



Chapter

05

OUR ORGANISATION
AND
OUR PEOPLE

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

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

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

The Tribunal has structures, policies and practices in place which contribute to sound corporate governance. See Chapter 2 for information on the Tribunal's senior leaders and the committees that comprise Tribunal members and staff. Information relating to the Tribunal's Audit Committee follows below.

CORPORATE PLANNING

The Tribunal's *Strategic Plan 2011–2014* was adopted in August 2011. A review of the plan in late 2012 culminated in the *Plan on a Page 2011–14* which updated and refocused the Tribunal's strategic priorities. These documents have guided the Tribunal's work during the reporting year. Key achievements are noted in Chapter 1 of this report.

A planning process was conducted in 2013–14 to develop the Tribunal's *Strategic Plan 2014–17* which was released in July 2014. A range of consultation mechanisms were employed to engage members and staff, including a strategic planning day for senior members and managers, the circulation of the draft plan for comment and a dedicated session at the AAT National Conference.

The *Strategic Plan 2014–17* continues to reflect the Tribunal's commitment to providing a high-quality independent merits review process. In addition to articulating its vision and outlining the Tribunal's core values and behaviours, the plan offers details of the strategies or means the Tribunal proposes to achieve its goals in relation to our users, our people, our organisation and our relationships.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Tribunal's audited financial statements for 2013–14 follow this chapter.

The Tribunal has reported an operating surplus of \$1.438 million in 2013–14 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. The Tribunal's principal focus remains on its core business.

PURCHASING

The Tribunal observed the core principles of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and relevant best practice guidelines in its purchasing activities in 2013–14. The Chief Executive 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 are employed unless the procurement purchase is covered by a mandatory whole-of-government

arrangement or a limited tender is appropriate in the particular circumstances. For purchases and contracts below the mandatory tender threshold, at least three quotes are generally required, together with an assessment of the need justifying the purchase request and an analysis of why the selected quote will achieve value for money.

Consultants

The Tribunal engages consultants where there is a need for independent research or assessment or for specialised or professional skills that are unavailable within the Tribunal. Consultants are typically engaged to investigate an issue or problem, carry out an independent review, study or evaluation, or provide independent advice that assists with the Tribunal's decision-making. The decision to engage a consultant is made in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and relevant internal policies.

During 2013–14, the Tribunal entered into ten new consultancy contracts involving total actual expenditure of \$139,441.60. Three ongoing consultancy contracts were active, involving total actual expenditure of \$101,945.25 in 2013–14.

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

Table 5.1 Total actual expenditure on consultancy contracts

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14
Total actual expenditure (incl GST)	\$253,338	\$192,209	\$241,387

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 Tribunal's website in accordance with the Senate order on agency contracts.

There were no contracts of \$100,000 or more let in 2013–14 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.

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

The Tribunal's Audit Committee, comprising an independent chairperson, a member drawn from the Tribunal's part-time members, a District Registrar and the Registrar (the Tribunal's Chief Executive Officer), met regularly during the reporting year to review operations, and to plan and approve the audit policy for the forthcoming year. The committee also advised the Registrar on matters such as the financial statements, compliance with the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* and fraud control.

The Tribunal's independent internal auditor undertook an audit program covering a range of transactions to give assurance that the Tribunal's systems were complying with the Financial Management and Accountability Act and the Chief Executive Instructions. This included auditing the Principal Registry finance and human resources operations, which are audited annually, as well

as the Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth Registries. Identified issues were addressed by management and reviewed by the Audit Committee. No major issues or risks were identified by the audits.

During the reporting year, the Tribunal reviewed and updated its Fraud Control Plan, including its Fraud Risk Register. The next review is scheduled for 2015–16.

The Audit Committee has implemented processes to enable the Registrar to complete the Certificate of Compliance for the 2013–14 financial year.

During 2014–15, the Tribunal will alter its Audit Committee membership so that it contains a majority of independent members and excludes the Registrar (the Tribunal's Accountable Authority) in accordance with the requirements of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* relating to the constitution of audit committees.

CERTIFICATION OF TRIBUNAL FRAUD CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS

I, Philip Kellow, certify that I am satisfied that for 2013–14 the Tribunal:

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



Philip Kellow
Registrar

22 September 2014

Insurance

The Tribunal is insured through Comcover. In general terms, the Tribunal has a low risk of insurance exposure and a limited likelihood of major disruption to its services, but cover is provided should that occur. There was a small increase in the insurance premium in 2013–14.

Risk assessment and planning

The Tribunal regularly assesses its risk position, particularly for business risks that may have an impact on national operations. These assessments include registry operations, public interaction and information systems, and link with the Fraud Control Plan. The Tribunal reviewed and updated its Risk Management Plan and associated risk register in 2013–14. The Risk Management Plan is scheduled for review again in 2015–16.

The Tribunal updated its national and local business continuity plans in 2013–14 to ensure their currency. The Tribunal's national Business Continuity Plan is on the Tribunal's intranet for all members and staff. Officers with delegated responsibility under the plan are given a backup of the plan to use should the Tribunal's intranet be unavailable.

MAINTAINING ETHICAL STANDARDS

Rules and standards relevant to ethical conduct, including the APS Values, Code of Conduct and Employment Principles, are incorporated into Tribunal policies, guidelines and instructions. The Tribunal's agency agreement includes a commitment that all employees accept a

responsibility to contribute to Tribunal outcomes by adhering to and promoting the APS Values and Code of Conduct, and demonstrating behaviours consistent with the Values and the Code. In addition, managers are to provide employees with the tools they need to do their work efficiently, effectively, ethically and creatively.

The APS Values, Code of Conduct and Employment Principles are available on the Tribunal's intranet. Online training relating to the Values and Code of Conduct is available to all staff and forms part of the Tribunal's induction process. All new staff are 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 must sign a statement confirming they have read and understood them.

During 2013–14, the Registrar provided information to all members and staff in the AAT's internal newsletter about the changes to the APS Values, Code of Conduct and Employment Principles that commenced on 1 July 2013 and the Director, Human Resources developed a presentation on the changes for delivery by managers at staff meetings. The Executive Director, Operations and the Learning and Development Manager conducted face-to-face training which was mandatory for all staff on the APS Values, Code of Conduct and Employment Principles in early 2014.

PROPERTY AND SECURITY

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

The lease for the Canberra Registry expired on 30 June 2014. Following a search exercise, the Tribunal entered into a lease at a new location in February 2014. The fit-out for the new premises was designed and constructed between February and June, and operations commenced at the new address in late June.

During 2013–14, a number of recommendations from the Tribunal's 2012 Security Risk Review and 2013 Enterprise Security Risk Assessment were implemented to improve its compliance with the Protective Security Policy Framework, including an update of security policies, plans and procedures. The Tribunal submitted its first annual Protective Security Policy Framework compliance report in September 2013, and achieved a high level of compliance.

Mandatory training on the Protective Security Policy Framework was conducted for staff in all registries during the reporting year based on training resources provided by the Protective Security Training College, Attorney-General's Department. The Tribunal worked collaboratively with the Protective Security Training College to develop an e-learning program which is available on the Tribunal's intranet.

The Tribunal places a high priority on security to ensure that members, staff and visitors are in safe and secure environments when in Tribunal premises. Measures currently employed to ensure physical security include secure office areas as well as 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 Tribunal arranges additional security services for alternative dispute resolution processes and hearings as required. If necessary, for hearings involving a security risk, the Tribunal may arrange with the Family Court or the Federal Court to use their court rooms and security arrangements.

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

The Tribunal conducted a review of the security of its ICT systems in May and June 2014.

MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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

STAFFING OVERVIEW

At 30 June 2014, the Tribunal had 156 staff: 105 ongoing and 51 non-ongoing, of whom 20 were engaged to undertake duties that are irregular or intermittent.

Table 5.2 shows the Tribunal's staffing numbers over the three most recent reporting years, by engagement type, classification level, full-time or part-time status, gender and location. A more detailed breakdown of staffing at 30 June 2014 is in Appendix 2.

Table 5.2 Trends in staffing numbers

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14
Total	155	163	156
BY ENGAGEMENT TYPE			
Ongoing	102	109	105
Non-ongoing (irregular/intermittent)	53 (16)	54 (18)	51 (20)
BY CLASSIFICATION CATEGORY			
SES	2	2	2
Executive Level	32	33	34
APS Level	121	128	120
BY FULL-TIME/PART-TIME STATUS			
Full-time	112	117	113
Part-time (including irregular/ intermittent)	43	46	43
BY GENDER			
Men	49	47	45
Women	106	116	111
BY LOCATION			
Adelaide	14	16	16
Brisbane	39	38	38
Canberra	11	11	11
Hobart	4	5	4
Melbourne	26	27	22
Perth	15	18	17
Sydney	46	48	48

The decrease in total staffing numbers since 30 June 2013 can be attributed primarily to the introduction of the Australian Government's recruitment arrangements for the Australian Public Service which has placed restrictions on the Tribunal filling vacancies. The Tribunal experienced some increased turnover in its ongoing staffing complement in 2013–14 with nine staff leaving the Tribunal. Five staff were engaged or transferred at level in the same period. Consistent with previous years, turnover was greater among non-ongoing staff. The Tribunal's practice of engaging legal graduates to work with members of the Tribunal, usually for 12 to 18 months, contributes to this.

EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENTS AND ARRANGEMENTS

The Tribunal's collective workplace agreement, the *Administrative Appeals Tribunal Agency Agreement 2011–2014* was approved by Fair Work Australia on 22 August 2011 and came into force on 29 August 2011. Its nominal expiry date was 30 June 2014. Most Tribunal staff are covered by the agency agreement.

The Tribunal commenced preparations in 2013–14 for the bargaining process to develop a new agency agreement. Bargaining began formally on 21 July 2014.

As at 30 June 2014, four employees had entered into Individual Flexibility Arrangements. The terms and conditions of employment of two other employees were set out in determinations made under section 24(1) of the *Public Service Act 1999*. No Tribunal employees were covered by an Australian Workplace Agreement.

More detail about the number of employees covered by the agency agreement and by individual employment arrangements at 30 June 2014 is shown in Table A2.3 of Appendix 2. Table A2.3 also shows the salary ranges available for the Tribunal's employees by classification level.

Senior executive officer remuneration

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

Performance pay

No performance bonuses were paid by the Tribunal in 2013–14. The Tribunal does not have a performance pay or bonus system for any employee.

Non-salary benefits

Non-salary benefits available to the Tribunal's employees in 2013–14 under the agency agreement included:

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

Studies assistance

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

capability, as well as that of the Tribunal, through vocational education at pre-tertiary, undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Requests for studies assistance were approved in 2013–14 for studies in accounting, business, information technology, law, management and public policy. Thirteen staff gained approval for financial support with total expenditure of \$13,810.

Performance management program

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

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

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

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE TRIBUNAL

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

Major professional development activities

The Tribunal's new jurisdiction to review decisions relating to the National Disability Insurance Scheme was an area of focus for learning and development in 2013–14. Training was provided for members and staff over the course of the year on working with people with disability, the legislative framework, the support available for applicants and the Tribunal's case management approach. A key activity was the Tribunal's inaugural National Disability Insurance Scheme seminar held on 4 September 2013 for members assigned to the NDIS Division, Conference Registrars, District Registrars and legal and policy staff. The Tribunal invited a range of external speakers to talk about the disability movement and disability rights in Australia, how to facilitate communication and give people with disability a voice, and a parent's perspective on creating a life of dignity, worth and contribution.

The Tribunal also held its biennial National Conference in May 2014. Convened by Senior Member Narelle Bell, the conference offered a valuable opportunity for members, Conference Registrars, District Registrars and Principal Registry staff to share information, discuss Tribunal practice and undertake continuing education to develop the Tribunal's capabilities. The conference was opened by the Attorney-General, Senator the Hon George Brandis QC, and speakers covered a range of topics, including dealing with parties with cognitive impairment, giving oral decisions, exploring the scope of the duty to inquire and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Tribunal members and staff also spent time exploring ways in which the management of applications could be improved under the theme of integrated dispute resolution. The format and content of the conference promoted fruitful discussion.

Members' professional development

The Members' Professional Development Program is a comprehensive program based on a framework of competencies developed specifically for the Tribunal. The program comprises induction, mentoring, appraisal and other professional development opportunities. The Professional Development Committee advises on the Members' Professional Development Program. It met in July, September, October and December 2013, and in May 2014.

The Tribunal conducted two new member induction programs in July and October 2013. Eight new members were given a comprehensive introduction to the Tribunal, its key jurisdictions and its way of operating. The Tribunal's mentoring scheme pairs each new member with a more experienced member to assist new appointees gain a better understanding of the workings of the Tribunal and their role. Senior Member Narelle Bell was the Coordinator of the Mentoring Scheme during 2013–14.

The Tribunal's appraisal scheme combines self-assessment with appraisal by another Tribunal member against the framework of competencies. Self-assessment and peer review give members the opportunity to reflect upon their practice and consider options for further professional development. Deputy President Stan Hotop is the Appraisal Scheme Coordinator.

A range of learning activities was offered to members during 2013–14. Members attended in-house professional development sessions, including seminars on dealing with challenging people and the effects of family violence, as well as individual and small group sessions on library and information services and recent developments such as the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013*. 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, the National Judicial College of Australia and other national and state-based professional bodies.

Conference Registrars' professional development

Conference Registrars conduct alternative dispute resolution processes and have primary responsibility for managing applications during the pre-hearing process. The Tribunal's Conference Registrars' Professional Development Program is based on a framework of competencies and includes induction, mentoring, reflective learning, peer review and performance appraisal. The *Conference Registrars' Professional Development Handbook* outlines the components of the program and provides practical assistance with its operation.

Conference Registrars participated in internal and external professional development activities in 2013–14 that were focused on best practice in alternative dispute resolution, working effectively with Tribunal users and recent developments in the law. Access to continuing professional development also assisted Conference Registrars to meet requirements to remain accredited under the National Mediator Accreditation System.

Staff learning and development

Learning and development for staff reflects the Tribunal's values and seeks to meet the learning needs of individuals and teams in all registries and to improve the Tribunal's capacity. Staff undertook in-house activities and attended a range of external conferences, seminars and workshops during the reporting year.

The Tribunal has a formal learning and development plan and strategies to encourage staff learning through formal, structured in-house programs. The Tribunal's comprehensive induction program was updated during 2013–14. Active learning is also encouraged through on-the-job experiences and membership of working groups and committees where possible. Participants in learning and development activities provide feedback and the programs are refined to meet operational and strategic requirements.

Internal learning and development sessions were delivered in a variety of modes that included face-to-face delivery, e-learning programs and collaborative approaches. There was a focus on foundation and core skills development in 2013–14 with sessions on the APS Values, Code of Conduct and Employment Principles, disability awareness, privacy and confidentiality, records management and security awareness. Seminars and workshops developed capabilities in coping with conflict at work, dealing with people threatening violence or self-harm and strengthening teams. Training also covered developments in Tribunal practice and procedure and case management, particularly in the National Disability Insurance Scheme jurisdiction.

Tribunal managers identified the further development of their performance management skills as a priority for the reporting period. The APSC Strategic Centre for Leadership, Learning and Development selected the Tribunal to participate in a pilot of its new Performance Management learning program. The program was facilitated over two days in November 2013 for 16 managers from around Australia. In an extensive evaluation of the program, the managers found the program content highly relevant and useful. Participation in the program also led to work commencing on the development of a revised Performance Management Framework for Tribunal staff.

Membership of learning communities

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

The Tribunal continued its involvement with the Australasian Committee for Court Education. The Tribunal's Learning and Development Manager was also part of the Courts Reference Group convened by Government Skills Australia to review and make recommendations on units of competency and proposed qualifications for court and tribunal staff.

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

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

The Tribunal took steps during the reporting year to ensure that members and staff understand the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and their duties under it. Comcare's e-learning programs for workers and managers were available to all members and staff on the Tribunal's intranet. All new staff, as well as those performing higher duties in roles with management or supervisory responsibilities, were required to complete the relevant module.

The Tribunal engaged the services of an external consultant, Niche Consulting, in 2013–14 to conduct an independent audit of the Tribunal's Rehabilitation Management System as required under Comcare's *Guidelines for Rehabilitation Authorities 2012*. The audit did not identify any matters of non-conformance.

The Tribunal continued with the development and implementation of a number of initiatives relating to the safety and security of its employees and visitors to the Tribunal's premises.

Health and wellbeing initiatives available to all employees during 2013–14 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.

The Tribunal continued to make available to members and staff e-learning modules on manual handling and ergonomics in the office. Workstation assessments and training were undertaken in all registries and remedial action implemented as required.

An updated Mental Health First Aid e-learning program was made available to all members and staff on the Tribunal's intranet. It is designed to teach people to recognise the symptoms of mental health problems and how to go about guiding a person towards appropriate professional help. This is complemented by access to mental health guides from the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Australian Public Service Commission.

All Tribunal First Aid Officers completed training in 2013–14 and received guidance in the use of external defibrillators which are available in all registries. The Tribunal also funds training for backup First Aid Officers to cover staff absences.

The Tribunal's Health and Safety Committee met four times during the reporting year 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 Tribunal continues to have a low number of compensation claims, as shown in Table 5.3. Case management of compensation matters is conducted either in-house or by external service providers, according to the location and the complexity of the matter.

Table 5.3 Trends in compensation claims

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14
Number of claims accepted	1	4	0

Notifiable incidents and investigations

There were no notifiable incidents that the Tribunal was required to report to Comcare in 2013–14 under the Work Health and Safety Act. Comcare did not undertake any investigations in relation to the Tribunal during the reporting year, nor did it issue any notices to the Tribunal.

Workplace harassment

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

The Tribunal's Workplace Diversity Officer is a qualified lawyer and mediator experienced in resolving disputes and dealing with harassment issues. The officer is available for all members and staff, and all discussions are confidential. The Tribunal had four Workplace Harassment Contact Officers during 2013–14, 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 Tribunal in general. These attitudes are reflected in the Tribunal's Workplace Diversity Plan and through the work of the Workplace Diversity Committee, which reviews the plan and looks for opportunities to promote the benefits of an inclusive work environment.

Appendix 2 shows the number of staff in the various equal employment opportunity categories.

NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The National Consultative Committee is a forum for the exchange of information between management and employees in relation to workplace matters and for consultation on issues which have Tribunal-wide implications or which involve major change to any section of the Tribunal. It forms part of the Tribunal's commitment to cooperative workplace relations and participatory decision-making.

The committee was reconstituted in March 2014 and new terms of reference were adopted. Meetings are chaired by the Executive Director, Operations and held on a quarterly basis. Tribunal employees may attend and participate at any meeting.

PRODUCTIVITY GAINS

The Tribunal worked effectively to deal with an 18 per cent increase in lodgements in 2013–14. With its existing resources, the Tribunal finalised 12 per cent more applications and achieved an improvement in the proportion of applications finalised within 12 months. This reflects a range of efforts to deal with cases as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The Tribunal maintained its commitment to health and wellbeing initiatives to improve employee health and reduce unplanned absences. The reported level of unplanned absences due to illness was largely unchanged in 2013–14 when compared with 2012–13.

Technology initiatives also contribute to productivity gains. The Human Resources Section continued work on a project to implement web recruitment functionality which will bring about improved controls, timeframes and consistency for its selection processes. Improvements to TRACS, the Tribunal's electronic case management system, continue to contribute to more efficient work practices.

BENEVOLENT TRUST

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

During 2013–14, 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 Tribunal's Information and Development Section delivers communications, legal and policy, library and information management and technology services to the Tribunal. The section contributed to achieving the Tribunal's priorities, as set out in the *Strategic Plan 2011–2014*, in a number of ways including those detailed below.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Tribunal develops, implements and supports communication strategies to meet its internal and external communication needs. These strategies include producing an internal newsletter to help keep members and staff in all registries connected, informed and up-to-date, making available a suite of external information products, including the annual report, and contributing to improvement to the content and functionality of the Tribunal's website and intranet.

Internal communications

@ *The AAT*, the Tribunal's monthly newsletter, was published throughout 2013–14 with the assistance of the Tribunal's network of Communications Champions. A survey conducted in April 2014 to assess satisfaction with internal communication confirmed the benefits of changes, such as the monthly newsletter, implemented after the August 2012 survey. Satisfaction rates were high, and respondents rated @ *The AAT* highly, nominating it as a preferred method for receiving updates.

Media enquiries

The Tribunal received 41 media enquiries in the reporting period from print, online, radio and television outlets, ten more than in the previous year. Information was provided within 24 hours in relation to the majority of enquiries.

LEGAL AND POLICY

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

During the year, the Legal and Policy area made a range of contributions to the Tribunal meeting its objective of providing a fair, just, economical, informal and quick mechanism of review, including by:

- developing procedural documentation for the management of applications about decisions under the National Disability Insurance Scheme and establishing arrangements for monitoring the Tribunal's performance in that jurisdiction
- finalising and launching practice and procedure documentation to support improvements to changes to improve case management in the workers' compensation jurisdiction
- working on the draft practice direction for the expedited review of certain decisions, including coordinating consultation on the draft
- coordinating the Tribunal's response to amendments to the Privacy Act, including the development of its Privacy Policy and related procedures for handling requests for access to information and documents held by the Tribunal
- training staff on practice and procedure developments, the NDIS Act and reforms to the Privacy Act, and
- advising on the ongoing development of the functionality and reporting capacity of the Tribunal's case management system, including collaborating with Technology Services to develop enhancements to the system for managing data collection in relation to disability and accessibility issues.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

The Library Network provides library and information services to all Tribunal members and staff, legal professionals appearing before the Tribunal and self-represented parties. The Library also organises, publishes and manages information on the website and intranet, and manages the delivery of Tribunal decisions to publishers, government departments and agencies, and other interested parties. Libraries are located in Principal Registry Brisbane, and the District Registries in Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney.

Major achievements during the reporting year included: improved access to the latest information on reported cases, new books and journal articles through an expanded internal weekly *AAT Bulletin*; a dedicated intranet site for Tribunal delegates to the 2014 National Conference; and conducting a business and user needs analysis of the intranet.

Library Committee

The Director, Library and Information Services supports the Tribunal's Library Committee which oversees the development of the library collection. The Committee met in October 2013, February 2014 and May 2014 and liaised regularly during the year about purchases of new library materials. It also monitored implementation of changes to the print collection that are based on changing usage patterns and designed to limit duplication and increase online availability.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The Tribunal continued its commitment to the development of a comprehensive and integrated information and records management program by engaging a project manager to implement program-related projects. Key achievements in 2013–14 included: developing and implementing an information and records management framework and policy; developing and implementing a new records authority under the *Archives Act 1983* in consultation with the National Archives of Australia and publishing a Normal Administrative Practice policy; training all members and staff in records management awareness; and developing an options paper on the management of digital records before moving to an electronic document and records management system.

The work is part of a broader Tribunal-wide program to expand the use of online services and electronic management of information.

TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

The Technology Services area manages the planning, implementation and support of computer hardware, software, business systems and telecommunications systems that the Tribunal uses.

Projects during the year were designed to ensure that the Tribunal's hardware and software are up-to-date, network security is enhanced and the Tribunal's members and staff are fully supported to undertake their work. Key achievements during the year included:

- completing a major server upgrade that included implementing an enhanced business continuity planning and disaster recovery solution
- moving to a new secure internet gateway
- installing a new system to improve security compliance and other network management activities
- reviewing the security of the Tribunal's ICT systems, and
- implementing improvements and developments to the case management system, TRACS.