

# Chapter 5: Our people and our organisation

This chapter describes the Tribunal's performance in meeting the goals identified in the 2006–07 Organisational Plan in relation to its people and the organisation.

## **Our people**

The Tribunal's goal in relation to its people is:

*To maintain professional standards and a positive, safe and productive workplace that values diversity.*

This section of the report describes the activities undertaken by the Tribunal during the reporting period that are directed to meeting this goal.

### **Professional Development Committee**

The Professional Development Committee met in December 2006 and May 2007. The Committee considered a range of matters relating to the professional development of Tribunal members, including the nature and content of the induction program for new members, the mentoring program, the Tribunal's internal conference program and other professional development activities. Significant developments that occurred during the reporting period are outlined separately in this section of the report.

### **Members' Professional Development Program**

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

The program continues to evolve under the direction of the Professional Development Committee. In the past year, the program has included many important initiatives including regional conferences, the implementation of the mentoring scheme, seminars, workshops, tutorials and local registry professional development meetings.

#### ***Induction program for new members***

Induction programs for new members were held in Sydney in July 2006 and in November 2006.

The induction program provides new members with a comprehensive overview of the Tribunal and its mission. It acquaints new members with the principles and practice of administrative law, the Tribunal's jurisdiction, the practice and procedure of the Tribunal and case management in the Tribunal. The program is delivered by experienced Tribunal members and senior staff. The induction is designed to deliver a consistent experience for all members.

A comprehensive evaluation of the induction program was undertaken during September 2006. Members who had participated in previous programs were surveyed in relation to the timing, pitch, form and content of the program and were asked to provide suggestions for improving the program. Members indicated that they found the program content highly relevant and useful as they took up their new roles. They valued the opportunity for group discussion about complex legal and other issues, and the development of networks with more experienced members.

#### ***Mentoring and appraisal***

All new members attending the induction programs in 2006 were allocated a mentor. New members and their mentors had an initial face-to-face meeting during the induction program. It is expected that, over the course of the following year, new members and their mentors will have discussions from time to time about issues relating to their new role. These may occur in person, by telephone or by email.

Senior Member Narelle Bell, the Mentoring Scheme Coordinator, continues to liaise with mentors and new members who are being mentored. In her last report to the Professional Development Committee she indicated that both new members being mentored and mentors had found the program to be of benefit.

Deputy President Deane Jarvis is the current Appraisal Scheme Coordinator. The appraisal scheme framework has been implemented and the first round of peer appraisals will be conducted over a two-year period.

## Training and development for members and staff

There have been many initiatives during the reporting year aimed at maintaining and enhancing the skills and knowledge of Tribunal members and staff. These included:

- regional conferences involving members, Conference Registrars and District Registrars;
- workshops on decision writing conducted by Professor James Raymond in the Tribunal in September 2006 and April 2007;
- training on alternative dispute resolution processes;
- a range of in-house seminars, tutorials, workshops and round table discussions;
- the National Staff Conference in Melbourne in October 2006;
- biannual District Registrars' meetings;
- members and staff attending conferences, including the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration's Tribunals' Conference and the annual conference of the Australian Institute of Administrative Law; and
- members and staff participating in external training courses run by the Australian Public Service Commission, Australian Government Solicitor and others.

The organisation-wide staff learning and development program is aligned and linked with the Tribunal's Organisational Plan and

reflects the values of the Tribunal. The program also seeks to meet the learning needs of individuals and teams across all registries. The Tribunal also continues to liaise with other tribunals with a view to developing joint training activities and programs for staff where appropriate.

Priorities for staff learning and development have been further refined through information gathered from a recent organisation-wide training needs analysis. Learning and development initiatives are also developed in response to individual staff development plans as well as feedback gathered from session evaluations and during meetings and other forums held within the Tribunal.

During the reporting year, the staff learning and development calendar included activities relating to the following areas: appraisals and appraising, the Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct, better health strategies, case management, clear writing, cultural awareness and diversity, financial accountability, office ergonomics, online legal research, security awareness, team work, Tribunal practice and procedure issues and working effectively with self-represented parties.

### *Tribunal conferences*

#### *National Staff Conference*

The National Staff Conference was held in Melbourne during October 2006.



*Staff at the 2006 National Staff Conference.*



*Arthur Gotzordis, Cherie McFadden, Ros Hunt at the 2006 National Staff Conference.*

The conference provided an opportunity for staff located in registries across the country to be trained together as well as to meet and share information.

The conference program included sessions on managing information, interacting with users with special needs, the new electronic case management system, the review of registry processes undertaken by the Work Organisation Group, Tribunal practice and procedure and working with interpreters. Representatives from each registry also provided updates and progress reports on major initiatives within their registry.

#### *Regional conferences*

Members, Conference Registrars and District Registrars attended a series of regional conferences in the second half of 2006 and early 2007. The conferences provided an opportunity for members and senior staff in each registry to develop a program that would meet their particular organisational or professional development needs. A variety of topics were covered, including evaluating expert evidence, recent cases of interest and the Tribunal's use of alternative dispute resolution processes.



*Members at the ACT/NSW Regional Conference.*

### **Staff induction program**

During the year a working party was formed to revise the Tribunal's staff induction program. The working party was involved in the development of the Australian Public Service induction program CD ROM, "Your guide to working in the Australian Public Service" by participating in the consultation and evaluation process. The working party is now involved in customising this program to meet the needs of the Tribunal.

### **A positive, safe and productive workplace that values diversity**

#### ***Occupational health and safety***

The Tribunal gives priority to the health and work safety of its members and staff. In accordance with Comcare requirements and to assist in monitoring occupational health and safety issues, the Tribunal has a National Occupational Health and Safety Committee, which includes staff representatives from each registry. The committee meets regularly by telephone to discuss issues including site reports, incident reporting and recent information releases from Comcare. Expressions of interest are sought from staff members to act as health and safety representatives. Representatives attend appropriate training from providers, including Comcare.

Workplace assessments are undertaken by the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service or similar providers for the benefit of staff where occupational health and safety problems are identified. Assessments are conducted in relation to matters such as posture, workstation set-up and equipment requirements. Remedial action is implemented. 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.

A trial of an internally-administered injury management scheme aimed at addressing low-cost injuries continued during the reporting year. The scheme provides injured employees with the option of seeking immediate reimbursement by the Tribunal for costs outlaid in managing their injuries. Employees continue

to have the right to lodge a formal claim for compensation through Comcare at any time in the future. This scheme facilitates quick resolution of minor work-related injuries.

The Comcare Occupational Health and Safety Incident Reporting Guidelines are in place and are supplemented with Tribunal instructions. There were no reportable incidents during 2006–07 and no investigations into the Tribunal's operations.

The Tribunal has commenced preparations for replacing its current Occupational Health and Safety Policy with new Health and Safety Management Arrangements.

### ***Productivity gains***

The Tribunal is pursuing several initiatives designed to achieve further productivity gains in its operations. The broad-based learning and development program aims to address the identified learning needs of employees. Specific training to improve personal and office-wide skills continues to be targeted.

During 2006–07, the Victorian Registry introduced the administrative model for processing applications already in operation in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Case officers manage a set of applications from lodgement to finalisation rather than performing specific tasks in relation to all applications.

As has been noted in Chapter 4, a general review of registry processes was undertaken during the year by the Work Organisation Group. The group, comprising staff at different levels from each of the Tribunal's registries, made a number of recommendations designed to ensure that the Tribunal's work organisation model is nationally consistent. The group sought to identify the best of the Tribunal's existing practices and to suggest new processes that would enhance the efficient processing of applications. The majority of the group's recommendations have been accepted and many have been implemented.

The Tribunal's new electronic case management system, TRaCS, was implemented during 2006–07. It is anticipated that the system will facilitate a range of more efficient work practices and time-saving measures over time.

### ***Tribunal Benevolent Fund***

A benevolent trust funded by voluntary contributions from members and staff and managed by elected trustees was established in 2003. The trust is able to provide financial support in circumstances where a Tribunal member or staff member, or a member of his or her immediate family, suffers misadventure or illness from any cause. The trust provided assistance to one member of staff in the 2006–07 year.

### ***Tribunal sporting activities***

The Tribunal encourages a healthy lifestyle for its staff by making a financial contribution towards the registration of Tribunal teams in sporting competitions and activities. Staff in the New South Wales Registry fielded a team, the AATackers, in a lunchtime netball competition during the year. Members and staff in the Victorian Registry formed walking and running teams that participated in the Melbourne City Sports Corporate Cup series. Both teams placed first in their respective divisions in the Spring 2006 season and second in the Autumn 2007 season.

### ***Workplace diversity***

The Tribunal recognises that people have different qualities, skills, qualifications and experience. Valuing and making proper and effective use of these differences can improve the workplace for individuals and enhance the overall performance of the Tribunal. These attitudes are reflected in the Tribunal's Workplace Diversity Plan, which can be viewed on the Tribunal's website at: [www.aat.gov.au/CorporatePublications/WorkplaceDiversityPlan.htm](http://www.aat.gov.au/CorporatePublications/WorkplaceDiversityPlan.htm).

The Tribunal's Workplace Diversity Committee, which comprises Tribunal staff representatives and a Tribunal member, met several times during the reporting year. The Committee continues to be involved in the Tribunal's Indigenous employment strategy, including

supporting the Tribunal's Aboriginal School Based Traineeship planned for the Perth Registry. Minutes from the meetings are made available to members and staff via the intranet.

Appendix 2 provides information on the number of staff members who have indicated that they fall within particular equal employment opportunity categories. This includes the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

#### *Accessible Government Services For All Report*

The Tribunal contributed to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's report on "Accessible Government Services for All" which replaced the Access and Equity Annual Report. The Tribunal submitted a self-assessment against the relevant criteria.

#### *Reconciliation Action Plan*

On 28 May 2007, the Tribunal finalised its Reconciliation Action Plan. The plan aims to promote reconciliation through the engagement of Indigenous Australian employees and promoting awareness of the Tribunal's services among Indigenous Australians. The plan is available on the Tribunal's website ([www.aat.gov.au](http://www.aat.gov.au)).

#### *Indigenous traineeship*

The Tribunal has implemented an Indigenous employment strategy, providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees with an opportunity to learn basic clerical job skills and to prepare for a career in the Australian Public Service or elsewhere. The Tribunal's second trainee was selected to undertake a one-year clerical traineeship in June 2007 and is due to commence work in the Queensland Registry in July 2007. The traineeship will include work placements in the Principal Registry Finance and Human Resources Sections.

During the year, the Tribunal explored the possibility of extending its Indigenous employment strategy to include a traineeship for a school aged Indigenous person in the Perth Registry. Perth's Aboriginal School Based Traineeship will commence in 2007–08 and is aimed at a student in Years 10 to 12 who will attend school for four days per week with the fifth day spent at the registry.

#### *Workplace Harassment Contact Officer network*

The Tribunal has nine Workplace Harassment Contact Officers across its registries, including one Tribunal member. The officers have undertaken training with the Australian Public Service Commission and operate as a national network. Tribunal members and staff members are able to contact any Workplace Harassment Contact Officer within the network.

All members and staff of the Tribunal are entitled to a workplace free from intimidation and harassment. The Tribunal's commitment to the prevention and elimination of all forms of harassment in the workplace is supported by its Prevention and Elimination of Workplace Harassment Policy. This policy sets out the Tribunal's expectations of Tribunal members, managers and staff in preventing and dealing with workplace harassment. In particular, the policy encourages managers and supervisors to be familiar with, and actively promote and support, the Tribunal's policy and strategies for dealing with harassment.

#### *Commonwealth Disability Strategy*

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy is designed to help agencies improve access to their services and facilities for people with disabilities. The Tribunal is assessed as performing the roles of an employer and a provider. Appendix 9 provides a summary of the Tribunal's performance in relation to these roles during 2006–07.

#### *Disability Action Plan*

The Tribunal's Disability Action Plan reflects and implements the Tribunal's commitment to the principles of workplace diversity and equality of access. It is based on the Commonwealth Disability Strategy. The plan sets out performance indicators in relation to various aspects of the Tribunal's role as an employer and provider. It is currently under review.

The plan can be viewed on the Tribunal's website at: [www.aat.gov.au/CorporatePublications/DisabilityActionPlan.htm](http://www.aat.gov.au/CorporatePublications/DisabilityActionPlan.htm).

## Human resource management

### *Workplace planning, staff retention and turnover*

During 2006–07, the Tribunal implemented recommendations from the review of classifications of staff which was finalised in March 2006. The review examined the relativities between positions in the Tribunal and comparable positions in other agencies. The Tribunal has introduced an additional grading point for case officers in all registries which will apply from 1 July 2007. The Tribunal has also upgraded six management positions nationally on work value grounds. Five of these six positions have been filled.

The Tribunal's training and development and performance management programs foster staff retention and professional development. The Tribunal's ongoing staffing complement was quite stable during the reporting period. This resulted in increased familiarity with duties and enhanced performance.

### *Agency-wide and individual employment agreements*

The Tribunal's new Agency Agreement came into operation on 20 July 2006 and is nominally set to expire on 30 June 2009. The three-year certified agreement offers 4.2 per cent annual salary increases. The agreement promotes a high standard of client service and the development of staff. It seeks to improve productivity and efficiency while reducing costs through specific in-house programs and initiatives, particularly those associated with the purpose-designed electronic case management system.

During the reporting year, nine staff members were covered by Australian Workplace Agreements: the Tribunal's only Senior Executive Service employee, four Executive Level 2 staff and four Executive Level 1 staff. Seven of these agreements provided for the payment of a performance bonus linked to a performance agreement. In addition, the Registrar of the Tribunal, as a statutory appointee, is eligible for a performance bonus under the Principal Executive Officers determination set by the Remuneration Tribunal. As only eight employees in total are eligible, the quantum of individual bonuses

paid is not published for privacy reasons. The total value of bonuses paid by the Tribunal for the 2006–07 year was \$88,944.

Salary ranges for all staff members covered by Australian Workplace Agreements are included in Table 2.1 in Appendix 2. Other conditions of service are similar or identical to those contained in the Agency Agreement.

The Tribunal does not have a performance pay or bonus system for employees covered only by the Agency Agreement.

### *Senior Executive Service Officer remuneration*

The Tribunal has only one Senior Executive Service position: the Assistant Registrar. Remuneration for that position is based on comparisons with the remuneration for staff in similar Australian Government agencies. The remuneration package allows the occupant to cash out certain limited items in accordance with common Australian Government practice.

### *Performance Management Program*

All Tribunal staff members have performance agreements in accordance with the Tribunal's Performance Management Program. Depending on performance during the appraisal period, staff members are able to advance through the salary pay scale up to the maximum of the salary range for the relevant position. The program is linked to the Agency Agreement.

Appraisals were completed by 30 June 2007 for all staff members except those who were on leave at the appraisal time or where approval was given for extensions. Staff members also have individual development plans linked to their performance agreements, which identify training and development needs.

### *Non-salary benefits*

Tribunal staff members were provided with the following non-salary benefits under the Agency Agreement:

- two days of paid leave between Christmas Day and New Year's Day during which the Tribunal operates a skeleton staff to maintain basic registry functions;

- two additional weeks of paid maternity/parenting leave;
- ability to participate in a Transport Loans Scheme;
- health and well-being benefits such as influenza vaccinations; and
- study assistance.

Ongoing staff members are eligible to apply for study assistance, which can include limited time off work to attend lectures, tutorials and examinations and may include full or partial reimbursement of fees and costs. During the reporting year, 21 staff members were accredited as approved students under the Tribunal's study assistance scheme. Approved courses included accounting, business, human resources management, information technology, public administration and policy, workplace training and various areas of the law, including public law and tribunal procedures. The cost of reimbursing study fees and charges was \$64,515. Approximately 1,095 study hours were approved for all purposes, such as attendance at lectures and tutorials, study leave and exam leave.

### **Salary packaging**

Salary packaging is available to Tribunal members and staff pursuant to two policies covering different products: one policy is administered externally by the commercial firm McMillan Shakespeare and the other is administered internally by the Human Resources Section. During the reporting year, 48 employees took up the opportunity to access salary packaging arrangements in relation to superannuation (37), laptop computers (9) and motor vehicles (2).

### **Ethical standards**

Tribunal staff members are required to act in accordance with the Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct. The Tribunal employs a range of means to ensure that staff members are aware of, understand and apply them.

The Australian Public Service Values, Code of Conduct and explanatory materials are available to staff on the intranet. Recruitment guidelines and induction materials include information on

them. Specific training was undertaken during the reporting period in relation to the content and application of the Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct.

## **Our organisation**

The Tribunal's goal in relation to the organisation is:

*To be an organisation with systems and processes that maximise effective and efficient use of Tribunal resources.*

This section of the report describes the activities undertaken by the Tribunal during the reporting period that were directed to meeting this goal. It also provides more general information on the Tribunal's administration and governance.

### **Finance and property**

Finance and property issues are the responsibility of the Chief Financial Officer, the Finance Section and the Manager, Property, Services and Business.

#### **Financial management**

The Tribunal's audited financial statements for 2006–07 appear from page 55.

The 2006–07 financial year was an active year for the Finance Section with purchasing activity linked to new leases for Tribunal premises. This should continue into 2007–08. The first stage of the implementation of the new electronic case management system was completed and included the replacement of the existing desktop computer facilities.

The Tribunal's financial performance was just under budget due mainly to delays in some accommodation projects. The increasing number of applications in recent years contributed to an increase in salary costs relating to both members and staff. Supplier costs remained relatively static for this financial year.

#### **Property**

The Tribunal operates from commercially-leased premises in Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. In Brisbane and Hobart, the Tribunal occupies premises in the Commonwealth Law Courts buildings.



A refurbishment of the registry in Sydney was completed during 2006–07. A refurbishment of the Canberra Registry was also substantially completed. Planning for refurbishments in Adelaide and Melbourne was completed during the reporting period and the refurbishments will be carried out in 2007–08.

### **Purchasing**

The Tribunal observes the core principles of the *Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines* and relevant best practice guidelines in relation to its purchasing activities. The Tribunal's Chief Executive Instructions are reviewed to ensure that they conform to the current procurement guidelines. They are a valuable tool for staff with purchasing duties and have been used as a model by several other agencies.

For major purchases or contracts, the Tribunal uses competitive procurement processes to ensure value for money as well as proper and effective competition. Open tender processes are employed unless the circumstances indicate that a select tender would be appropriate. In accordance with the Tribunal's purchasing guidelines, at least three quotes are ordinarily obtained for goods or services that do not involve major purchases or contracts.

### **Consultants**

The Tribunal employs consultants when the required skills are not available within the Tribunal or where the capacity to undertake the work in a specialist area is not available. Consultants are engaged using the procurement methods specified in the Chief Executive Instructions for the purchasing of services. Open tender, select tender or direct sourcing are used depending on the circumstances, timelines and the identified need for a consultant.

During 2006–07, two new consultancy contracts were entered into involving total actual expenditure of \$31,197 (inclusive of GST). In addition, five ongoing consultancy contracts were active during 2006–07, involving total actual expenditure of \$201,465 (inclusive of GST). Table 5.1 sets out the Tribunal's total actual expenditure on all consultancies in the three most recent reporting years.

**Table 5.1 Summary of total actual expenditure on consultancy contracts in the three most recent reporting years (inclusive of GST)**

Year	Total actual expenditure (incl GST)
2004–05	\$307,209
2005–06	\$155,093
2006–07	\$232,662

Appendix 10 provides details in relation to each new consultancy let by the Tribunal during 2006–07 for which the total contract value (inclusive of GST) is \$10,000 or more. Appendix 10 also sets out the number and aggregate value of consultancies valued at \$10,000 or more for the three most recent reporting years.

### **Reporting on purchases**

All purchases were gazetted as required. Overview details of all contracts of \$100,000 or more current in any one calendar year are available through the Tribunal's website in accordance with the Senate order relating to agency contracts.

No contracts in excess of \$10,000 (inclusive of GST) or standing offers were exempted from being published on the AusTender website on the basis that they would disclose exempt matters under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Information on expenditure on contracts and consultancies is also available on the AusTender website at [www.tenders.gov.au](http://www.tenders.gov.au).

### **Risk management**

#### **Audit and fraud control**

The Tribunal's Audit Committee meets periodically to oversee the audit policy and plans for the forthcoming year. Its responsibilities include providing advice to the Registrar on a range of matters, such as the financial statements and fraud risk assessment, as well as commissioning internal audits on operational activities.

Each year, the Tribunal's independent internal auditor reviews the operations at most risk, and at most common risk, and undertakes audit activities related to these operations. During the reporting year, the internal auditor undertook audits of the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Victorian Registries. Areas scrutinised included assets, attendance records and payroll, bank accounts, hospitality, payments and receipting, purchasing and security. Audits of Principal Registry finance and human resources operations are also undertaken each year. No major risks were identified as a result of the audits.

The Audit Committee implemented some additional processes to enable the Registrar to complete the Certificate of Compliance for the 2006–07 financial year.

The Registrar certifies that the Tribunal has prepared risk assessments and fraud control plans and has in place procedures that provide for fraud prevention, detection, investigation, reporting and data collection in compliance with the Commonwealth Fraud Control Guidelines.

#### *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. However, cover is provided should that occur. In line with a general trend in the industry, the insurance premium decreased again in 2006–07.

#### *Risk management assessment*

The Tribunal is currently undertaking a risk assessment review examining all business risks that may impact on the Tribunal's national operations. The review will cover registry operations, public interaction and information systems and will link with the security assessment undertaken by a separate contractor. These assessments will provide the basis for a comprehensive review of the Tribunal's current risk management plan.

#### *Security*

The Tribunal's office areas are access-controlled. Duress alarms are installed in conference and hearing rooms and at registry counters to protect Tribunal members and staff in the event of an incident. The Tribunal has a fee-for-service agreement with Chubb Security Pty Limited to provide additional security services for Tribunal alternative dispute resolution processes and hearings as required. During the year, security services were arranged on several occasions as a precautionary measure. No security incidents were reported at any Tribunal registry.

The Tribunal has arrangements in place with the Family Court and the Federal Court to use their court rooms and security arrangements for hearings that involve a security risk. Court rooms were used on several occasions during the year for this purpose without incident.

The Australian Federal Police undertakes security vetting of staff whose duties require a security clearance in compliance with the Commonwealth Protective Security Manual.

T4 Protective Security completed a review of the Tribunal's physical security arrangements in 2006–07 to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to protect Tribunal members, staff, the public and Commonwealth records and assets from attack or unwanted intervention. Implementation of the recommendations of the review will commence in 2007–08.

#### **Information technology**

The Information Technology Section has developed and managed several significant projects during the year.

#### ***New electronic case management system***

During the reporting year, the Tribunal replaced its mainframe-based case management system (AATCAMS) which had been in operation for more than 15 years. AATCAMS was replaced with a new system known as TRaCS (Tribunal Record and Case System). TRaCS is based on the latest generation Microsoft Windows server environment, database technology and application software. TRaCS runs on two servers, a web server and an application server, installed in Sydney with data network links to the other registries.

The system allows users to record more information about cases, including documents received, summonses and exhibits. It covers a greater range of standard registry procedures than the former system, including the generation of letters and orders from within the system. The system is also designed to provide enhanced workflow procedures. These features will ensure more consistent processing of applications as well as enhanced capacity to access information about individual cases and monitor their progress.

TRaCS was designed in consultation with software consultants from Strategic Business Consulting Pty Limited, a company experienced in court and tribunal electronic case management systems. TRaCS was first implemented in the New South Wales Registry in December and then progressively rolled out to the other six registries over the following three months.

Work is now focused on developing the system's reporting functions and the migration of all data from the old system into TRaCS. In future years, the Tribunal will introduce additional functionality, such as online document management facilities.

#### ***Data network upgrade***

The increased volume of data traffic associated with the new electronic case management system made it necessary to upgrade the port speeds at all registries. This work was carried out in November 2006 prior to the commencement of the system. The network upgrade benefited users more generally by providing for faster downloads of documents from interstate file servers and faster web browsing.

#### ***New personal computers***

In the second half of 2006, the Tribunal rolled out a fleet of new personal computers for Tribunal members and staff. The new PCs feature 19 inch monitors that can be set in landscape and portrait mode so that A4 document pages can be viewed in full without scrolling. The personal computers also have one gigabyte of main memory which will enable efficient running of the Microsoft Vista operating system which will be installed in the future.

#### ***Digital recording of hearings***

During the reporting year, the Tribunal commenced a trial of making digital recordings of hearings available to members in the Queensland Registry. The trial was undertaken in association with Auscript, the Tribunal's recording and transcription service provider.

The digital recordings of hearings are held on a central server and can be accessed by members through the Tribunal's data network. Members are able to listen to the recording through their personal computer. Access to the digital recording may obviate the need to order transcripts in some circumstances.

#### ***Voice recognition system***

The Tribunal's use of voice recognition software increased in the past year. Over 20 members and staff now use this software to write documents.

#### ***Help Desk management relocated to Sydney***

The management of the information technology Help Desk was relocated from Brisbane to Sydney to provide enhanced support for the growing concentration of computer facilities in the Sydney site and to enable more efficient integration of the Help Desk and systems support facilities. The Help Desk now manages requests from users relating to all hardware and software issues. This centralised approach to systems support provides greater consistency in resolving issues raised by users and enables closer teamwork with the Help Desk personnel now located alongside other information technology staff.

#### ***Library and information services***

##### ***Library Committee***

The Library Committee met twice during the reporting year in December 2006 and May 2007. The acquisitions sub-committee liaised regularly in relation to the purchase of additional hard-copy and online resources.

##### ***Library network***

The Tribunal's library network provides library and information services to Tribunal members and staff in all registries throughout Australia. The network is comprised of the Principal

Registry library in Brisbane and District Registry libraries in all other mainland capital cities except Darwin. Libraries are staffed by professional librarians who organise and manage the collection and assist members and staff with their information needs.

The library network provides access to a number of online legal resources and online reference resources, which are available through the Tribunal intranet. The Electronic Publishing Officer, also a librarian located in Principal Registry library, manages the content of the Tribunal's internet and intranet.

Achievements of the library network in the reporting year include:

- acquisition, cataloguing and distribution of new paper and electronic materials in response to Library Committee recommendations for the collection;
  - continuation of a project to create electronic copies of the earliest decisions produced by the Tribunal;
  - delivery of library orientation training for new members;
  - maintenance of the Tribunal's intranet and internet sites; and
  - ongoing management of the process of electronic delivery of Tribunal decisions to publishers, government departments and agencies and other interested parties.
- producing and maintaining resource materials, including the Tribunal's jurisdiction list and procedure manuals;
  - coordinating reporting on Tribunal performance, including producing statistical information on the Tribunal's workload;
  - managing projects and providing support to Tribunal committees; and
  - assisting with the delivery of training for Tribunal staff.

Key achievements for the reporting year included:

- coordinating the publication and distribution of the *Guide to the Workers' Compensation Jurisdiction*;
- coordinating the activities of the Work Organisation Group; and
- assisting with the implementation of the Tribunal's new electronic case management system, TRaCS.

The section comprises four staff: the Manager, the Senior Legal and Policy Officer and two Legal and Policy Officers.

### Policy and Research Section

The Policy and Research Section provides the President, Registrar and Assistant Registrar with advice and assistance in relation to legal and policy issues affecting the Tribunal. It also provides information and assistance to Tribunal members and staff in relation to legislative changes, case law developments and practice and procedure issues. The primary responsibilities of the section are:

- undertaking research and preparing advice, correspondence and papers relating to matters affecting the Tribunal;
- monitoring appeals from Tribunal decisions and arranging representation where the Tribunal is named as a party;