

Chapter 5: Our people and our organisation



This chapter describes the Tribunal's performance in meeting the goals identified in the 2005–06 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, 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. It provides information in relation to the activities of the Professional Development Committee and more general information relating to human resource management in the Tribunal.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Committee met in October 2005 and May 2006 and discussed a range of issues relating to the professional development of the Tribunal's members. Agenda items included the Members' Professional Development Program, the nature and content of the induction program for new members, professional development activities for Tribunal members, the development of a practice manual for Tribunal members, the Tribunal's internal conference program and the use of decision templates.

Significant developments relating to matters considered by the Committee 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, professional development opportunities and appraisal.

Implementation of the program commenced in 2005–06 with the appointment of Deputy President Deane Jarvis as Appraisal Coordinator and Senior Member Narelle Bell as Mentoring Coordinator.

The National Conference in October 2005 included a session dedicated to the program and its proposed implementation.

The Professional Development Committee decided that a handbook should be produced that would:

- provide members with information and practical assistance on all aspects of the program; and
- assist mentors and appraisers of the Tribunal to perform their roles appropriately and effectively.

The development of the handbook was overseen by the President, the Appraisal Coordinator and the Mentoring Coordinator.

In June 2006, members who had been selected to act as mentors and appraisers participated in a two-day workshop conducted by Dr Anthony Grant, Director Coaching Psychology Unit, School of Psychology, The University of Sydney.

New members attending the induction program to be held in August 2006 will be allocated a mentor. The new member and their mentor will have an initial face-to-face meeting during the program to begin their mentoring relationship.

The Professional Development Committee has also endorsed a Tutorial Scheme for the Tribunal. The Tutorial Scheme will provide a further avenue for members to participate in meaningful professional development. In the tutorial, members draw on their own and other members' knowledge, skill and past experiences to gain new perspectives and insights on aspects of their work in the Tribunal.

Induction program for new members

On 15 June 2005, the Attorney-General announced a round of appointments and re-appointments to the Tribunal to take effect on 1 July 2005. An induction program for new members was held in Adelaide in July 2005.

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 jurisdictions, the practice and procedure

of the Tribunal and case management in the Tribunal. The program also introduces the new member to the roles and duties of members of the Tribunal. The program is delivered by experienced Tribunal members and senior staff. The induction experience provides an opportunity for the development of networks between new and more experienced members.

A comprehensive evaluation of the induction program for new members will be undertaken in 2006–07.

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 provides Tribunal members with practical guidance on performing their duties under the AAT Act and under other legislation that confers jurisdiction on the Tribunal.

It was decided that the Tribunal manual would be developed after the *Practice Manual for Tribunals* had been published by the Council of Australasian Tribunals (COAT). This would avoid duplication of content and encourage consistency of approach. As was noted in Chapter 4, the COAT manual was published in April 2006.

The Professional Development Committee has considered the scope of what should be covered in the Tribunal manual and how it may be integrated with the material in the COAT Practice Manual for Tribunals. Further work will be undertaken on the manual in 2006–07.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

A range of initiatives aimed at maintaining and enhancing the skills and knowledge of Tribunal members and staff were undertaken during the reporting year. These included:

- training of members who will be mentors and appraisers under the Members' Professional Development Program;
- the Conference Registrars' Conference held in June 2006;
- District Registrars' meetings held in October 2005 and May 2006;
- professional development seminars for members and staff on a range of issues of interest;
- 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; and
- participation of members and staff 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 seeks to meet the learning needs of individuals and teams across all registries.

Priorities for staff learning and development are determined having regard to training needs analysis data and development plans. Feedback is also gathered from training evaluations and from meetings and other forums held within the Tribunal. During the reporting year, staff learning and development activities were expanded to include courses in the following areas: the APS Values and Code of Conduct, better health strategies, clear writing, coaching and mentoring, cultural awareness and diversity, effective team work, financial reporting, office ergonomics, online legal research, security awareness and work/life balance. Sessions on practice and procedure issues conducted by the Tribunal's Policy and Research Section received widespread endorsement and have now become a regular feature on the learning and development calendar.

Tribunal staff members 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.

Tribunal conferences

National Conference

The National Conference was held from 23 to 26 October 2005. It provided a welcome opportunity for Tribunal members, Conference Registrars and District Registrars from across Australia to meet and share information and experiences. The theme of the conference was the Tribunal's statutory objective to provide a mechanism of review that is fair, just, economical, informal and quick.



National Conference 2005

The first plenary session of the conference involved a panel discussion of the different components of the Tribunal's statutory objective. Other topics on Day One of the conference included a review of key cases that inform the Tribunal's work, informality and other issues relevant to self-represented parties, confidentiality, public interest and the media and mathematics, statistics and science for lawyers. The keynote address was delivered by the Honourable Justice Roslyn Atkinson of the Supreme Court of Queensland.

Day Two of the conference was dedicated to updates on a number of issues, including alternative dispute resolution, information technology in the Tribunal, the user survey, the Members' Professional Development Program, concurrent evidence and decision writing. On Day Three of the conference, Amanda Davies, Assistant Secretary, Attorney-General's

Department discussed the Department's role in relation to the Tribunal and the general responsibilities of government decision-makers who are involved in Tribunal proceedings.

Conference Registrars' Conference

The Conference Registrars' Conference was held in June 2006. The first day of proceedings focused on the developments in the Tribunal in relation to alternative dispute resolution processes. On the second day, presentations were given on the new Comcare Guide to the Assessment of the Degree of Permanent Impairment, which commenced in March 2006, and the Welfare to Work changes.

District Registrars' biannual meetings

District Registrars' meetings are held to coincide with the Tribunal committee meetings. District Registrars' meetings were held in October 2005 and May 2006. The purpose of the meetings is to provide training on appropriate topics, improve internal communication and promote consistency in national practice and procedure.

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

setup 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.

An internally administered injury management scheme aimed at addressing low-cost injuries has continued to be trialled 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 & Safety Incident Reporting Guidelines are in place and are supplemented with Tribunal instructions. There were no reportable incidents during 2005–06 nor were there any investigations into the Tribunal's operations.

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 2005–06, the Australian Capital Territory and South Australian Registries introduced the file management model already in operation in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia. This entails case officers managing a set of applications from lodgement to finalisation rather than performing specific tasks in relation to all applications.

More generally, a Work Organisation Group was established in June 2006 to examine current work practices in the Tribunal's registries. The group will make recommendations to management in relation to the introduction of a nationally consistent work organisation model. This model

will adopt the best of existing processes and implement new processes to maximise the efficient processing of applications. The Group includes staff from each of the registries and will complete its work in 2006–07.

The implementation of the Tribunal's new case management system in the next reporting period is also expected to generate a range of more efficient work practices and time-saving measures.

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 that person's immediate family, suffers misadventure or illness from any cause. The trust received no requests for assistance by a member of staff in the 2005–06 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. The New South Wales Registry fielded a team, the AATackers, in lunchtime volleyball and netball competitions during the year. The walking and running teams in the Victorian Registry achieved final three placings in both divisions of the Melbourne City Sports Corporate Cup held in Spring 2005. They were placed fourth in the Melbourne City Sports Corporate Cup held in Autumn 2006.

Workplace diversity

The Tribunal recognises that people have different qualities, skills, qualifications, experience and attitudes to work. 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.

The Tribunal's Workplace Diversity Committee, which comprises both Tribunal members and staff representatives, met several times during the reporting year. The Committee oversaw 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 provides information on the number of staff members who have indicated that they are within particular equal employment opportunity categories. This includes the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Contribution to Access and Equity Report

The Tribunal contributed to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs' 2005 Access and Equity Annual Report. The Tribunal met all four of the performance indicators assessed for 2005 at the level of "met well". This compares favourably with the 2004 assessment where only half of the performance indicators were met at that standard.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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 first trainee completed a one-year clerical traineeship in April 2006.

The traineeship program was reviewed and a second traineeship will be offered in late 2006 within the Tribunal's Principal Registry in Brisbane. The trainee will work in the human resources and finance areas and may work in the library, depending on the trainee's chosen field of study at TAFE.

Workplace Harassment Contact Officer network

The Tribunal has nine Workplace Harassment Contact Officers (WHCOs) across its registries including a member of the Tribunal. 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 WHCO 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 for people with disabilities to their services and facilities. 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 these areas during the 2005–06 year.

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 as measures in relation to various aspects of the Tribunal's role as an employer and provider.

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

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Workplace planning, staff retention and turnover

During the reporting period, a major review of classifications of staff in all registries, including the Member Support Teams, was completed. The review evaluated relativities between positions in the Tribunal and comparable positions in other agencies. Recommendations included an additional grading point for case officers in all registries and an upgrade of six management positions nationally on work value grounds.

The Tribunal's training and development and performance management programs foster staff retention and professional development. There was a continued emphasis on timeliness of monitoring and performance appraisals.

The Tribunal's ongoing staffing complement was quite stable during the reporting period, leading to increased familiarity with duties and enhanced performance.

Agency-wide and individual employment agreements

The Tribunal's Agency Agreement expired on 30 June 2006. Negotiations for a new agreement commenced in late 2005. The new three-year certified agreement, which will commence from 20 July 2006, offers 4.2 per cent annual salary increases. The agreement continues to promote a high standard of client service and the development of staff. It seeks to improve productivity and efficiency while reducing cost through specific in-house programs and initiatives, particularly those associated with the purpose-designed case management system.

During the reporting year, six staff members were covered by Australian Workplace Agreements: the Tribunal's only Senior Executive Service employee, two Executive Level 2 staff and three Executive Level 1 staff. All but one of the Executive Level 1 staff members were eligible for, and received, 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 six 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 2005–06 year was \$62,900.

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

In accordance with the Tribunal's Performance Management Program, all staff members have performance agreements. 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 2006 for all staff members except those who were on leave at the appraisal time or where approval was given for extensions.

Twenty-six staff members were eligible for performance-related salary advancement, which would generally be paid from July 2006. Staff members also have individual development plans linked to their performance agreements, which identify training and development needs.

Non-salary benefits

Under the Agency Agreement, staff members were provided with the following non-salary benefits:

- 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;
- 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, 25 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 approximately \$68,500. Approximately 590 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 Human Resources. During the reporting year, 23 employees took up the opportunity to access salary packaging arrangements in relation to superannuation (15), laptop computers (7) 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 APS 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 their content and application.

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.

CORPORATE SUPPORT

The Corporate Support area of the Tribunal is divided into the Finance Section and the Human Resources Management Section. Information on human resources issues is set out in the previous section of this report.

Financial management

The Tribunal's audited financial statements appear as part of the Annual Report 2005–06 from page 57.

The 2005–06 financial year was a dynamic year for the Finance Section with considerable purchasing activity linked to new leases for Tribunal premises. The implementation of the new case management system, which involves a replacement of the existing personal computer facilities, is underway. Most registries also installed new PABX facilities, which contributed to the purchasing activity.

The Tribunal's financial performance was close to budget with the increasing number of applications being the main factor contributing to an increase in employee costs. The small increase in supplier costs related mainly to additional costs associated with the renegotiation of Tribunal leases and relocation of Tribunal premises.

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.

New leases were negotiated or finalised during the reporting year in relation to all commercial sites other than Canberra.

The leases in Melbourne and Sydney expired in December 2005. The lease in Perth expired in early 2006 and the Adelaide lease expired in mid 2006. A property consultant was engaged in each city to undertake an open-market property search for the most suitable leasing deals that would enable the Tribunal to operate from affordable premises with leases of up to 10 years duration. The Tribunal negotiated new leases at its existing premises in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. The Perth registry moved to another building close to its previous location.

A refurbishment of the registry in Sydney was substantially completed during the reporting period. Minor refurbishments will be undertaken in Adelaide, Canberra and Melbourne in 2006–07.

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 were reviewed to ensure that they conformed with the current procurement guidelines and were reissued during 2005–06. 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 providing for 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 other goods or services.

With regard to information technology purchases, the Tribunal 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.

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 may be used depending on the circumstances, timelines and the identified need for a consultant.

Eight new consultancies were let during 2005–06 for internal auditing services and advice in a range of areas including human resources issues, information technology security, procurement processes and property. Actual expenditure on consultancies let during the reporting year was \$74,001 (including GST). Six consultancies let during previous years were active during 2005–06 involving total actual expenditure of \$81,092 (including GST).

Appendix 10 provides details in relation to each new consultancy let by the Tribunal during 2005–06 for which the total contract value (including 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.

Please note that the Tribunal's 2003–04 Annual Report overstated the value of consultancies let in that year. The error related to the consultancy for property services let to United KFPW. The value of the consultancy was inadvertently reported as \$100,000 which was twice its actual value.

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.

There were no contracts in excess of \$10,000 (including GST) or standing offers that were

exempt from being published in the Gazette on the basis that they would disclose exempt matters under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

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.

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. 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 Queensland, South Australian and Western Australian 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.

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 2005–06. The Tribunal's insurance cover has been increased in respect of its fit-out and property-related items.

Risk management assessment

The Tribunal commenced a risk assessment review during the reporting period 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 being undertaken by a separate contractor.

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 Ltd to provide additional security services for Tribunal ADR events 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 with the Family Court and 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 is undertaking a review of the Tribunal's physical security arrangements to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to protect Tribunal members, staff, the public and Commonwealth records and assets from attack or unwanted intervention.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Case Management System

During the reporting year, the Tribunal awarded the contract for the provision of a new case management system to replace the mainframe-based system that has operated for over 15 years. The new system will bring to the Tribunal the latest server-based computer technology, enabling state-of-the-art case management workflow techniques to be used.

The company that was awarded the contract, Strategic Business Consulting, has worked closely with a team of Tribunal staff to develop a detailed design specification which has now been approved. The new system will provide a structured online workflow for all stages of case management from initial receipt of applications, arranging ADR processes and hearings through to publication of decisions.

Technical development of the Tribunal's requirements is being added to a base system already implemented in several courts and tribunals around Australia. The system is expected to be fully operational by early 2007.

New PCs

The Tribunal awarded a contract during 2005–06 for the supply of new personal computers for all Tribunal members and staff around Australia. The existing fleet of PCs was several years old and unable to meet the needs of new software technologies being introduced.

The new PCs feature a 19-inch flat panel screen that can be positioned either in portrait or landscape mode. In portrait mode, full-sized displays of A4 pages can be displayed without the need for any scrolling, a beneficial feature in an environment that is focused on text documents.

Roll out commenced during the reporting period and was completed in early 2006–07.

New communications contracts

New contracts for the supply of telephone and data services that will take full advantage of the lower cost of telephone calls and data network bandwidths commenced during the reporting year. These contracts have led to a dramatic reduction in the Tribunal's costs in these areas.

Security

Work was carried out during the reporting year to develop strategies and implement improvements in relation to system security. This work will continue with some aspects to be completed in 2006–07. While the Tribunal's systems are already well secured, there is an ongoing need

to implement measures that address new threats that may impact on the Tribunal's operations.

Information Technology Committee

The Information Technology Committee is an advisory and review body that reports to the President on IT projects within the Tribunal. The committee met in October 2005 and May 2006 to discuss a range of issues, including the new case management system, an upgrade to voice recording software and issues relating to digital recording of Tribunal proceedings.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Library Committee

The Library Committee met in October 2005 and May 2006 to discuss issues relating to the management and maintenance of the Tribunal's library resources. The Committee has focused on ensuring the currency of the library's book collection and expanding the collection of electronic research, journal and law report resources. The Committee has aimed to improve members' accessibility to the materials needed for the performance of their work and to ensure the overall maintenance and ongoing improvement in the collection.

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. Libraries are staffed by professional librarians who organise and manage the collection and assist members and staff with their information needs. The Library Network also 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;
- commencement of a project to create electronic copies of the earliest decisions produced by the Tribunal;
- improvement in access to the written works of past and current Tribunal members by cataloguing members' papers and articles and making the details available via the library's computerised catalogue, Horizon;
- delivery of library orientation training for new members;
- production of a photo-gallery suitable for electronic publication that provides a photographic history of the Tribunal, commemorating significant events and ceremonies and recording the Tribunal's past and present membership and staff;
- regular improvement to the intranet and internet sites, particularly in response to user feedback and change requests; 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:

- publication of the report on the study relating to concurrent evidence in the Tribunal's New South Wales Registry; and
- participating in the development of the specification for the Tribunal's new case management system.

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