

Chapter // 05

Our organisation and our people

This part of the report sets out information relating to the governance and administration of the AAT, 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 2014–2017* which relate to our organisation and our people:

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

Organisational management

The AAT has a range of structures, policies and practices in place which contribute to sound corporate governance and management.

Governance

The President of the AAT is responsible for ensuring the expeditious and efficient discharge of the AAT's business and for managing its administrative affairs. The President is assisted by the Registrar who is the Accountable Authority under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and the Agency Head for the purposes of the *Public Service Act 1999*.

During the reporting year, the Registrar was assisted by two Executive Directors who are Senior Executive Service employees. The Executive Director, Information and Development was Mr Christopher Matthies and the Executive Director, Operations was Ms Nerrilee Cuthbertson. Ms Carolyn Krochmal acted in the Executive Director, Operations role during the latter part of the reporting year.

Local management of each of the District Registries in 2014–15 was the responsibility of a Deputy President or Senior Member appointed as Executive Deputy President/Senior Member and a District Registrar. Table 5.1 lists the Executive Deputy Presidents and Senior Member who performed the role in 2014–15.

Table 5.1 Executive Deputy Presidents/Senior Member, 2014–15

REGISTRY	EXECUTIVE DEPUTY PRESIDENT/SENIOR MEMBER
Sydney	Deputy President Robin Handley Deputy President James Constance
Melbourne	Deputy President Stephanie Forgie
Brisbane	Deputy President Philip Hack SC
Adelaide	Deputy President Katherine Bean
Perth	Deputy President Stanley Hotop Deputy President Christopher Kendall
Hobart	Deputy President Raymond Groom AO Deputy President Gregory Melick AO RFD SC
Canberra	Senior Member Professor Robin Creyke Deputy President Gary Humphries

A number of committees comprising AAT members and staff assisted the President in relation to the management of the AAT in 2014–15.

The Executive Committee was responsible for monitoring and providing advice on a range of executive management matters, including budget, property and strategic planning. Its members included the President, Deputy President Constance, the Registrar, the Executive Directors, the Director, Alternative Dispute Resolution and District Registrar Carolyn Krochmal. The Executive Deputy Presidents Committee met regularly to discuss issues relating to the management of the AAT's caseload and to provide high level input to the President on significant organisational developments.

Other key member and staff committees which met to consider issues in specific areas of the AAT's operations in 2014–15 included the Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee, the Library Committee, the National Disability Insurance Scheme Monitoring Committee, the Practice and Procedure Committee, the Practice and Procedure Consultative Group, the Professional Development Committee and the Warrants Committee.

Information relating to the AAT's Audit Committee and other committees follows below.

Corporate planning

Following a planning process conducted in 2013–14, the AAT's *Strategic Plan 2014–2017* was released in July 2014. In addition to articulating our vision, mission and core values and behaviours, the plan set out strategies to achieve our goals in relation to our users, our people, our organisation and our relationships. These strategies informed the work plans of the Principal Registry and District Registries during the reporting year. Achievements are noted in Chapters 1, 4 and 5 of this report.

At the time the strategic plan was released, it was recognised that it would need to be revisited in light of the amalgamation of the AAT with the Migration Review Tribunal (MRT), Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) and Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT) from 1 July 2015. A revised strategic plan for the amalgamated AAT will be developed in addition to the corporate plan required under section 35 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

Financial management

The AAT's audited financial statements for 2014–15 follow this chapter.

The financial result for the reporting year is an operating surplus of \$2.970 million, prior to unfunded depreciation charges and revaluations. The surplus is a result of lower than anticipated spending on supplier and employee costs during the year. Our principal focus remains on our core business.

Purchasing

The AAT observed the core principles of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and relevant best practice guidelines in our purchasing activities in 2014–15. The Accountable Authority Instructions and other guidance material were relied on to ensure officials with purchasing duties achieved value for money, encouraged effective competition and ensured efficient, effective, economical and ethical procurement.

In relation to major purchases and contracts, open tender or prequalified tender processes were employed unless the procurement purchase was covered by a mandatory whole-of-government arrangement or a limited tender was appropriate in the particular circumstances. For purchases and contracts below the mandatory tender threshold, at least three quotes were generally

required, together with an assessment of the need justifying the purchase request and an analysis of why the selected quote would achieve value for money.

The AAT supports small business participation in the Commonwealth Government procurement market. We utilise the Commonwealth Contracting Suite for low-risk procurements valued under \$200,000 and use electronic systems to facilitate on-time payment of invoices. Small and Medium Enterprises and Small Enterprise participation statistics are available on the Department of Finance’s website: www.finance.gov.au/procurement/statistics-on-commonwealth-purchasing-contracts.

Consultants

We engage consultants where there is a need for independent research or assessment or for specialised or professional skills that are unavailable within the AAT. Consultants were engaged in 2014–15 to investigate an issue or problem, carry out an independent review or evaluation and provide independent advice that assisted with our decision-making on corporate matters. Any decision to engage a consultant is made in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and relevant internal policies noted above.

During 2014–15, the AAT entered into 20 new consultancy contracts involving total actual expenditure of \$241,428.66. One ongoing consultancy contract was active in 2014–15, involving total actual expenditure of \$52,534.05.

Table 5.2 sets out the AAT’s total actual expenditure on all consultancies in the three most recent reporting years.

Table 5.2 Trends in expenditure on consultancy contracts

	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Total actual expenditure (incl. GST)	\$192,209	\$241,387	\$293,963

Reporting on purchases

All purchases were gazetted as required. Details of all contracts of \$100,000 or more that are current in the most recent calendar or financial year are available on the AAT’s website in accordance with the Senate order on agency contracts.

There were no contracts of \$100,000 or more let in 2014–15 that did not include a clause providing for the Auditor-General to have access to the contractor’s premises.

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 1982*.

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.

Risk management

Audit and fraud control

During the reporting year, the AAT’s Audit Committee comprised an independent chairperson, another member who was a part-time member of the AAT until November 2014, a District Registrar and the Registrar. The committee met regularly to review operations, and to plan and approve the audit policy for the forthcoming year. It also advised the Registrar, who is the AAT’s

Accountable Authority, on matters such as the financial statements, compliance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and fraud control.

The AAT's independent internal auditor undertook an audit program during the reporting year covering a range of transactions to give assurance that our systems were complying with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and the Accountable Authority Instructions. This included auditing the Principal Registry's finance and human resources operations, which are audited annually, as well as the Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra Registries. Identified issues were addressed by management and reviewed by the Audit Committee. No major issues or risks were identified by the audits.

The Audit Committee implemented processes to enable the Registrar to complete the Certificate of Compliance for the 2014–15 financial year.

Membership of the Audit Committee will be altered in 2015–16 in light of the establishment of the amalgamated AAT and to comply with the requirements of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* relating to the constitution of audit committees.

CERTIFICATION OF AAT FRAUD CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS

I, Sian Leathem, certify that I am satisfied the AAT:

- has prepared fraud assessments and fraud control plans
- has in place appropriate fraud prevention, detection, investigation and reporting mechanisms that meet the specific needs of the AAT, and
- has taken all reasonable measures to appropriately deal with fraud relating to the AAT.



Sian Leathem

Registrar

28 September 2015

Insurance

The AAT is insured through Comcover. In general terms, we have a low risk of insurance exposure and a limited likelihood of major disruption to our services. However, cover is provided should that occur. There was a small increase in the insurance premium in 2014–15.

Risk assessment and planning

The AAT regularly assesses its risk position, particularly for risks that may have an impact on national operations. These assessments consider registry operations, public interaction and information systems, and link with the Fraud Control Plan. We maintain and regularly update our risk documentation as well as national and local business continuity plans. The AAT's Business Continuity Management Committee comprising the Registrar and a number of senior managers met regularly in 2014–15.

Maintaining ethical standards

Rules and standards relevant to ethical conduct, including the APS Values, Code of Conduct and Employment Principles, are incorporated into the AAT's policies, guidelines and instructions.

The APS Values, Code of Conduct and Employment Principles are available on the intranet. Online training relating to the Values and Code was available to all staff and formed part of our induction process in 2014–15. All new staff were provided with a copy of the APS Values, Code of Conduct and Employment Principles as well as relevant excerpts from the *Crimes Act 1914* and the Australian Privacy Principles, and were required to sign a statement confirming they had read and understood them.

The Tribunal's Learning and Development Manager conducted face-to-face training on the APS Values, Code of Conduct and Employment Principles for individuals and small groups on request during the reporting year. Some AAT staff also attended similar sessions for SSAT staff conducted by the SSAT.

Property and security

During 2014–15, the AAT operated from commercially-leased premises in Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, and from the Commonwealth Law Courts buildings in Brisbane and Hobart.

Following the announcement in May 2014 of the Government's decision to amalgamate the AAT, MRT-RRT and SSAT, focused planning commenced for co-location of tribunal premises into single locations in each city. A Long Term Accommodation Masterplan was adopted in May 2015, which establishes the guiding principles to be used to select and manage accommodation.

On 30 June 2015, the AAT signed a lease for new premises in Sydney which involves taking up additional space in the building occupied by the former MRT-RRT. Property arrangements for Perth are being finalised. A property search for premises in Brisbane commenced in April 2015 and preparatory work for property searches in Melbourne and Adelaide commenced in October 2014 and March 2015 respectively.

In relation to security, some further recommendations originally made in the AAT's 2012 Security Risk Review and 2013 Enterprise Security Risk Assessment were implemented in 2014–15 to improve our compliance with the Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF). We submitted our second annual PSPF compliance report in August 2014 and achieved a high level of compliance.

In February 2015, a review of the protective security arrangements in place across the AAT, MRT-RRT and SSAT was commissioned to assist in planning for the amalgamated AAT.

We place a high priority on security to ensure that members, staff and visitors are in a safe and secure environment at our premises. Measures to ensure physical security that were in place in 2014–15 included secure office areas accessible by proximity card, photo ID cards, and duress alarms installed in conference and hearing rooms and at registry counters to protect members, staff and others in the event of an incident. The AAT arranged additional security services for conferences and hearings as required. If necessary, for matters involving a security risk, we may arrange with the Family Court or the Federal Court to use their court rooms and security arrangements.

The Australian Government Security Vetting Agency undertook security vetting of staff whose duties require a security clearance, in compliance with the PSPF.

Management of human resources

This part of the report provides information on our effectiveness in managing and developing our staff to achieve our objectives.

Staffing overview

At 30 June 2015, the AAT had 157 employees under the *Public Service Act 1999*: 94 ongoing and 63 non-ongoing, of whom 25 were engaged to undertake duties that are irregular or intermittent

Table 5.3 shows the AAT's staffing numbers over the last three years by engagement type, classification level, full-time or part-time status, gender and location. A more detailed breakdown of staffing at 30 June 2015 is in Appendix 2.

Table 5.3 Trends in staffing numbers

	30 JUNE 2013	30 JUNE 2014	30 JUNE 2015
Total	163	156	157
BY ENGAGEMENT TYPE			
Ongoing	109	105	94
Non-ongoing (irregular/intermittent)	54 (18)	51 (20)	63 (25)
BY CLASSIFICATION CATEGORY			
SES	2	2	2
Executive Level	33	34	37
APS Level	128	120	118
BY FULL-TIME/PART-TIME STATUS			
Full-time	117	113	115
Part-time (including irregular/intermittent)	46	43	42
BY GENDER			
Men	47	45	53
Women	116	111	104

Table 5.3 Trends in staffing numbers (continued)

	30 JUNE 2013	30 JUNE 2014	30 JUNE 2015
BY LOCATION			
Adelaide	16	16	14
Brisbane	38	38	41
Canberra	11	11	13
Hobart	5	4	5
Melbourne	27	22	22
Perth	18	17	16
Sydney	48	48	46

Total staffing numbers at 30 June 2015 were similar to the previous year. However, there was some change in the numbers of ongoing and non-ongoing staff. The reduction in ongoing staff was the result of a mix of resignations and retirements, staff taking extended leave and staff on secondments to other agencies. The increase in non-ongoing staff related partly to the continued operation in 2014–15 of the restrictions on filling vacancies in the Australian Public Service, particularly ongoing staff, but also the need for some additional staff to assist on a short-term basis with the increased workload associated with the amalgamation of the AAT.

Employment agreements and arrangements

During 2014–15, most of the AAT’s staff were covered by the AAT’s enterprise agreement known as the *Administrative Appeals Tribunal Agency Agreement 2011–2014*. It originally came into force on 29 August 2011 and nominally expired on 30 June 2014.

Bargaining for a new enterprise agreement commenced on 21 July 2014 and 14 meetings of the Agency Bargaining Committee were held during 2014–15. Bargaining will continue in 2015–16 with a committee which includes management and staff representatives for the amalgamated AAT.

As at 30 June 2015, five employees had entered into Individual Flexibility Arrangements. The terms and conditions of employment of one employee was set out in a determination made under section 24(1) of the *Public Service Act 1999*. No AAT employees were covered by an Australian Workplace Agreement at 30 June 2015.

More detail about the number of employees covered by the AAT’s enterprise agreement and by individual employment arrangements at 30 June 2015 is shown in Table A2.3 of Appendix 2. Table A2.3 also shows the salary ranges available for the AAT’s employees by classification level.

Senior Executive Service employee remuneration

Remuneration for the AAT’s Senior Executive Service employees 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 AAT in 2014–15. The AAT did not have a performance pay or bonus system for any employee.

Non-salary benefits

Non-salary benefits that were available to the AAT's staff in 2014–15 under the enterprise 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, and
- health and wellbeing benefits such as assistance for group or individual participation in health and fitness activities, the Employee Assistance Program, eyesight testing and flu vaccinations.

Studies assistance

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

Requests for studies assistance were approved in 2014–15 for studies in government, law, management and training and assessment. Thirteen staff gained approval for financial support with total expenditure of \$21,620.

Performance management program

In accordance with the AAT's Performance Management Program in place during 2014–15, all ongoing AAT staff were required to have performance agreements and training and development plans. Staff appraisals were conducted in accordance with the performance management guidelines, taking leave of absence and other approvals for extension into consideration. Staff advanced to the next salary point if their performance was assessed as fully effective or higher.

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

During the reporting year, work commenced on revising our performance management framework. It is anticipated that a revised framework for the amalgamated Tribunal will be implemented in 2015–16.

Learning and development

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

Major professional development activities

A major focus in the reporting period was on preparing employees for change in relation to the amalgamation of the AAT, MRT-RRT and SSAT. AAT staff in each registry participated in two programs between September and December 2014: an Australian Public Service Commission “Dealing with Change” workshop delivered by facilitators from the AAT and SSAT and a building resilience at work session.

Another identified priority was further development of the change management capabilities of the AAT’s leaders and senior managers. The Australian Public Service Commission Strategic Centre for Leadership, Learning and Development delivered its two-day “Planning and Managing Change” program in Sydney and Melbourne in February 2015. The program was positively evaluated with most participants reporting increased confidence in leading and managing change as a consequence of their participation.

In November 2014, members, Conference Registrars and staff undertaking work in the NDIS jurisdiction came together for a one-day colloquium. It provided an opportunity for further training on the legislative framework and to discuss our experiences to date in relation to the review of decisions made under the scheme.

Members’ professional development

The AAT’s Members’ Professional Development Program was developed as a comprehensive program based on a framework of competencies specific to the AAT. It comprises induction, mentoring, appraisal and other professional development opportunities.

One formal group induction program was conducted in 2014 and local individualised programs were arranged for newly appointed members. The induction program included a comprehensive introduction to the AAT, our key jurisdictions and operations.

Under the AAT’s mentoring scheme, new members were paired with a more experienced member to assist them to gain a better understanding of the workings of the AAT and their role. Senior Member Bernard McCabe was the coordinator of the Mentoring Scheme during 2014–15.

The appraisal scheme combines self-assessment with appraisal by another AAT 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.

The Members’ Professional Development Program is being revised in light of the amalgamation of the AAT, MRT-RRT and SSAT from 1 July 2015. Work is being undertaken on developing a revised competency framework as well as guidelines and associated tools for induction, mentoring and appraisal for members of the amalgamated AAT.

In relation to professional development activities for members, a priority identified for 2014–15 was the development of a program on understanding and engaging with people in hearings, particularly self-represented parties. Members of the AAT’s Professional Development Committee worked with subject-matter experts from the National Judicial College of Australia to contextualise for tribunal members a program that the College had developed for the judiciary. A two-day pilot program was delivered in Sydney and Melbourne in April 2015 which

was attended by members from the AAT and MRT-MRT. It is anticipated the College may offer the program to other tribunals in the future.

We actively sought to develop closer ties with the College during 2014–15. AAT members participated in a number of courses conducted by the College, including the witness assessment program and the inaugural online decision-making program for tribunal members and judicial officers.

A range of other learning activities was offered to members during 2014–15. Members attended in-house professional development sessions, including a decision-writing course 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

The AAT's Conference Registrars have a Professional Development Program which is also based on a framework of competencies specific to the AAT and includes induction, mentoring, reflective learning, peer review and performance appraisal.

Conference Registrars participated in a range of professional development activities in 2014–15. Internal activities were focused on working effectively with Tribunal users, including cultural competency training, and recent developments in the NDIS and tax jurisdictions. Access to continuing professional development assisted Conference Registrars to meet requirements to remain accredited under the National Mediator Accreditation System.

Staff learning and development

Learning and development for staff during the reporting year sought to meet the learning needs of individuals and teams in all registries. Staff undertook in-house activities as well as a range of external conferences, seminars and workshops.

Internal learning and development sessions were delivered in a variety of modes in 2014–15 that included face-to-face delivery, e-learning programs and collaborative approaches. Foundation and core skills development was addressed in 2014–15 with face-to-face sessions on information and records management as well as access to online modules on diversity, security awareness and work health and safety. Seminars and workshops developed capabilities in constructive conversations at work, performance conversations, and writing, editing and proofreading.

Membership of learning communities

The AAT continued to work collaboratively with other Australian tribunals and courts on member and staff training initiatives during the reporting year, particularly with the MRT-RRT and SSAT. We shared information about developments in this area and developed and facilitated shared training opportunities. The AAT was also involved in a project initiated by the Council of Australasian Tribunals to develop an online induction program for tribunal members.

Work health and safety

The AAT is committed to providing and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment through cooperative, consultative relationships. It is also committed to introducing and promoting measures for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all workers.

To ensure that members and staff understand the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and their duties under it, Comcare's e-learning programs for workers and managers are available on our intranet. All new staff, as well as staff acting for the first time in roles involving management or supervisory responsibilities, were required to complete the modules during the reporting year.

Health and wellbeing initiatives available to all employees during 2014–15 included the Employee Assistance Program, eyesight testing, flu vaccinations, providing taxis to increase personal safety in certain circumstances and assistance with return to work costs.

We continued to make available to members and staff e-learning modules on best practice for manual handling and ergonomics and they were included as part of the AAT's induction program. Workstation assessments and training were undertaken in all registries and remedial action implemented as required.

A Mental Health First Aid e-learning program was available to all members and staff on the intranet. It complemented access to two other mental health guides from the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Australian Public Service Commission.

All AAT First Aid Officers completed training in 2014–15 and received particular guidance in the use of external defibrillators which were available in all registries. We also funded training for backup First Aid Officers to cover staff absences.

The AAT's Health and Safety Committee met four times during the reporting year and minutes of meetings were made available to all members and staff on the intranet. Health and Safety Representatives conducted regular formal and informal inspections in their registries, finding no specific registry issues that had a national impact or required central involvement.

The AAT continued to have a low number of compensation claims as shown in Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4 Trends in compensation claims

	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Number of claims accepted	4	0	0

Notifiable incidents and investigations

There were no notifiable incidents that the AAT was required to report to Comcare in 2014–15 under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*. Comcare did not undertake any investigations in relation to the AAT during the reporting year, nor did it issue any notices to the AAT.

Workplace harassment

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

The AAT's Workplace Diversity Officer in 2014–15 was a qualified lawyer and mediator experienced in resolving disputes and dealing with harassment issues. The officer was available for all members and staff. The AAT also had three Workplace Harassment Contact Officers, including one member.

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 AAT in general. The Registrar approved a Workplace Diversity Statement of Commitment in June 2015. A new Workplace Diversity Plan will be developed for the amalgamated AAT in 2015–16.

Appendix 2 shows the number of staff in various equal employment opportunity categories. Table 5.5 shows the number of ongoing and non-ongoing AAT employees who identify as Indigenous as at 30 June 2015 and for the two previous years.

Table 5.5 Employees who identify as Indigenous

	30 JUNE 2013	30 JUNE 2014	30 JUNE 2015
Ongoing	1	1	1
Non-ongoing	0	0	0
Total	1	1	1

National Consultative Committee

The AAT's National Consultative Committee continued to provide a forum in 2014–15 for the exchange of information between management and staff in relation to workplace matters and for consultation on issues with Tribunal-wide implications. It formed part of the AAT's commitment to cooperative workplace relations and participatory decision-making.

The National Consultative Committee was chaired by the Executive Director, Operations and included seven staff representatives and four management representatives. Three meetings were held and minutes were made available on the intranet.

Productivity gains

The AAT utilised the available member, staff and other resources during the reporting year to conduct a greater number of conferences and hearings and to sustain the total number of applications that were finalised. This reflects a range of efforts to deal with cases effectively and efficiently.

We maintained our 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 2014–15.

During the reporting year, a number of options for productivity improvements were identified as part of the enterprise bargaining process and in the work undertaken by the Integrated Dispute Resolution Working Group. Further work on productivity will be undertaken in 2015–16 in the context of the amalgamated AAT.

Benevolent trust

The AAT'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 2014–15, the trust received one request from a staff member for financial assistance. The trustees approved a grant and an interest-free loan to assist that person.

Information and development

The AAT's Information and Development Section delivered communications, legal and policy, library and information management and technology services to the Tribunal in 2014–15. The Section contributed to achieving the AAT's priorities, as set out in the *Strategic Plan 2014–2017*, in a number of ways.

Communications

The AAT developed and implemented strategies during the reporting year to meet its internal and external communication needs. The focus of external communication activities were tasks associated with the amalgamation of the AAT with the MRT-RRT and SSAT undertaken in collaboration with the other tribunals. These included working with a design agency to develop the look and feel for the amalgamated AAT, coordinating the roll out of revised templates and assisting with the development of the new website and other information products to help inform our users and stakeholders about the role and operations of the amalgamated AAT.

Amalgamation was also a focus for internal communications. @ *The AAT*, our monthly internal newsletter was published throughout 2014–15 with the assistance of the Tribunal's network of Communications Champions and was a key channel for keeping members and staff informed about developments. In May 2015, a weekly Amalgamation Update newsletter was created to provide information to members and staff across all three tribunals. Work was also undertaken during the reporting year on the development of a new intranet for the amalgamated AAT which launched on 1 July 2015.

We responded to 43 media enquiries from print, radio and television outlets in 2014–15. This was at a similar level to the previous year. Information was provided within 24 hours in relation to the majority of enquiries.

Information management

The AAT continued work during the reporting year on a range of projects aimed at improving the AAT's information and records management. They included:

- completing the implementation of the AAT's new records authority issued under the *Archives Act 1983*
- assisting the AAT's District Registries to improve the management of their electronic records in accordance with our business classification system
- delivering records management training, and
- working on projects relating to the management of administrative records for the amalgamated AAT.

Legal and policy

The AAT's Legal and Policy team advised and assisted the President, Registrar and Executive Directors during 2014–15 on a range of legal and policy issues affecting the AAT, and helped the Tribunal meet its accountability obligations. The Legal and Policy team provided information and assistance to members and staff on legislative changes and practice and procedure issues and also undertook a range of other tasks, including managing litigation in which the AAT was named as a party, monitoring appeals from Tribunal decisions, managing freedom of information requests, producing resource materials, coordinating reporting on AAT

performance, and supporting the Practice and Procedure Committee and the Practice and Procedure Consultative Group.

A significant part of the Legal and Policy team's work in 2014–15 related to the amalgamation of the AAT, MRT-RRT and SSAT and included:

- coordinating the AAT's contribution to the development of the legislative amendments required to give effect to the creation of the amalgamated AAT, and
- working with officers of the MRT-RRT and SSAT to produce a revised and updated set of practice documents and internal authorisations and delegations for the amalgamated AAT.

Library and information services

The Library Network provided library and information services to AAT members and staff, legal professionals appearing before the Tribunal and self-represented parties during the reporting year. The Library Network was also responsible for publishing and managing information on the AAT's website and intranet, and managing the delivery of AAT decisions to publishers, government departments and agencies, and other interested parties. Libraries were located in the Principal Registry in Brisbane, and the District Registries in Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney.

The Director, Library and Information Services supported the AAT's Library Committee which oversaw the development of the library collection. The Committee made decisions on the selection of new library materials and monitored the implementation of changes to the print collection based on changing usage patterns.

Library Network staff also worked closely with officers of the MRT-RRT and SSAT in 2014–15 on preparations for amalgamation. Following an audit of collections, services and systems in each of the tribunals, recommendations were made and actions implemented in relation to the consolidation of subscriptions, and changes to decisions publication processes from 1 July 2015. A roadmap for further consolidation of services, collections and systems for the amalgamated AAT during 2015–16 was also developed.

Technology services

The Technology Services team managed the planning, implementation and support of computer hardware, software, business systems and telecommunications in 2014–15. Key achievements during the reporting year included:

- working with officers of the MRT-RRT and SSAT on a range of projects to facilitate the ICT requirements associated with amalgamation of the tribunals, including implementing email and network connectivity and shared systems
- further deployment of features of the system installed in 2013–14 to improve security compliance and other network management activities, and
- implementing a technical upgrade to the AAT's case management system, TRACS.