



## Chapter 5

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### Our people

The Tribunal's goal in relation to this key result area, as outlined in its Organisational Plan 2004–05, is:

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

This section of the report describes the key strategies and targets which the Tribunal has adopted in seeking to achieve this goal. It also provides information in relation to the activities of the Professional Development Committee and more general information relating to human resource management in the Tribunal.

### Training and development

There have been many initiatives undertaken during the reporting year aimed at maintaining and enhancing the skill and knowledge base of members and staff. These include:

- meetings of the Professional Development Committee
- the National Client Service Officers' Conference in Hobart in October 2004
- training needs analysis involving staff in all registries
- the development of an internal Staff Learning and Development Calendar
- training on mediation conducted in liaison with LEADR (Association of Dispute Resolvers) in the Tribunal in January 2005
- professional development seminars for members and staff on issues of interest
- the establishment of a Melbourne Members' Professional Development Program
- the extension of the Sydney Members' Professional Development Program to include the Tasmanian Registry and the Australian Capital Territory Registry

- biannual District Registrars' meetings
- attendance of members and staff at relevant external conferences, including the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration's Tribunals' Conference and the annual conference of the Australian Institute of Administrative Law
- participation of members and staff in relevant external training courses run by the Australian Public Service Commission, Australian Government Solicitors, and others
- sponsorship of one senior staff member to attend the Public Sector Management course.

The staff training needs analysis was an important initiative as information gathered from this process will continue to be used to develop and refine an organisation-wide staff learning and development program. This program is aligned and linked with the Tribunal's organisational plan and reflects the values of the Tribunal.

Several priorities for staff learning and development have been identified through reviewing the training needs analysis data including: refinement of the staff induction program, cultural awareness and diversity training, updates on legislation, policy, practice and procedures and developing interpersonal and leadership skills.

### Professional Development Committee

The Professional Development Committee considers, and makes decisions on, issues relating to the professional development of Tribunal members. The Committee comprises the President, a diverse group of members from different Tribunal registries with an interest in professional development, and the Registrar. The Committee was supported during the reporting year by staff of the Tribunal's Policy and Research Section, and the Learning and Development Officer.

The Committee met in September 2004 and April 2005. Issues considered by the Committee included:

- professional development scheme and activities for Tribunal members

- the nature and content of the induction program for new members
- the development of a practice manual for Tribunal members
- AAT internal conference program
- the use of decision templates
- the National Conference to be held in October 2005.

Significant developments that occurred during the reporting period relating to matters considered by the Committee are outlined separately in this section of the report.

#### Professional development scheme for Tribunal members

At the Professional Development Committee Meeting held on 6 April 2005, it was agreed that the proposed members' professional development program, including both mentoring and appraisal schemes, should be implemented.

The endorsement of the program followed extensive planning and consultation with members which was overseen by a subcommittee.

The consultation process began with Mary Holmes, Senior Training Advisor and Head of Tribunal Training of the Judicial Studies Board (United Kingdom) visiting all registries to meet with members and discuss the model schemes used in that jurisdiction. Feedback from members, including written submissions, led to substantial modifications to the templates provided by Ms Holmes. A program has been developed which is suited to the needs of the Tribunal and its members.

The adoption of the program is an important development for the Tribunal, of which all members can be proud. It further enhances the role of the Tribunal as a leading Australian tribunal adopting the highest standards of performance and efficiency.

Implementation of the program will begin with the appointment of an Appraisals Coordinator from one of the Deputy Presidents or Senior Members,

and a Mentoring Coordinator from the larger pool of all Tribunal members. Following the appointment of the coordinators, initial training on the mentoring and appraisals schemes will be conducted, beginning with a briefing to all members at the National Conference.

#### Induction program for new members

On 27 May 2004 the Attorney-General announced a round of appointments and reappointments to the Tribunal that would take effect on and after 1 July 2004. With a number of new members among the appointees, the Tribunal conducted a group induction program for the new members in Sydney in early July, 2004. The program was designed to introduce new members to the Tribunal, its practices and procedures, major jurisdictions, staffing and resources, and the expectations and responsibilities of Tribunal members. The program was delivered by experienced Tribunal members and senior staff.

On 15 June 2005 the Attorney-General announced a round of appointments and reappointments to the Tribunal that would take effect on and after 1 July 2005. Preparations have commenced for an induction program to be held in Adelaide in late July 2005.

#### Tribunal Practice Manual project

The Tribunal has identified the development of a practice manual for Tribunal members as one of its strategies. The manual is intended to be a resource that will provide practical guidance to Tribunal members on performing their duties under the AAT Act and under other legislation that confers jurisdiction on the Tribunal.

As was noted in Chapter 4 of this report, the Council of Australasian Tribunals (COAT) is currently developing a practice manual for tribunal members. It is proposed that the manual will comprise three parts:

- generic principles of tribunal practice—to be produced by COAT

- principles relating to the operations and jurisdiction of each particular tribunal—to be prepared by each tribunal
- personal notes—to be prepared by each individual member.

The Tribunal practice manual would form the second part of an overall practice manual.

Drafting of the Tribunal-specific part of the manual will follow publication of the first part of the manual to be produced by COAT. The Professional Development Committee has established a subcommittee to oversee the project.

### Tribunal conferences

#### *Client Service Officers' Conference*

The biennial Client Service Officers' Conference was held in Hobart from 18 to 20 October 2004. The conference provided an opportunity for staff located in registries across the country to meet and share information. The conference was opened by the President and was attended by approximately 45 staff.

In keeping with the Conference theme 'Moving Forward', proceedings on day one of the conference included updates and progress reports on major initiatives from all registries and a workshop dealing with major developments in policy and procedure. The second day of the conference was dedicated to a workshop on developing staff's capabilities to satisfy user needs. Concurrent sessions on the third day provided participants with the opportunity to explore areas of professional interest ranging from ethical and legal challenges, leadership and effective team work.

The program was evaluated and, based on participant feedback, the agenda for the next conference will include more breakout sessions targeted to the needs of specific groups.

### *District Registrars' biannual meetings*

District Registrars' national meetings are held to coincide with the Tribunal Committee Meetings. During the reporting year, District Registrars' meetings were held in Brisbane in September 2004 and in Sydney in April 2005. The purpose of the meetings is to improve internal communication, promote consistency in national practice and procedure, and support both the local and overall organisational needs of the Tribunal.

### A positive and diverse workplace

#### *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traineeship*

The Tribunal has implemented its Indigenous Employment Strategy. In April the Tribunal's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainee commenced a one-year clerical traineeship, which provides an opportunity to learn basic clerical job skills and to prepare for a career in the Australian Public Service, or elsewhere. While the Tribunal is unable to offer guaranteed follow-on employment at the end of the traineeship, it is hoped that the trainee will be in a position to compete for any appropriate vacancies that might arise in the Tribunal.

A cultural awareness program was conducted for the Queensland Registry with other training scheduled for late 2005.

#### *Workplace diversity*

The Tribunal, through its Workplace Diversity Plan, recognises that all people have different qualities, skills, qualifications, experience and attitudes to work, and that valuing and making proper and effective use of these differences can improve the workplace for individuals, and enhance the overall performance of the Tribunal.

The plan can be viewed from 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 both members and staff, met several times during the reporting year.

The Committee progressed and finalised the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traineeship and the Workplace Harassment Contact Officer selection and training. Minutes from the meetings are made available to members and staff via the intranet. Appendix 2 lists the equal employment opportunity categories of staff, including the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, where such information has been volunteered by staff.

### Contribution to Access and Equity Report

The Tribunal made its initial contribution to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs' *Access and Equity Report 2004: Progress in implementing the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*. The Tribunal was acknowledged as meeting all of the relevant performance indicators for 2004—of which half were determined to have been met to a high standard.

### Disability Action Plan

The Tribunal's plan builds on and endorses the Tribunal's commitment to the principles of workplace diversity and equality of access. It addresses issues such as ensuring that electronic and printed material is available in appropriate formats and that standards of client service set out in the Service Charter, including those relating to the complaints process, are relevant to people with disabilities. When needed, the Tribunal provides applicants with electronic assistance for the hearing-impaired, information in multi-media options for sight-impaired people, and aids for those with a physical disability. Reasonable adjustment provisions cater for special needs in employment, induction and training of members and staff. The plan can be viewed from the Tribunal's website at: [www.aat.gov.au/CorporatePublications/DisabilityActionPlan.htm](http://www.aat.gov.au/CorporatePublications/DisabilityActionPlan.htm).

### Commonwealth Disability Strategy

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy is designed to help agencies improve access for people with disabilities to their services and facilities. In the

context of the strategy, the Tribunal is assessed as performing the roles of an employer and a provider. Appendix 8 provides a summary of the Tribunal's performance in this area during the 2004–05 year.

### Workplace Harassment Contact Officer network

A process was completed under the Workplace Diversity Plan to appoint new Workplace Harassment Contact Officers (WHCOs). Nine nominations were received, including for the first time an appointed Member of the Tribunal. Having completed training conducted by the Australian Public Service Commission, the new WHCOs are now operating as part of a national network which enables staff and members to contact any member 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 managers, members and staff in preventing and dealing with workplace harassment and encourages all managers and supervisors in particular to be familiar with, and to actively promote and support, the Tribunal's policy and strategies for dealing with harassment.

### Tribunal Benevolent Fund

A benevolent trust managed by elected trustees was established in late 2003. This trust, funded by voluntary contributions from staff and members, is available to assist in circumstances where a staff member or a member of their immediate family suffers misadventure or illness from any cause. The trust received only one request for assistance by a member of staff in the 2004–05 year.

### Tribunal sporting achievements

The Tribunal encourages a healthy lifestyle for staff by providing contributions towards the registration of Tribunal teams in various sporting competitions

and activities. This year the Victoria Registry walking and running teams had excellent results, finishing in second and fourth places in the Melbourne City Sports Autumn 2004 Corporate Cup. The New South Wales Registry's 'AATackers' volleyball team commenced as a rookie team in the Sydney lunchtime competition.

### Human resource management

#### Workplace planning, staff retention and turnover

Some of the significant developments during the reporting period relating to workplace planning included:

- commencement of a major review of classifications of supervisors and client service officers in all registries and staff within the Member Support Teams. The review aims to evaluate relativities between AAT positions and comparable positions in other agencies
- a continued emphasis on timeliness of performance appraisals and monitoring.

The Tribunal's training and development and performance management programs foster staff retention and professional development. The Tribunal's ongoing staffing complement was again quite stable, leading to increased familiarity with duties and enhanced performance.

#### Individual and agency-wide employment agreements

The AAT's current Agency Agreement commenced on 1 July 2003. The three-year certified agreement, expiring on 30 June 2006, offers four per cent annual salary increases. The agreement continues to promote a high standard of client service and the continual development of staff. It seeks to improve productivity and efficiency while reducing cost through specific in-house programs and initiatives.

During the year three staff members, the Tribunal's only Senior Executive Service employee and two Executive Level 2 staff, were covered by individual Australian Workplace Agreements. Each 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 four 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 2004–05 year was \$39,285.

Salary ranges for all staff 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 Certified Agreement.

#### Salary packaging

Salary packaging was made available to members and staff through the introduction of two relevant policies, the first of which is administered externally by the commercial firm of McMillan Shakespeare and the other administered internally by Human Resources. Twelve employees took up the opportunity to access salary packaging arrangements during the year.

#### Provision of personnel and payroll services to Australian Institute of Criminology

The Tribunal through its Human Resources and Finance sections continues to provide personnel and payroll services to the Australian Institute of Criminology through a Memorandum of Understanding.

#### Performance Management Program

In accordance with the Tribunal's Performance Management Program all staff have performance agreements. Depending on their performance during the appraisal period staff are able to advance through their salary pay scale, up to the

maximum of the salary range. The program is linked to the Agency Agreement. Appraisals were completed by 30 June 2005 for all staff except those who were on leave at the appraisal time.

Twenty six staff were eligible for performance-related salary advancement (i.e. an increment) and these were paid in July 2005, where possible. Staff also have individual development plans linked to their performance agreements which identify training and development needs.

#### 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.

#### Non-salary benefits

Under the certified agreement, staff were provided with the following non-salary benefits:

- Two days of paid leave is provided to most staff between Christmas and New Year. A skeleton staff operates to maintain basic registry functions.
- All ongoing staff are eligible to apply for study assistance. Approved students have access to assistance that can include limited time off work for attendance at lectures, tutorials and examinations and may include full or partial reimbursement of fees and costs. Fifteen staff were accredited as approved students under the Tribunal's study assistance scheme during 2004–05. Approved courses included information technology, accounting, workplace training, human resources management, business, and various areas of the law including public law, administration and policy, and tribunal procedures. The cost of reimbursing study fees and charges was less than \$17,100 and 298 study hours were approved for all

purposes such as attendance at lectures and tutorials, for exam leave and study leave.

- Two additional weeks of paid maternity/parenting leave are provided.
- Health and wellbeing benefits, such as influenza vaccinations, were provided.

#### Productivity gains

The Tribunal is undertaking several staged actions to further improve productivity across its staffing operations. The Learning and Development Officer has developed a broad-based learning and development program which will aim to address the identified learning needs of employees. Specific training to improve personal and office-wide skills will be targeted.

Work reorganisation in the registries continues. In Queensland, a registry work reorganisation pilot in which a case officer looks after matters in their entirety from application to finalisation has been implemented. This continues the arrangements set up in New South Wales and Western Australia.

#### Training database

Tribunal staff have intranet access to a reference database of training and development opportunities available across Australia. The Learning and Development Officer maintains a database recording staff attendance at training and development courses.

#### Occupational health and safety

The Tribunal gives priority to the health and work safety of its members and staff. To assist in monitoring occupational health and safety (OH&S), and in accordance with Comcare requirements, the Tribunal has a National Health and Safety Committee, with staff representatives from each registry. The committee meets regularly by telephone, and agenda items include site reports, incident reporting and recent information releases from Comcare. Health and Safety Representatives are sought on a voluntary basis from interested

staff who then 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 problems are identified, including posture issues, workstation set-up and equipment requirements. Remedial action is implemented. Case management of compensable matters is conducted in-house or outsourced, depending on the location and the complexity of the matter.

A new internally administered injury management scheme aimed at addressing low cost injuries has been trialled. The scheme provides injured employees with an option to seek immediate reimbursement, through the Tribunal, for costs outlaid in managing their injuries, but without forgoing their entitlement to lodge a formal compensation claim through Comcare at any time in the future. This scheme facilitates quick resolution of minor work-related injuries.

The Comcare OH&S Incident Reporting Guidelines are in place along with Tribunal instructions. During the year there were no reportable incidents nor were there any investigations into operations of the Tribunal.

#### Ethical standards

Tribunal staff are required to act in accordance with the Australian Public Service (APS) Values and the APS Code of Conduct.

The APS Values and the APS Code of Conduct are available to staff on the intranet and are referred to in Tribunal publications. Recruitment guidelines include information on the APS Values and APS Code of Conduct.

## Our organisation

The Tribunal's goal in this area, as outlined in its Organisational Plan 2004–05, is:

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

This section of the report outlines achievements of the Corporate Support, Information Services and Technology, and Policy and Research sections in pursuit of the above goal. It also provides more general information on the Tribunal's administration and governance.

### Organisational Plan

In 2004–05, the Tribunal developed the Organisational Plan, which set out the Tribunal's:

- vision, mission and values
- key result areas
- goals
- strategies
- key targets
- outcomes.

The plan was developed in consultation with all staff and members. The plan will be reviewed annually. A copy of the plan, including a statement of the Tribunal's achievements against the plan, is at the end of Chapter 1.

### Corporate Support

The Corporate Support area of the Tribunal is divided into the Financial Management Section and the Human Resource Management Section.

### Financial management

Audited financial statements appear as part of this annual report from page 57.

The financial statements include reports on the outputs identified in the 2004–05 Budget.

These outputs are:

- applications finalised without hearing
- applications finalised with hearing.

The 2004–05 financial year was a year of planning and preparation for the Tribunal in advance of a major acquisition that will be finalised in 2005–06. A tender evaluation commenced and progressed through the year for a new case management system. This is a major purchase for the Tribunal replacing an aged system called AATCAMS.

### 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, including the financial statements provided to the Auditor-General and fraud risk assessment, and commissioning internal audits on operational activities.

The Tribunal has in place approved risk assessment and fraud control plans and procedures that provide for fraud prevention, detection, investigation and reporting. The Tribunal's Chief Executive Instructions have been reviewed and were reissued during the 2004–05 financial year. These Chief Executive Instructions have been used as a model for several other agencies' instructions.

The Tribunal's independent internal auditor reviews each year 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 Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria Registries. Areas scrutinised included payments, receipting, bank accounts, payroll, attendance records and hospitality. Each year audits of Principal Registry Finance and Human Resources operations are also undertaken. No major risks were identified as a result of the audits.

No reports on Tribunal operations were published by the Auditor-General during the financial year.

### *Insurance*

The Tribunal's property and assets are insured through the Commonwealth's Comcover arrangements. In general terms, the Tribunal has a low risk of insurance exposure and a limited likelihood of major disruption to its services, although cover is provided should that occur. In line with a general trend in the industry, the insurance premium decreased this year. The Tribunal's insurance cover has been increased in respect of its fitout and property-related items.

### *Security*

The Tribunal has fee-for-service agreements with both the Australian Protective Service and Chubb Security Pty Ltd to provide ad hoc security guarding for Tribunal hearings on an as-needed basis. During the year specific guarding services were sought on several occasions nationally as a precautionary measure but no incidents affecting security actually occurred in any Tribunal hearing or in any registry. The Tribunal's premises are access-controlled and duress alarms are installed (with monitoring by Chubb Security Pty Ltd) to protect staff and members in the event of any incident during hearings or conferences.

The Tribunal has entered into an agreement with the Family Court of Australia to use its court rooms and security arrangements if the Tribunal becomes aware of a particular risk or threat to the conduct of a hearing. Court rooms at several Family Court Registries were used during the year for this purpose without incident.

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

## Property

The Tribunal operates from commercially leased premises in Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. It occupies premises in the Commonwealth Law Courts buildings in Brisbane and Hobart. Leases on all commercial sites, except Canberra, continue until mid to late 2005–06.

The Canberra lease was renewed, after a market-testing exercise for a 10-year term, commencing 1 July 2004. A small refurbishment of the premises is planned to ensure that it remains a workable fit-out for another decade.

The Sydney and Melbourne leases expire in December 2005. A property consultant was engaged from a public tender exercise and undertook open-market property searches in both cities for the most suitable leasing deals to enable the Tribunal to operate from affordable premises on leases of up to 10 years duration. As a result of these exercises, the Tribunal has agreed in principle to taking new leases at its existing premises in both cities. Approvals and details of the leases are being settled in the intervening period.

Leases in Adelaide and Perth fall due in early- to mid-2006. After market-testing exercises in both of those cities the Tribunal is negotiating two new leases-in-principle. In Perth the registry will move to another building close to the current location, where a better value for money lease will be achieved. In Adelaide the registry will, at this stage, remain in its current premises.

## Purchasing

Although the Tribunal has a limited purchasing profile, the core principles of the new *Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines* and best practice guidelines are observed; and the Tribunal ensures that purchases are in accordance with the Chief Executive Instructions. The Chief Executive Instructions have been reviewed to ensure that they remain current (conforming with the new

procurement guidelines) and valid documents for ongoing use by staff.

For major purchases or contracts, the Tribunal uses competitive methods to seek value for money, as well as providing for proper and effective competition. All significant purchases are put to open or, if appropriate, selective tender and, as is required by the Tribunal's purchasing guidelines, at least three quotes are ordinarily obtained for other minor services or goods when required.

In 2004–05, 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 on Agency Contracts.

With regard to information technology purchases, the Tribunal generally uses the Endorsed Supplier Arrangement to source likely suppliers of goods and services. Adherence to the principle of using only endorsed suppliers has resulted in some firms joining the Endorsed Supplier list in order to tender for Tribunal business.

## Exempt contracts

There were no contracts in excess of \$2,000 (inclusive of goods and services tax) or standing offers that were exempt from being published in the Purchasing and Disposal Gazette on the basis that they would disclose exempt matters under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

## 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 was not available. During 2004–05 fourteen new consultancies were let. Actual expenditure on all new consultancies during the year was \$122,209. In addition, during 2004–05 five consultancies carried through from the previous year involving actual payments of \$185,000.

Consultants are engaged using the methods contained in the Chief Executive Instructions for the purchasing of services. Open tender, select tender or direct sourcing may be used depending on the circumstances, timelines and the particular need. During 2004–05 consultancies were let for specialist property advisory services, for technical advice on property options, internal auditing services, specialist training and training advisory services, and for the undertaking of and reporting on the AAT User Survey.

Appendix 9 sets out the new consultancies let by the Tribunal during the year for which the total contract value (inc GST) for each exceeds \$10,000. Appendix 9 also sets out the number of, and total expenditure on, consultancies valued at more than \$10,000 each for the three most recent reporting years.

#### *Contracting out*

During the reporting year, the Tribunal did not contract out to another organisation the delivery of any government activities that it had previously performed.

#### *Discretionary grants*

The Tribunal has no discretionary grant programs.

#### *Advertising and market research*

The Tribunal has no item to declare under section 311A of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. Non-campaign advertising expenditure for the year was \$6951 paid to hma Blaze Pty Ltd for the newspaper advertising of tenders and for recruitment advertisements.

#### *Environmental performance*

Under section 516A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, agencies are required to report on ecologically sustainable development and environmental matters. The Tribunal is a review body and, as such, does not administer policy that has any major detrimental effect on the environment. The Tribunal attempts to limit its impact on the environment in day-to-day administrative

functions by ensuring that energy usage and wastage of resources are minimised. Results to date are encouraging in that energy usage is moderate compared with usage by similar organisations.

The Tribunal is a partner in the development of an environmental management system (EMS) for Commonwealth Law Courts buildings nationally. An EMS review of several Law Courts buildings has been conducted and a first-stage implementation plan is being prepared for consideration in 2005–06. A policy for national use will be developed subsequently. In addition, the landlord of the Tribunal's Sydney registry actively promotes energy and resource conservation within the building and seeks continual reduction in consumption of these items.

General energy consumption fell again by five per cent during the reporting year due to the efforts and diligence of staff in monitoring electricity usage. Petrol consumption rose slightly due to a change in fleet composition. As the number of executive cars is small, changes in car models can affect general consumption levels. The Tribunal has no cars for general office use.

#### **Information Technology**

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

#### **Case Management System**

The most significant project was the development, and planned implementation, of a new case management system. The current system, known as AATCAMS, has served the Tribunal well for almost 20 years; however, it is not able to provide the necessary functionality to support the Tribunal's projected move into electronic business methods. It is also unable to utilise current desktop computing technology to provide efficient in-house workflow processing of applications to the Tribunal.

The first major stage of the project was the development of a detailed user requirements

specification. This work was managed by the IT department with the assistance of e.Law, a consulting firm that specialises in court and tribunal systems solutions.

The second stage was the formal open-market tender advertising for the new system. At the end of the financial year the Tribunal is evaluating a short list of responses and expects to choose a preferred supplier during the first quarter of 2005–06.

### Communications Tender

The IT department developed a tender seeking interest from providers for all of the Tribunal's voice, data and Internet communications services. Current contracts were ending and an opportunity existed to make considerable cost savings without any dilution in the quality of services provided. After an extensive analysis of the responses the preferred suppliers were confirmed with the financial benefits to begin from 1 July 2005.

### Business Continuity Services

As part of its IT continuity arrangements the Tribunal is installing new backup tape drive technology to improve the efficiency of backup and recovery of its systems. It also installed a new system for filtering spam e-mail.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Tribunal is regularly involved in forums with other tribunals and courts, the Attorney-General's Department and with the Australian Government Information Management Office to continually monitor opportunities for adopting IT practices that will assist in enabling whole of Government IT efficiencies.

### IT Steering Committee

The IT Steering Committee is an advisory and review body reporting to the President on strategic IT projects. The committee met twice during the year (September 2004 and April 2005) to review each of the projects listed above. It agreed the recommendations and advised approval of them.

## Library and information services

The Library Committee meets twice yearly to discuss issues relating to the management and maintenance of the Tribunal's library resources. During the reporting year, the Committee finalised a Collection Development Policy, established an acquisitions sub-committee to make decisions on the purchase of subscriptions and text books and focused its attention on updating the library's book collection, including improving members' access to the materials needed for the performance of their work.

Achievements of the library network team in the reporting year have included:

- acquisition, cataloguing and distribution of new text and reference book materials in response to Library Committee recommendations for the collection
- an upgrade to the menu and the addition of alternative formats for documents posted on the Tribunal website in order to meet W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) guidelines and Australian Government website standards
- regular improvement to the intranet and Internet sites particularly in response to user feedback and change requests
- organisation of multiple online legal research training sessions to members and staff in the use of the LexisNexisAU database and the provision of individual training on request
- delivery of library orientation training for new members
- ongoing management of the process of electronic delivery of Tribunal decisions to publishers, government departments, agencies and other interested parties.

### 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 relevant legislative changes, case law developments and practice and procedure issues. The primary responsibilities of the section include:

- undertaking research and preparing advice, correspondence and papers relating to matters affecting the Tribunal
- monitoring and coordinating appeals from decisions of the Tribunal
- 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
- assisting with the delivery of training for Tribunal staff.

Key achievements for the reporting year included:

- successful implementation of system changes required by amendments to the AAT Act
- provision of information to members and staff relating to the amendments to the AAT Act
- high level of support provided to the Practice and Procedure Committee and the Constitution Committee
- preparation and presentation of regular training for Tribunal staff in relation to practice and procedure issues.

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

Administrative Appeals Tribunal

2004-2005  
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