution body.
- To promote merits review and the role of the AAT.
- To use new technologies to enhance the AAT's digital interface and deliver services electronically.
- To improve the AAT's workforce planning, metrics, reporting and communication.
- To use the opportunity of many leases ending in 2015-16 to align its property portfolio with the needs of members, staff and users.
- To deliver its mission and vision in an environment of budgetary constraints that impacts on the AAT and on the organisations whose decisions are subject to review.
- To develop effective arrangements for co-locating and partnering with other tribunals.
- To support its members who have responsibility for the issuing of telephone and surveillance warrants without detriment to the AAT's core functions.

## STRATEGIC GOALS & PRIORITIES

The following list includes selected priorities only. A full summary may be found in the AAT's Strategic Plan 2011-2014

- 1. To provide a high quality merits review process**

  - Refocus the AAT's efforts on further developing highly effective and integrated dispute resolution processes to become a premier body in its field.
  - Engage in active two-way communication with key user and professional bodies to increase understanding about the operation and advantages of the AAT and to receive feedback.
  - Improve the AAT's capacity to manage information and deliver its services electronically.
  - Capture and use data more effectively to monitor and manage performance, inform key decisions and be accountable to government and stakeholders.
- 2. A professional, productive, safe workplace**

  - Develop a workforce plan for the AAT having regard to future needs and relevant government policies.
  - Attract and retain the best members, conference registrars and staff.
  - Deliver a broader range of targeted and high quality professional development programs for members, conference registrars and staff.
  - Strengthen the AAT's internal governance to ensure key decisions are well-informed and involve members, conference registrars and staff.
  - Continue to build an organisation that works collaboratively through effective internal communication and dismantling of organisational barriers.
- 3. Manage our resources strategically & effectively**

  - Manage the budget to ensure adequate resourcing for critical projects such as information management, eServices and property.
  - Develop the capacity to identify, plan and deliver key projects on time and to specification.
  - Upgrade the content and organisation of the AAT's web site and Intranet to better deliver information and services.
  - Develop and implement property principles that ensure the AAT's accommodation is sustainable and provides a positive and productive environment for members, staff and users.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Tribunal's audited financial statements for 2012–13 follow this chapter.

The Tribunal has reported an operating surplus of \$0.618 million in 2012–13 prior to unfunded depreciation charges. The surplus is a result of increased revenue from other agencies utilising the Tribunal's resources. The Tribunal's principal focus remains on its core business.

## PURCHASING

The Tribunal observed the core principles of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and relevant best practice guidelines in its purchasing activities in 2012–13. The Chief Executive Instructions and other guidance material are continually updated to ensure officials with purchasing duties comply with procurement requirements.

The Tribunal's competitive procurement processes ensure value for money for major purchases and contracts, as well as proper and effective competition. Open tender processes are employed unless the purchase is covered by a whole-of-government purchasing arrangement or a more limited tender is appropriate in the particular circumstances. Minor purchases and contracts below the mandatory tender threshold are guided by the Chief Executive Instructions. In general, at least two quotes are required for small purchases and three for larger purchases together with an assessment of the need that justified the purchase request and an analysis of why the selected quote will achieve best value for money.

## CONSULTANTS

The Tribunal engages consultants where it lacks specialist expertise or when independent research, review or assessment is required. Consultants are typically engaged to investigate or diagnose a defined issue or problem, carry out defined reviews or evaluations, or provide independent advice, information or creative solutions to assist in the Tribunal's decision-making process.

Prior to engaging consultants, the Tribunal considers the skills and resources required for the task, the skills available internally and the cost-effectiveness of engaging external expertise. The decision to engage a consultant is made in accordance with the Financial Management and Accountability Act and related regulations, including the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and relevant internal policies.

During 2012–13, the Tribunal entered into eight new consultancy contracts involving total actual expenditure of \$167,268. Four ongoing consultancy contracts were active for a total expenditure of \$24,941.

Table 5.1 sets out the Tribunal's total actual expenditure on all consultancies in the three most recent reporting years. All contract amounts include GST.

**Table 5.1** Total actual expenditure on consultancy contracts

	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13
Total actual expenditure (incl GST)	\$99,627	\$253,338	\$192,209

Annual reports contain information about actual expenditure on contracts for consultancies. Information on the value of contracts and consultancies is available on the AusTender website: [www.tenders.gov.au](http://www.tenders.gov.au).

## REPORTING ON PURCHASES

All purchases were gazetted as required. There were no contracts of more than \$10,000 (including GST) or standing offers exempt from being published on the AusTender website on the basis that they would disclose exempt matters under the Freedom of Information Act.

Details of all contracts of \$100,000 or more that are current in the most recent calendar or financial year are available on the Tribunal's website in accordance with the Senate order on agency contracts.

There were no contracts of \$100,000 or more let in 2012–13 that did not include a clause providing for the Auditor-General to have access to the contractor's premises.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

### AUDIT AND FRAUD CONTROL

The Tribunal's Audit Committee meets regularly to review operations, and to plan and approve the audit policy for the forthcoming year. The committee also advises the Registrar on matters such as the financial statements, compliance with the Financial Management and Accountability Act and fraud control.

During the reporting year, changes were made to the membership of the Audit Committee. It now comprises an independent chairperson, a part-time Tribunal member, a District Registrar and the Registrar. The changes strengthen the ability of the committee to provide robust oversight of the Tribunal's audit and compliance program.

Each year, the Tribunal's independent internal auditor undertakes an audit program covering a range of transactions to give assurance that the Tribunal's systems are complying with the Financial Management and Accountability Act and the Chief Executive Instructions. Any identified issues are addressed by management and reviewed by the Audit Committee.

During the reporting year, the internal auditor conducted an internal audit in the Canberra and Sydney Registries. The Principal Registry finance and human resources operations are also audited annually. No major issues or risks were identified by the audits.

The Audit Committee has implemented various processes to enable the Registrar to complete the Certificate of Compliance for the 2012–13 financial year.

The Tribunal reviewed and updated its Fraud Control Plan, including its Fraud Risk Register in 2011–12. The next review is scheduled to occur during 2013–14.

#### **CERTIFICATION OF TRIBUNAL FRAUD CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS**

I, Philip Kellow, certify that I am satisfied that for 2012–13 the Tribunal:

- has prepared fraud assessments and fraud control plans
- has in place appropriate fraud prevention, detection, investigation, reporting and data collection procedures and processes that meet the specific needs of the Tribunal, and
- has taken all reasonable measures to minimise the incidence of fraud in the Tribunal and to investigate and recover the proceeds of fraud against the Tribunal.



**Philip Kellow**

**Registrar**

19 September 2013

#### **INSURANCE**

The Tribunal is insured through Comcover. In general terms, the Tribunal has a low risk of insurance exposure and a limited likelihood of major disruption to its services, but cover is provided should that occur. Due to the Tribunal's low risk and low claim rate, there was a small decrease in the insurance premium in 2012–13.

## RISK ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

The Tribunal regularly assesses its risk position, particularly for business risks that may have an impact on national operations. These assessments encompass registry operations, public interaction and information systems, and link with the Fraud Control Plan. The Tribunal reviewed and updated its Risk Management Plan and associated risk register in 2011–12. The Risk Management Plan is scheduled for review again in 2013–14.

The Tribunal's national Business Continuity Plan is on the Tribunal's intranet for all members and staff. Officers who have delegated responsibility under the plan are given a backup of the plan to use should the Tribunal's intranet be unavailable. Local Business Continuity Plans have also been developed for each registry.

## MAINTAINING ETHICAL STANDARDS

The APS Values and Code of Conduct, aspects of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and other standards relevant to ethical conduct are incorporated, as appropriate, into Tribunal policies, guidelines and instructions. The Tribunal's Agency Agreement 2011–2014 includes a commitment that all employees accept a responsibility to contribute to Tribunal outcomes by adhering to and promoting the APS Values and Code of Conduct, and demonstrating behaviours consistent with the Values and the Code. In addition, managers are to provide employees with the tools they need to do their work efficiently, effectively, ethically and creatively.

The APS Values and Code of Conduct are available on the Tribunal's intranet. Online training relating to them is available to all staff and forms a specific part of the Tribunal's staff induction process. All new staff are provided with a copy of the Values and the Code, as well as relevant excerpts from the *Crimes Act 1914* and the Information Privacy Principles, and must sign a statement confirming that they have read and understood these provisions. This information has been reviewed and updated in line with changes to the *Public Service Act 1999* that will apply from 1 July 2013.

In February 2013 after Parliament passed the Public Service Amendment Bill 2012, the Learning and Development Manager provided information to District Registrars, Deputy District Registrars and Principal Registry Managers about the revised APS Values and Code of Conduct and the new Employment Principles. Since then, a number of initiatives have been progressed for implementation in 2013–14 including:

- the Registrar providing information to all members and staff about the changes to the Values and the Code through the AAT's internal newsletter and on the Tribunal's intranet
- the Director, Human Resources providing a generic presentation on the changes to be delivered by managers at registry staff meetings
- training on the Values and the Code to be conducted across the Tribunal.

## PROPERTY AND SECURITY

The Tribunal operates from commercially-leased premises in Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, and from the Commonwealth Law Courts buildings in Brisbane and Hobart. No major fit-out works were carried out during 2012–13. The Tribunal supported minor works in Adelaide to assist in the delivery of MRT-RRT services in accordance with the resource-sharing arrangements that operate in that registry.

In 2012–13, the Tribunal engaged Project Control Group Pty Ltd (PCG) to undertake a Strategic Property Review. The review report sets out broad principles that the Tribunal will use to select and manage its future accommodation and will be used to direct planning for the Tribunal's future property requirements as various leases come to an end in the next few years.

PCG were also engaged during the reporting period to manage a search and negotiation exercise for the Tribunal's accommodation in Canberra, ahead of the current lease expiry on 30 June 2014.

The Tribunal engaged Michael Small Consulting Pty Ltd in 2012–13 to undertake an access appraisal of the Sydney Registry. Recommendations from the review to improve accessibility and usability of Tribunal premises for people with disability, along with recommendations from internal assessments in the other Tribunal registries, will be considered and implemented in 2013–14.

To assess and improve its compliance with the Australian Government Protective Security Policy Framework, the Tribunal engaged the Australian Federal Police to undertake a Security Risk Review of the Tribunal's District Registries and Agilient Pty Ltd to undertake an Enterprise Security Risk Assessment. Recommendations of the review and assessment will be considered and implemented during 2013–14. Agilient Pty Ltd were also engaged to commence a review and update of the Tribunal's security policies, plans and procedures in 2012–13. These will be finalised and implemented in 2013–14.

The Tribunal places a high priority on security to ensure that members, staff and visitors are in safe and secure environments when in Tribunal offices. A number of measures are currently in place to enhance physical security. Tribunal office areas are secure and duress alarms are installed in conference and hearing rooms and at registry counters to protect members, staff and others in the event of an incident.

The Tribunal arranges additional security services for alternative dispute resolution processes and hearings as required. If necessary, the Tribunal may arrange with the Family Court or the Federal Court to use their court rooms and security arrangements for hearings involving a security risk.

The Australian Government Security Vetting Agency undertakes security vetting of staff whose duties require a security clearance, in compliance with the Protective Security Policy Framework.



## MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

This section reports on the Tribunal's effectiveness in managing and developing its staff to achieve its objectives.

### STAFFING OVERVIEW

At 30 June 2013, the Tribunal had 163 staff: 109 ongoing and 54 non-ongoing, of whom 18 were engaged to undertake duties that are irregular or intermittent.

Table 5.2 shows the Tribunal's staffing numbers over the three most recent reporting years by engagement type, classification level, full-time/part-time status and gender. A more detailed breakdown of staffing at 30 June 2013, including by location, is in Appendix 2.

**Table 5.2** Trends in total staffing numbers

	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>By engagement type</b>			
Ongoing	102	102	109
Non-ongoing (irregular/intermittent)	53 (22)	53 (16)	54 (18)
<b>By classification category</b>			
SES	1	2	2
Executive Level	34	32	33
APS Level	120	121	128
<b>By full-time/part-time status</b>			
Full-time	115	112	117
Part-time (including irregular/intermittent)	40	43	46
<b>By gender</b>			
Men	51	49	47
Women	104	106	116

The increase in total staffing numbers since 30 June 2012 can be attributed predominantly to the recruitment of additional staff to support the operations of the MRT-RRT in the Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth Registries in accordance with arrangements agreed between the tribunals. In addition, two new positions that had been created as part of the restructure of the Tribunal's Principal Registry in 2011–12 were also filled in the reporting year. A number of positions that had been filled previously on a non-ongoing basis were filled on an ongoing basis during 2012–13 leading to the increase in the total number of ongoing staff.

The Tribunal continued to have a stable ongoing staffing complement with only four ongoing staff leaving the Tribunal in 2012–13. Consistent with previous years, turnover was greater among non-ongoing staff. The Tribunal's practice of engaging legal graduates to work with members of the Tribunal, usually for 12 to 18 months, contributes to this.

## EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENTS AND ARRANGEMENTS

The Tribunal's collective workplace agreement, the *Administrative Appeals Tribunal Agency Agreement 2011–2014* was approved by Fair Work Australia on 22 August 2011 and came into force on 29 August 2011. It is due to expire on 30 June 2014. Most Tribunal staff are covered by the Agency Agreement.

As at 30 June 2013, four employees had entered into Individual Flexibility Arrangements. The terms and conditions of employment of two employees were set out in determinations made under section 24(1) of the *Public Service Act 1999*. No Tribunal employees were covered by an Australian Workplace Agreement.

More detail about the number of employees covered by the Agency Agreement and by individual employment arrangements at 30 June 2013 is shown in Table A2.3 of Appendix 2. Table A2.3 also shows the salary ranges available for the Tribunal's employees by classification level.

## SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE OFFICER REMUNERATION

Remuneration for the Tribunal's Senior Executive Service officers is determined having regard to the remuneration for SES staff in similar Australian Government agencies. The remuneration package allows the occupant to cash out certain items in accordance with common Australian Government practice.

## PERFORMANCE PAY

No performance bonuses were paid by the Tribunal in 2012–13. The Tribunal does not have a performance pay or bonus system for any employee.

## NON-SALARY BENEFITS

Non-salary benefits available to the Tribunal's employees in 2012–13 under the Agency Agreement included:

- two days of paid leave between Christmas Day and New Year's Day, other than for skeleton staff who maintained basic registry functions
- two additional weeks of paid maternity/parenting leave
- ability to participate in a Transport Loans Scheme
- health and wellbeing benefits such as influenza vaccinations, assistance for group or individual participation in health and fitness related physical activities, eyesight testing and the Employee Assistance Program
- studies assistance.

Under the Studies Assistance Scheme, ongoing staff may apply for assistance which can include full or partial reimbursement of fees and costs as well as limited time off work to attend lectures, tutorials and examinations. Non-ongoing staff may apply in certain circumstances for limited time off work for study purposes. The scheme allows staff to develop their own capability, as well as that of the Tribunal, through vocational education at pre-tertiary, undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Requests for studies assistance were approved in 2012–13 for studies in alternative dispute resolution, financial management, general tribunal services, law, management, project management and technology services. Twelve staff gained approval for financial support with total expenditure of \$23,536.

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

In accordance with the Tribunal's Performance Management Program, all ongoing Tribunal staff are required to have performance agreements and training and development plans. Staff advance to the next salary point if their performance is assessed as fully effective or higher. The program is linked to the Agency Agreement.

Salary levels for non-ongoing staff are generally reviewed at contract expiration or on the completion of 12 months' service, whichever is earlier. Salary advancement is based on performance.

Staff appraisals are conducted in accordance with the Tribunal's performance management guidelines, taking leave of absence and other approvals for extension into consideration.

## LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE TRIBUNAL

Learning and development are a priority for the Tribunal. During the reporting year, the Tribunal undertook a wide range of activities to meet the needs of members and staff.

## MEMBERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Members' Professional Development Program is a comprehensive program based on a framework of competencies developed specifically for the Tribunal. The program comprises induction, mentoring, appraisal and other professional development opportunities. The Professional Development Committee advises on the Members' Professional Development Program.

The mentoring scheme involves pairing a more experienced member with each new member to assist new appointees gain a better understanding of the workings of the Tribunal and their role. Senior Member Narelle Bell was the Coordinator of the Mentoring Scheme during 2012–13.

The Tribunal's appraisal scheme combines self-assessment with appraisal by another Tribunal member against the framework of competencies. Self-assessment and peer review give members the opportunity to reflect upon their practice and consider options for further professional development. Deputy President Deane Jarvis was the Appraisal Scheme Coordinator until his term of appointment ended on 31 May 2013. Deputy President Stan Hotop has since taken over the role.

A range of learning activities was offered to members during 2012–13 to help them stay up-to-date with developments relevant to their work. Members attended in-house professional development sessions organised by individual registries and Principal Registry, including a seminar on case appraisal and neutral evaluation, decision writing workshops and individual and small group sessions on library and information services. Members also participated in a range of external seminars, workshops and other professional activities, including those organised by the Australian Institute of Administrative Law, the Council of Australasian Tribunals, the Law Council of Australia and other national and state-based professional bodies.

## CONFERENCE REGISTRARS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Conference Registrars conduct alternative dispute resolution processes such as conferences, conciliations and mediations and have primary responsibility for managing applications during the pre-hearing process. They assist parties to try to reach an agreed outcome and, where this does not occur, prepare cases for another ADR process or hearing.

The Tribunal's Conference Registrars' Professional Development Program is based on a framework of competencies and includes induction, mentoring, reflective learning, peer review and performance appraisal. The *Conference Registrars' Professional Development Handbook* outlines the components of the program and provides practical assistance with its operation.

Conference Registrars participated in a range of internal and external professional development activities in 2012–13, including a two-day seminar in May 2013 focused on case management, disability awareness training and developments in the law. Access to continuing professional development also assisted Conference Registrars to meet requirements to remain accredited under the National Mediator Accreditation System.

## STAFF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Learning and development for staff reflects the Tribunal's values and seeks to meet the learning needs of individuals and teams in all registries. Staff attended in-house programs as well as external conferences, seminars, workshops and other activities.

The Tribunal has a formal learning and development plan and strategies to encourage staff learning through on-the-job experiences, tasks and problem solving. Participants in learning and development activities provide feedback and the programs are refined to meet operational and strategic requirements.

Internal training sessions were delivered in a variety of modes during the reporting year, including through face-to-face delivery, e-learning programs and collaborative learning. Initiatives in the reporting period included team-strengthening workshops, sessions on managing difficult conversations and working effectively with Tribunal users, library training, a program on communication and influencing skills, and practice and procedure seminars.

The District Registrars continued to use the 'Coaching Ourselves' learning program to guide and promote discussion, reflection and knowledge sharing about management and leadership. A second learning circle comprising Deputy District Registrars has been established.

## MEMBERSHIP OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES

The Tribunal continues to work collaboratively with other Australian tribunals and courts on staff training initiatives through its leadership of the Commonwealth Tribunals and Courts Learning and Development Forum. Forum members share information about developments in this area and provide shared training opportunities for participant tribunals and courts.

The Tribunal is also represented on the Australasian Committee for Court Education.

## WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Tribunal is committed to providing and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment for its employees through cooperative, consultative relationships. It is also committed to introducing and promoting measures for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of employees while at work.

The Tribunal took a number of steps during the reporting year to ensure that members and staff understand the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and their duties under it. Comcare's e-learning program for workers and managers was made available to all members and staff on the Tribunal's intranet. All staff with management or supervisory responsibilities were required to complete the module. The Tribunal also conducted work health and safety and risk management workshops with staff in all registries.

The Tribunal engaged the services of an external consultant, Konekt, in 2012–13 to conduct an independent review of the Tribunal’s health and safety risk arrangements. The Tribunal is continuing with the development and implementation of a number of work health and safety initiatives such as the Tribunal’s Rehabilitation Management System and processes to ensure the Tribunal is meeting its responsibilities to visitors to the Tribunal’s premises.

Health and wellbeing initiatives available to all employees during 2012–13 included:

- flu vaccinations
- eyesight testing
- providing taxis to increase personal safety in certain circumstances
- the Employee Assistance Program
- assistance with return to work costs.

The Tribunal completed its first 10,000 Steps Program that was launched during the 2012 National Staff Conference. This activity encouraged staff to undertake more walking as part of their daily routine to enjoy the health benefits of low-impact exercise. Over a nine week period, 12 teams comprising 58 members and staff took part in the program with over 36,413,455 steps being made.

The Tribunal continued to make available to members and staff e-learning modules on manual handling and ergonomics in the office, including as part of the Tribunal’s new starter induction program. Workstation assessments and training were undertaken in all registries and remedial action implemented as required.

All Tribunal First Aid Officers completed training in 2012–13 and received particular guidance in the use of external defibrillators which are available in all registries. The Tribunal also funds training for backup First Aid Officers to cover staff absences.

The Tribunal’s Health and Safety Committee met four times during the reporting year. The membership of the committee was increased to include two District Registrars, reflecting the responsibilities of ‘officers’ under the Work Health and Safety Act. Minutes of meetings are made available to all members and staff on the Tribunal’s intranet. Health and Safety Representatives conducted regular formal and informal inspections within their registries, finding no specific registry issues that had a national impact or required central involvement. A national calendar of work health and safety events and requirements is to be introduced in 2013–14.

The Tribunal continues to have a low number of compensation claims as reflected in Table 5.3 below. Case management of compensation matters is conducted either in-house or by external service providers, depending on the location and the complexity of the matter.

**Table 5.3** Trends in compensation claims

	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13
Number of accepted claims	1	1	4

## NOTIFIABLE INCIDENTS AND INVESTIGATIONS

There were no notifiable incidents that the Tribunal was required to report to Comcare in 2012–13 under the Work Health and Safety Act. Comcare did not undertake any investigations in relation to the Tribunal during the reporting year, nor did it issue any notices to the Tribunal.

## WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

The Tribunal's commitment to preventing and eliminating all forms of harassment in the workplace is set out in the Prevention and Elimination of Workplace Harassment Policy which articulates the Tribunal's expectations of members, managers and staff in preventing and dealing with workplace harassment. Managers and supervisors are actively encouraged to be familiar with, promote and support the Tribunal's policy and strategies for dealing with harassment.

The Tribunal's Workplace Harassment Contact Officer is a qualified lawyer and mediator experienced in resolving disputes and dealing with harassment issues. The officer is available for all members and staff, and all discussions are confidential.

## WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

Valuing and making proper and effective use of the different qualities, skills, qualifications and experiences of members and staff can improve the workplace for individuals and the performance of the Tribunal in general. These attitudes are reflected in the Tribunal's Workplace Diversity Plan and through the work of the Workplace Diversity Committee, which reviews the plan and looks for opportunities to promote the benefits of an inclusive work environment.

Appendix 2 shows the number of staff who fall into various equal employment opportunity categories.

## PRODUCTIVITY GAINS

The Tribunal pursued several initiatives in 2012–13 aimed at increasing productivity in relation to its operations. The Tribunal maintained its commitment to health and wellbeing initiatives to improve employee health and reduce unplanned absences. The reported level of unplanned absences due to illness decreased marginally in 2012–13.

Technology initiatives also contribute to productivity gains. The Human Resources Section commenced a major project implementing web recruitment functionality which will bring about improved controls, timeframes, transparency and consistency for its selection processes. Improvements to TRACS, the Tribunal's electronic case management system, continue to bring about more efficient work practices and time-saving measures were identified and developed.

The Tribunal anticipates that the development and implementation of a suite of integrated technology systems and online services will improve productivity over time. Progress was made in this area in 2012–13 with the launch of eCase Search which allows parties, their representatives and the public to access basic information about certain Tribunal cases online 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## BENEVOLENT TRUST

The Tribunal's benevolent trust, established in 2003, exists to assist members or staff, and their immediate families, who may require financial assistance. Voluntary contributions by members and staff fund the trust which is managed by elected trustees.

During 2012–13, the trust did not receive any requests from staff for financial assistance. One interest-free loan approved in an earlier reporting period continues to be repaid.

## INFORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Tribunal's Information and Development Section is responsible for communications, legal and policy matters, library and information management, and technology services. The Section worked on a range of projects during the reporting year which contributed to achieving the Tribunal's priorities set out in the Strategic Plan 2011–2014.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The Tribunal has one part-time officer with responsibility for:

- developing and implementing strategies to meet the Tribunal's internal and external communication needs
- developing and managing the Tribunal's main information channels and products: website, brochures, fact sheets and publications such as the annual report.

## INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

To determine the current level of satisfaction with internal communication, a survey was conducted in August 2012 with members and staff. The survey focused on determining what volume and frequency of communication would work best in the Tribunal. Respondents were also asked to nominate preferred channels for receiving key updates. The results and feedback were incorporated into a number of internal communication activities, including the:

- launch of a digital internal newsletter @ The AAT in February 2013 – the monthly newsletter includes messages from the President and Registrar, information about changes to legislation, jurisdiction and practice, updates on projects and contributions from members and staff about activities in their registry
- launch of a Communication Champions network – key contacts at each of the Tribunal's registries assist in gathering news and information for internal communication activities
- implementation of an enhanced intranet home page to improve the look and functionality of the Tribunal's intranet.



## **MEDIA ENQUIRIES**

The Tribunal received 31 media enquiries in the reporting period from print, radio and television outlets. This was an increase of 14 on the previous year. Information was provided within 24 hours in relation to the majority of enquiries.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

With the launch of the eCase Search tool in March 2013, the Tribunal created and updated a range of communication materials (key brochures, fact sheets and the website) to provide information about the new facility and how the Tribunal handles personal information. The updated materials were re-published on the website, including in a range of languages other than English.

The Tribunal also developed a new series of fact sheets during the reporting period relating to its new jurisdiction to review decisions made by DisabilityCare Australia. They provide information about applying to the Tribunal and on the key steps in the Tribunal's review process, including conferences, conciliation and hearings.

## **WEBSITE**

The website provides information about the Tribunal and its services – for example, about applying for review, practice and procedure information and corporate information. In the financial year, the following new content was added to the website:

- AAT Online – the Tribunal's platform for electronic services which currently features the Tribunal's eCase Search facility
- the weekly AAT Bulletin which includes information about recent Tribunal decisions
- dedicated pages relating to the Tribunal's jurisdiction to review DisabilityCare Australia decisions.

During the reporting period, usage of the website continued to increase. The website generated around 546,000 hits (around 40,000 more than the previous year) with 45,700 visits per month.

## **LEGAL AND POLICY**

The Tribunal's Legal and Policy area provides advice and assistance to the President, Registrar and Executive Directors on legal and policy issues affecting the Tribunal and to meet the Tribunal's accountability obligations. The section also provides information and assistance to members and staff on legislative changes, case law developments and practice and procedure issues. It manages litigation when the Tribunal is named as a party, monitors appeals from Tribunal decisions, produces resource materials, coordinates reporting on Tribunal performance, and supports the Tribunal's Practice and Procedure Committee and Practice and Procedure Consultative Group.

During the reporting year, the area:

- implemented procedural changes associated with amendments to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal Regulations
- developed, and coordinated consultation on, proposed changes to case management in the workers' compensation jurisdiction and worked on the development of a comprehensive Tribunal privacy policy and related internal procedures for handling requests for access to information and documents held by the Tribunal
- launched three chapters of the revised Registry Procedures Manual and undertook significant work on revising the remaining chapters
- provided training to staff on practice and procedure developments
- advised on the ongoing development of the functionality and reporting capacity of the Tribunal's electronic case management system.

## LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

### LIBRARY NETWORK AND LIBRARY COMMITTEE

The Library Network consists of the Principal Registry library in Brisbane, and District Registry libraries in Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. The Network provides library and information services to all Tribunal members and staff, legal professionals appearing before the Tribunal and self-represented applicants. Library staff also organise and publish information on the Tribunal's internet and intranet sites and manage the electronic delivery of Tribunal decisions to publishers, government departments and agencies, and other interested parties.

During 2012–13, the Library Network delivered library orientation training to members' support staff, organised training sessions on a number of legal research databases, continued to negotiate access to a wider range of online information, improved the accessibility of the website and implemented the redesign of the intranet home page.

The Director, Library and Information Services also supports the Library Committee which oversees the development of the Tribunal's library collection, including making decisions on the selection of new library materials. The Committee liaised regularly during the year about purchases.

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The Tribunal engaged external consultants Recordkeeping Innovation Pty Ltd in 2011–12 to conduct a review of its information and records management practices and assist the Tribunal develop a strategy to improve its practices. Following consideration of the report of the review, the Tribunal has identified a range of projects that it will undertake over the coming years in this area. The work forms part of the broader program for implementing a suite of integrated systems to deliver online services and manage information electronically.

In the reporting period, the Tribunal selected Acrodata to assist the Tribunal develop a more comprehensive and integrated information and records management program. Interviews and workshops were conducted with Tribunal members and staff to ensure the program will meet its needs. The Tribunal will focus on the implementation of the program during 2013–14.

The Tribunal continued work in 2012–13 on the development of a new records authority under the *Archives Act 1983* in consultation with the National Archives of Australia. It is anticipated that the new authority will be issued in 2013–14 and implemented as part of the information and records management program.

## TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

The Tribunal's Technology Services team manages the planning, implementation and support of computer hardware, software, business systems and telecommunications used by the Tribunal.

The Technology Services team managed a range of projects in 2012–13 designed to ensure that the Tribunal's hardware and software are up-to-date, the network is secure and the Tribunal's members and staff are fully supported to undertake their work. Key achievements during the year included:

- commencement of a major server upgrade, including implementation of an enhanced business continuity and disaster recovery solution
- commencement of Secure Internet Gateway and Wide Area Network upgrade projects
- implementation of mandated email protective marking protocols
- work on enhanced network security measures
- implementation of enhancements to the Tribunal's case management system for the launch of the Tribunal's eCase Search facility.