

# Chapter // 04

Our users and our relationships

# Our users

The principal users of the AAT are the parties to applications in the Tribunal and their representatives. Parties may be individuals, organisations or government agencies. This part of the report provides information on actions undertaken during the reporting period relating to Goal One in the Tribunal's *Strategic Plan 2014–2017*: to provide a high-quality independent merits review process that is fair, just, economical, informal and quick. The strategic priorities were:

- ensuring we provide highly effective and efficient integrated dispute resolution processes
- providing accessible and effective registry services, and
- maintaining effective communication and engagement with our users and the public.

## Changes to the AAT's legislation

Following the announcement in May 2014 of the Government's decision to amalgamate the key Commonwealth merits review tribunals, the AAT worked closely with the Attorney-General's Department, the Migration Review Tribunal and Refugee Review Tribunal (MRT-RRT), the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT) and their portfolio departments on the development of the legislative amendments required to create the amalgamated AAT.

### ***Tribunals Amalgamation Act 2015***

The Tribunals Amalgamation Bill 2014 was introduced into the Parliament on 3 December 2014, was passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives in the Winter sittings and received Royal Assent on 26 May 2015. The *Tribunals Amalgamation Act 2015* commenced on 1 July 2015, amending the *Administrative Appeals Tribunal Act 1975*, the *Migration Act 1958*, relevant social services legislation and a number of other Acts.

The amending legislation has established the governance structure for the amalgamated AAT and introduced a revised divisional structure for the management of our workload from 1 July 2015. In particular, the new Migration and Refugee Division deals with applications formerly made to the MRT-RRT and the new Social Services and Child Support Division handles applications formerly made to the SSAT. The Small Taxation Claims Tribunal (STCT) has ceased to exist with all applications about tax decisions managed in the new Taxation and Commercial Division. A lower application fee continues to apply, however, in relation to the types of decisions that were reviewed in the STCT.

The amalgamation of the tribunals has not resulted in any diminution in rights of review. The two levels of merits review that existed for many decisions reviewed by the SSAT continue to be available by way of a first review in the Social Services and Child Support Division and a second review in the General Division.

While the *Tribunals Amalgamation Act 2015* has not made significant changes to the procedures that previously applied in the AAT, MRT-RRT and SSAT, changes were made to the AAT's statutory objective and some other aspects of the *Administrative Appeals Tribunal Act 1975* to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our processes, particularly in the jurisdictions formerly dealt with by the AAT.

The AAT's statutory objective under section 2A of the *Administrative Appeals Tribunal Act 1975* has been broadened so that the Tribunal is required to provide a mechanism of review that:

- is accessible
- is fair, just, economical, informal and quick

- is proportionate to the importance and complexity of the matter, and
- promotes public trust and confidence in the decision-making of the Tribunal.

Parties and their representatives are also required to use their best endeavours to assist the Tribunal to fulfil this objective: section 33(1AB).

Key changes to powers and procedures from 1 July 2015 include the following:

- the obligation on decision-makers to give the AAT, the applicant and any other party all documents they hold that are relevant to the review within 28 days after being notified of an application has been supplemented by an ongoing requirement to provide any relevant documents that come into their possession during the review process: section 38AA
- the President may give directions specifying for particular classes of applications the types of documents that a decision-maker is or is not required to give to us, the applicant and any other party under sections 37 and 38AA: section 18B(4)
- the Act makes clear that the types of directions we may give for the purposes of a review include limiting the number of witnesses who may be called, requiring witnesses to give evidence at the same time, limiting the time for giving evidence or making oral submissions and limiting the length of written submissions: section 33(2A)
- the Tribunal's powers to dismiss an application have been extended to include circumstances in which the Tribunal is satisfied an application has no reasonable prospect of success or is otherwise an abuse of process: section 42B.

### ***Administrative Appeals Tribunal Regulation 2015***

The *Administrative Appeals Tribunal Regulation 2015* was made on 25 June 2015 and commenced on 1 July 2015. It repealed the *Administrative Appeals Tribunal Regulations 1976*.

The new regulations continue to prescribe a similar range of matters to support the operation of the amalgamated AAT, including providing for the Veterans' Appeals Division and setting out the rules relating to the payment and refund of application fees. They have been updated to modernise and clarify various aspects of the Tribunal's practices and procedures which will contribute to more effective and efficient processes for the AAT and the parties. Key changes that have been made include:

- allowing the President to approve forms for the purposes of applications to the AAT rather than having forms prescribed in the regulations
- extending the ways in which documents, including summonses, may be given to a person for the purposes of applications to the AAT
- providing that a person who is summoned to produce documents to the AAT is entitled to be paid reasonable expenses for doing so, and
- clarifying the procedures for dealing with disputes relating to the amount of fees and allowances that are payable for complying with a summons issued by the AAT.

## **AAT practice and procedure**

The AAT monitors the operation of the review process and seeks to identify ways in which practice and procedure can be improved to promote the effective and timely disposition of applications lodged with the Tribunal.

Significant developments in relation to practice and procedure during the reporting period are discussed below.

## Practice directions, guides, guidelines and forms for the amalgamated AAT

A working group comprising representatives from the AAT, MRT-RRT and SSAT was established during the reporting year to consider changes that would be required to each tribunal's practice directions, guides, guidelines and forms as part of implementing the *Tribunals Amalgamation Act 2015*. Practice documents were revised in consultation with the President and Principal Members of the MRT-RRT and SSAT to:

- incorporate procedural and other changes made necessary by legislative changes, and
- where possible, harmonise procedures and streamline practice documents.

On 30 June 2015, the President approved new practice documents to take effect from 1 July 2015 and has subsequently issued further documents. Some apply to all divisions of the amalgamated AAT such as the *General Practice Direction*, the *Constituting the Tribunal President's Direction* and the *Persons Giving Expert and Opinion Evidence Guideline*. Other documents apply only to one or more of the divisions. The full set of practice documents is available on the AAT website.

In June 2015, the President wrote to stakeholders, including decision-makers, professional bodies, legal aid commissions and non-government organisations, to provide information about the proposed changes to the practice documents. The President advised that the amalgamated AAT would progressively review the revised practice documents and welcomed any comments on their implementation.

### **Review of Taxation and Commercial Decisions Practice Direction**

During the reporting year, we held a planning workshop to consider how management of cases may change with the transition to the amalgamated AAT. One of the outcomes of the workshop was the formation of a working group led by Deputy President Hack SC to develop a proposal for the management of applications in the new Taxation and Commercial Division.

The working group developed a proposed case management model incorporating national coordination and oversight. A draft practice direction was developed setting out the general principles underpinning the model and outlining the proposed procedures. In June 2015, the President and Deputy President Hack conducted a series of consultations with internal and external stakeholders across Australia. The feedback informed the finalisation of the practice direction.

On 30 June 2015, the President issued the *Review of Taxation and Commercial Decisions Practice Direction* which applies from 1 July 2015. It provides for the early allocation of each application to the member who will generally manage the case from lodgement to finalisation, including conducting any hearing. While some cases may be referred to the conference process, the first case event in most cases will be a directions hearing with the managing member at which:

- the issues in dispute are discussed
- directions are made in relation to the further material that will be lodged, and
- dates are set for an alternative dispute resolution process and the hearing.

The aim is to identify the real issues in dispute early, limit factual investigation to what is required in relation to those issues and adopt a case management strategy that will be most effective to achieve early resolution by way of agreement between the parties or by the AAT making a decision.

### **Integrated Dispute Resolution**

During 2014–15, an Integrated Dispute Resolution Working Group was established to explore opportunities for improving how we manage cases with a focus on mechanisms for increased collaboration between members, Conference Registrars and registry staff. The working group

is piloting the use of a team approach to the early assessment of social security cases in the Adelaide and Sydney Registries. The pilots commenced in March 2015 and will continue into the next reporting period before being evaluated. The working group has also undertaken targeted consultations with registry staff to identify further opportunities for improvements in collaboration and knowledge sharing within and between registries.

### ***Practice Direction relating to the Taxation of Costs***

In limited circumstances, and most commonly in the workers' compensation jurisdiction, the AAT has the power to order that a party to a proceeding pay the costs incurred by another party. If the parties cannot agree on the amount, they can apply to the Tribunal to tax the costs. On 10 April 2015, the President issued the *Practice Direction relating to the Taxation of Costs*, which outlines the process the AAT will follow. In summary, a Taxing Officer will give an estimate of the costs likely to be payable. If this is not accepted, a settlement conference will be held and then, if necessary, a full taxation.

## **Alternative dispute resolution**

We make extensive use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR). It is a core element of the review process. ADR contributes to a review process that is economical, informal and quick as well as fair and just by assisting the parties to reach agreement or narrow the issues in dispute. The activities outlined below were pursued during 2014–15 to enhance and promote the use of ADR in the AAT.

### **Improved data on ADR performance**

We have continued to focus on the production and analysis of data relating to ADR. Data on the duration of ADR events demonstrates that ADR is cost-effective. The average number of minutes spent in ADR per case finalised in 2014–15 was 60 minutes. The time investment required on the part of the AAT and the parties is therefore low to achieve very high rates of finalisation without a hearing and formal determination. In relation to timeliness, cases reached their last ADR event on average within 132 days in 2014–15. Given the AAT allows a minimum of 28 days for the decision-maker to lodge the documents that are relevant to the review prior to listing the first ADR event and time for the parties to gather further relevant material, this represents a timely finalisation of the ADR stage of AAT proceedings.

### **Improved collaboration on ADR**

We liaised with stakeholders in relation to the use of ADR in 2014–15, including specific discussions in the social security, taxation, veterans' affairs and workers' compensation jurisdictions. We contributed material to the development of ADR models at the Veterans' Review Board and also continued our participation in the independent study into the use of ADR processes in tax disputes involving the Australian Taxation Office conducted by the Australian Centre for Justice Innovation at Monash University.

### **Raising awareness of ADR**

To raise awareness of our approach and expectations in relation to ADR processes, AAT members and staff spoke at a variety of external conferences and seminars: see Appendix 8 for more information. We also continued with a competition for university students, Negotiating Outcomes on Time, which focuses on ADR processes. See page 47 for more details.

## High-quality ADR practitioners

All Conference Registrars, and members regularly involved in conducting ADR processes, are accredited as mediators under the National Mediator Accreditation Standards. The AAT is a Registered Mediator Accreditation Body and ensured that AAT mediators were offered a range of professional development activities in 2014–15 to maintain the competencies required by the Standards. Maintaining accreditation is a key mechanism to ensure quality and consistency in mediation practice within the Tribunal.

One measure of whether quality is being maintained is the rate of complaints about ADR processes or practitioners. As outlined in Table 3.15 of this report, the AAT received only two complaints in 2014–15 about the conduct of conferences. Given that the AAT conducted 8,321 ADR processes during this period, this is a very low level of complaints and indicates ADR processes are being conducted appropriately.

## eServices

The AAT is committed to providing accessible and effective services to our users and the public. In 2014–15, we continued work on projects aligned with our Electronic Services and Information Management Program which was developed to support the delivery of more electronic services and improve our ability to manage our information digitally.

In April 2015, we extended to Comcare electronic notification of applications made to the AAT. Another significant project was work undertaken with the MRT-RRT and SSAT in the first half of 2015 on an online forms solution which will enable the electronic lodgement of applications in the divisions of the AAT where online lodgement has not been available. It is anticipated this will be implemented in the second quarter of 2015–16.

The development of an eServices Strategy for the amalgamated AAT will be a priority in 2015–16.

## Communication and engagement with AAT users

The AAT uses various methods to engage with our users in relation to the services that we provide and to ensure those services meet the needs of users. We also communicate with our users in a variety of ways to assist their understanding of our role and procedures.

### Ongoing liaison with users

As part of our commitment to being an open and transparent organisation, the AAT met with regular users and other stakeholders during 2014–15.

Members and senior AAT staff held liaison meetings with representatives of the National Disability Insurance Agency to discuss a range of operational issues in the NDIS jurisdiction. District Registries arranged local liaison meetings with persons and organisations who appear regularly before the Tribunal – departments, agencies and other decision-makers, private legal practitioners, legal aid commissions, community legal centres and disability advocacy organisations. Some registries held meetings with users from all jurisdictions while others arranged jurisdiction-specific meetings. The meetings were a forum in which we could inform users of changes to practice and procedure and users could give feedback on the service the Tribunal is providing.

## Agency Multicultural Plan

The AAT engages with many people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and strives to be accessible and responsive to their needs. Our Agency Multicultural Plan set out actions to be taken over the two-year period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2015 to maintain and improve our performance in the provision of services to these users.

In 2014–15, we maintained our suite of information products in languages other than English and continued to promote and support Harmony Day. A number of members and Conference Registrars participated in cultural competency training. Work on some actions set out in the plan was deferred in light of the amalgamation of tribunals. A new Agency Multicultural Plan will be developed for the amalgamated AAT in 2015–16.

## Indigenous access to the AAT

The AAT is committed to improving access for Indigenous Australians. Among other initiatives, we have established an Indigenous Access Working Group which identifies and implements strategies in this area. Various activities and projects were completed or progressed during 2014–15.

## Reconciliation Action Plan

The AAT's *Reconciliation Action Plan 2014–2017* sets out a range of practical actions aimed at showing respect for, developing relationships with, and increasing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The plan focuses on ensuring the AAT and its personnel respond appropriately to the needs of Indigenous people, gathering better information and engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relation to access and service delivery issues, and attracting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Activities undertaken in 2014–15 included:

- the completion of Indigenous cultural competency training by a number of staff
- participation in NAIDOC week activities in various locations
- the revision of our application form to allow applicants to identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the implementation of changes to our electronic case management system to facilitate the recording of this information which will provide better data about Indigenous users of the AAT, and
- engagement with law schools and other organisations to promote Indigenous internships and other work experience opportunities at the Tribunal.

## Outreach activities

The working group has developed a program to promote communication and consultation with legal centres and advocacy organisations who deal with Indigenous clients, particularly in relation to the NDIS and social security issues. The aims of outreach are to:

- increase awareness about the right to challenge decisions and provide information about the appeal process and where people can get help, and
- connect with community workers, giving them resources and information, and liaising with them on how the Tribunal could improve its accessibility for the community.

In October 2014, District Registrar Catherine Cashen participated in an outreach visit to the Barkly region in the Northern Territory, one of the NDIS trial sites. District Registrar Cashen met with local community members, key service providers and representatives of the National Disability Insurance Agency.

## Information products

The AAT has a range of products available for users which provide information about our role and procedures. They include practice directions, guides, guidelines, fact sheets and our standard letters. A key focus during the reporting year was the revision and updating of our information products in advance of the amalgamation of the AAT, MRT-RRT and SSAT.

We developed two new fact sheets in plain language to inform users of the changes that would occur as part of the amalgamation. One fact sheet provides an overview of what the amalgamated AAT does and how to apply and the second focused on key changes for existing users of the merging tribunals. These were published online on 1 July 2015.

### AAT Alerts and the AAT Bulletin

AAT Alerts are emails to subscribers with information about AAT news and events. Two AAT Alerts were issued over the course of the reporting year.

Subscribers can also elect to receive the *AAT Bulletin*, a weekly publication that provides information on recent AAT decisions and appeals, changes to the Tribunal's jurisdiction and other important developments.

During the year, the number of subscribers to AAT Alerts continued to increase, rising to 929 at 30 June 2015 compared with 870 a year earlier. The number of subscribers to the *AAT Bulletin* also increased to 659, up from 502 a year earlier.

### Website

The AAT website provided key information for users and other visitors about the Tribunal's role, procedures and operations during the reporting year as well as enabling access to publicly available information about select applications lodged with the AAT through our eCaseSearch tool.

Major developments to the website during 2014–15 were:

- the introduction of a mobile and tablet friendly version of the website, and
- the implementation of the ReadSpeaker text-to-speech software which enhances access for users with a visual impairment and learning or literacy difficulties.

Usage of the website continued to increase. The number of unique visits for the year was 185,019 compared with 159,423 in 2013–14.

Significant work was also undertaken with the MRT-RRT and SSAT in 2014–15 on the development of a new website for the amalgamated AAT, including a refreshed design and updated content. The new website was launched on 1 July 2015.

## Our relationships

This part of the report provides information on actions undertaken to meet Goal Four in the AAT's *Strategic Plan 2014–2017*: to engage effectively with government, tribunals, the legal profession and other interested organisations in Australia and internationally. The strategic priorities were:

- contributing to strategic discussions, reviews and forums dealing with administrative review and related issues in Australia
- establishing and maintaining cooperative and collaborative engagements with courts and other tribunals, and with our international counterparts, and



- promoting greater understanding of the AAT and our role within the broader context of the AAT as an agency aimed at improving the accountability and transparency of government and the quality of government decision-making.

## Developing and enhancing links with government, other tribunals, organisations and individuals

The AAT maintained and developed relationships with a range of government departments and agencies, organisations and individuals during 2014–15.

### Liaison with the Attorney-General's Department, other departments and agencies

We worked closely with the Attorney-General's Department during the reporting year, particularly in relation to the amalgamation of tribunals but also on other matters, including the Tribunal's membership, budget and jurisdiction. We engaged with the Department as well as other agencies in relation to proposals that affect the Tribunal and in the context of reviews relevant to work the AAT undertakes.

In May 2014, the Government announced its proposal to transfer merits review of decisions under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* from the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) to the AAT. The Attorney-General's Department consulted the AAT on the legislation to give effect to the decision, the Freedom of Information Amendment (New Arrangements) Bill 2014. We also met with the OAIC to discuss practical issues relating to the proposal, including the proposed transfer to the AAT of reviews not finalised by the OAIC on commencement of the legislation.

Other liaison activities undertaken in 2014–15 included:

- consultation in relation to other proposed legislative amendments such as changes to the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*
- meeting with the Productivity Commission in relation to its review of the mutual recognition schemes to discuss our experiences in this area of jurisdiction.

### Amalgamation of tribunals

Implementation of the Government's decision to amalgamate the AAT, MRT-RRT and SSAT required extensive collaboration between the AAT, the other tribunals, the Attorney-General's Department, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Department of Social Services. This occurred in various ways.

The Attorney-General's Department convened a group comprising the President, the Principal Members of the MRT-RRT and SSAT and a Deputy Secretary from each of the portfolio departments to discuss key policy issues associated with the amalgamation. The Registrar of the AAT was a member of the Tribunals Amalgamation Steering Committee which included the Registrars of the MRT-RRT and SSAT as well as representatives from the portfolio departments and the Departments of Finance and Prime Minister and Cabinet. The AAT also liaised extensively with the Attorney-General's Department's Tribunals Amalgamation Taskforce which coordinated the project.

The President, the Principal Members of the MRT-RRT and SSAT and the Registrars of the tribunals met frequently during the reporting year to consider and decide the many issues raised by the establishment of an amalgamated AAT. Staff of the AAT participated in working groups which focused on planning for and implementing the changes required in the areas of finance, human resources, information technology, library and information services, property and security. A dedicated Transition Team was also created to progress a number of key tasks for the amalgamated organisation.

In addition to the cooperative work required in the context of the amalgamation, there was ongoing liaison between officers of the tribunals throughout the reporting period about matters such as learning and development activities and staff vacancies.

## Other forums

### Australian Institute of Administrative Law

The AAT participated in the activities of the Australian Institute of Administrative Law during the year, including the National Administrative Law Conference. Senior Member Professor Robin Creyke was an officer of the National Executive of the Institute and Member Regina Perton was a committee member of the Victorian Chapter.

### Council of Australasian Tribunals

The AAT is a member of the Council of Australasian Tribunals (COAT), an association for tribunals and those who work in, or have an interest in, tribunals in Australia and New Zealand. It consists of a National Council with local chapters, and was established to facilitate discussion and collaboration on matters relevant to tribunals.

We continued our involvement in the Council during the year, participating in COAT conferences as well as other training and networking opportunities. Tribunal members and staff were active contributors to the work of the Council. Justice Kerr was the Chair of the National COAT Executive during 2014–15. Senior Member Anne Britton continued in her roles as the Secretary for the National COAT Executive and Convenor of the New South Wales Chapter during her term of appointment to the AAT and Registrar Sian Leathan continued as Treasurer of the New South Wales Chapter. Deputy President Katherine Bean was the Secretary for the South Australian Chapter, and Member Regina Perton and District Registrar Susan Woodford were committee members of the Victorian Chapter.

## Resource-sharing arrangements

The AAT had cooperative arrangements with a number of courts and tribunals in relation to the provision of facilities and services either by the AAT or for the AAT in 2014–15.

### Federal Court of Australia

The AAT and the Federal Court continued to operate a joint registry in Hobart. Court staff provided registry services and conducted ADR processes for the Tribunal.

### Migration Review Tribunal–Refugee Review Tribunal

We provided accommodation and hearing room facilities for MRT-RRT members, including hearing room assistance and videoconferencing facilities. AAT staff in Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth received applications and handled enquiries on behalf of the MRT-RRT.

### Social Security Appeals Tribunal

We provided hearing rooms and related facilities for the SSAT in our Canberra Registry.

### Supreme Court of Norfolk Island

The AAT extended our agreement with the Administration of Norfolk Island for the Supreme Court of Norfolk Island to provide basic registry services in relation to applications made to the Tribunal.

## Veterans' Review Board

We made facilities available in our registries in Adelaide, Canberra, Hobart and Perth for the Veterans' Review Board to conduct hearings.

## International relationships and delegations

### International Association of Supreme Administrative Jurisdictions

The AAT is a member of the International Association of Supreme Administrative Jurisdictions (IASAJ), an organisation for bodies that are empowered to adjudicate public law disputes.

The association's purpose is to promote the exchange of ideas and experiences between jurisdictions. The IASAJ was founded in 1983, and the AAT has been a member since 2004.

In 2014, the IASAJ implemented an exchange program for judges to develop a better knowledge of judicial practices in other countries. The exchanges take the form of a two-week traineeship. The Federal Court and the AAT offered to host a judge. Ms Semeh Bey, a Judge of the Administrative Court of Tunisia, was the first judge to visit the Oceania region under this program. She completed her exchange in July 2014.

### International delegations

The AAT regularly hosts visitors from international courts and tribunals, as well as other organisations and individuals interested in gathering information on the Tribunal and our operations. These visits also provide an opportunity for us to learn about the public law systems of other countries and how similar organisations undertake their work.

In July 2014, we welcomed a delegation from Thailand led by the Office of the Administrative Courts of Thailand. The delegation was in Australia as part of the Court's Training Course on Administrative Law for Executives from the public and private sectors in Thailand.

In October 2014, we hosted a delegation from the Revenue Appeals Tribunal of Zambia. The focus of their visit was to gather information about the Tribunal's tax jurisdiction.

In April 2015, the Tribunal welcomed Judge Shota Watanuki, a judge of the Saga (Toyko) District Court and the 2014–15 Australian Network for Japanese Law Judge in Residence at the University of Sydney. Judge Watanuki was particularly interested in learning about the use of ADR at the AAT.

## Better understanding of the AAT and our role

We undertook a range of activities in 2014–15 aimed at promoting a better understanding of the Tribunal and our role in administrative law.

### AAT participation in external conferences, seminars and other activities

Members and staff gave presentations on the AAT and our operations at various external conferences, seminars and forums during the reporting period, helping to raise awareness of the Tribunal and our role in a variety of communities. These included general community information sessions relating to the review of NDIS and social security decisions.

See Appendix 8 for more information on these activities.

## AAT competitions

We offered two competitions for students during the year as a means of promoting understanding of administrative law and the Tribunal's role and processes. The National Mooting Competition gave students the opportunity to participate in an abridged version of a Tribunal hearing, while the Negotiating Outcomes on Time Competition involved participation in an ADR process.

### Mooting competition

The annual National Mooting Competition marked its 10th anniversary this year with a record number of thirty teams registered. The 2014 competition consisted of five rounds, running from July through to October.

Over a series of rounds, students made submissions to AAT members about the facts and how the law should be applied in realistic scenarios drawn from the Tribunal's customs, immigration, social security, veterans' affairs and workers' compensation jurisdictions. The competition allowed students to demonstrate their research and advocacy skills and promoted their understanding of practice in administrative law.

The competition culminated in the grand final which was held at the Brisbane Registry on 7 October 2014 before the President, Justice Kerr, Deputy President Ian Molloy and Senior Member Bernard McCabe. The team from the University of Queensland, consisting of Nathan Lindsay, Eloise Gluer and Erin Gourlay was successful. The runner-up team, from the University of Western Australia, consisted of Nigel Siegwart, Sam Pack and Cassandra Lee. Senior Member Egon Fice awarded Nathan Lindsay the Best Orator award for 2014.

All prizes were generously donated by the Law Council of Australia, which has been a longstanding supporter of the competition.



Left to right standing: Eloise Gluer, Nathan Lindsay, Erin Gourlay, Senior Member Fice, Samuel Pack, Cassandra Lee, Nigel Siegwart. Left to right seated: Deputy President Molloy, the Hon Justice Kerr, Senior Member McCabe.

## Negotiation competition

In 2015, we held our second Negotiating Outcomes on Time Competition (NOOT). The competition complemented the National Mooting Competition by offering students a realistic insight into conciliation processes, promoting the importance of early settlement discussions and articulating the high standards expected of legal practitioners in ADR processes.

Ten teams of Queensland law students took part in the final in the Brisbane Registry on 30 May 2015 and they displayed outstanding ADR skills. First place was awarded to Cameron McCormack and Tim Noonan (Bond University), second place to Jack Siebert and Hannah McAlister (University of Queensland) and third place to Felicity Young and Kristen Centorame (Bond University). The Best Communicator prize was awarded to Felicity Young (Bond University). The following teams were highly commended: Matthew Naylor and Stephanie Centorame (Bond University), Taylor McCaw, Rosemary Kirby and Daniel Posner (Queensland University of Technology) and Jonathan Chabowski, Jackson Saunders and Kit Yan Lam (Queensland University of Technology).

We extend our thanks to LEADR & IAMA and the Bond University Dispute Resolution Centre who provided the major prizes, the Law Council of Australia who sponsored the trophies, the Australian Mediation Association who contributed continuing professional development webinars and Bond University Faculty of Law who provided their purpose-built ADR training facilities for the preliminary rounds.

## Sponsored work experience placements and student visits

The AAT provides various opportunities for work experience candidates, creating meaningful opportunities for the students to develop an understanding of the Tribunal's role and processes. A number of placements were arranged during the reporting year.

The Adelaide Registry provided placements for two students under the University of Adelaide Public Law Internship Program and one student who completed a two-week placement as part of their Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice program requirements. The Brisbane Registry hosted a group of Year 11 and 12 students arranged by the University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre as part of the Inspire U Law Camp for Indigenous high school students from across Queensland. One student undertook work experience in the President's Chambers in the Hobart Registry and two students from the Leo Cussen Centre for Law undertook a placement in the Melbourne Registry.

The Sydney Registry maintained its relationship with the University of New South Wales, offering work experience placements to six students under the Law Faculty Public Interest Internship Program during the reporting period. The AAT also accepted three students from the University of Newcastle for placements under a similar arrangement. One student from the University of Wollongong completed a placement and we accepted our first student from the University of Wollongong's *Lucy Mentoring Program*, an innovative leadership program for female law students. One school student also completed a work experience placement.