



CHAPTER 5

OUR PEOPLE AND
OUR ORGANISATION

This chapter outlines the Tribunal's performance in meeting the goals for its people and the organisation identified in the 2008-09 Organisational Plan. It also provides information on human resource management and the Tribunal's administration and governance.

OUR PEOPLE

This section addresses how the Tribunal worked towards to meeting the following goal during the reporting period:

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

Members' Professional Development

The Members' Professional Development Program is a comprehensive program based on a framework of competencies developed by the Tribunal. The program comprises induction, mentoring, self-assessment complemented by peer review and other professional development opportunities. The Professional Development Committee met in December 2008 and June 2009 to advise on the program and its development.

Learning activities for members are developed with reference to the Tribunal's framework of competencies. A range of options, such as attendance at conferences and seminars, are offered that assist members to remain up-to-date with developments relevant to their work.

Most registries have a program of regular professional development meetings, and other registries may participate by videoconference or telephone, facilitating shared learning. Topics covered in 2008-09 included updates on significant cases, aspects of practice and procedure, comparative law and cultural awareness.

Mentoring Scheme

The Mentoring Scheme assists newly appointed members to gain a better understanding of the workings of the Tribunal and their role, and promotes the Tribunal's overall objectives. Senior Member Narelle Bell, who continued as the coordinator of the Mentoring Scheme in 2008-09, led a formal evaluation of the Scheme during the

reporting year. The evaluation confirmed that the premises upon which the scheme were developed are sound. Mentoring is particularly worthwhile for newly appointed members and the framework of competencies provides a useful reference point for discussions between mentors and mentees. There was agreement that, where possible, mentors and mentees should be located in the same registry to improve the effectiveness of the relationship.

Appraisal Scheme

The Appraisal Scheme combines self-assessment with appraisal by another Tribunal member against the framework of competencies. The self-assessment and peer review process gives members the opportunity to reflect upon their practice and consider options for further professional development. Deputy President Deane Jarvis continued as Appraisal Scheme Coordinator in 2008-09. An evaluation of the Appraisal Scheme will be conducted in 2009-10.

Tribunal members are encouraged to share their expertise not only with their peers and Tribunal staff, but also with the wider profession and members of other tribunals through participation in organisations such as the Council of Australasian Tribunals (COAT). Members learn from colleagues working in other jurisdictions by attending conferences, including the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration/COAT Tribunals' Conference and the annual conference of the Australian Institute of Administrative Law.

National Conference Registrars' conference

The Tribunal's Conference Registrars met in the Sydney Registry on 1-2 December 2008 to explore three themes: best practice elements of alternative dispute resolution practice; case management and workflow; and strategies for promoting settlement.

Outcomes from the conference included:

- further improvement of the Tribunal's alternative dispute resolution checklist
- implementation of a professional development component into the Conference Registrars' monthly meetings

- continued discussion of case management and settlement options, and
- an ongoing commitment by Conference Registrars to continue to raise awareness of the Tribunal's conferencing and other ADR processes by conducting sessions for civil law lawyers and current and potential users.

Learning and development

Learning and development is a priority in the Tribunal. The broad-based learning and development program addresses the identified learning needs of employees, as well as being aligned with the Organisational Plan and reflecting the values of the Tribunal.

During the reporting year, the learning and development calendar included activities offered in response to identified training needs. Face-to-face and videoconference sessions covered topic areas including practice and procedure issues, working effectively with Tribunal users, editing and proofreading, online legal research, risk management fundamentals, National Relay Service information sessions, identifying and dealing with mood disorders, and cultural awareness and diversity.

Staff also attended relevant external short courses, seminars, workshops and conferences.

Collaborative learning has proven to be an effective methodology. For example, the Members Support Staff Network is a popular forum for the legal and administrative staff who work closely with the members to share ideas and remain abreast of developments in the law.

The Studies Assistance Scheme provides another avenue for staff to develop their capability, as well as that of the Tribunal, through vocational education at pre-tertiary, undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Most staff participating in the scheme undertook legal studies, while others elected public sector management, education and training.

Evaluation by participants at the pre-training and post-training stages is an important feature of the Tribunal's learning and development program. Staff contribute to the customisation of particular programs through

participation in focus groups and also provide formal feedback. This initiative ensures that programs meet the Tribunal's needs and represent value for money.

Membership of learning communities

Commonwealth Tribunals Learning & Development Forum

The Tribunal has a memorandum of understanding to work with other Australian Government tribunals on training initiatives to make the best use of government resources. To this end, a learning community, the Commonwealth Tribunals Learning & Development Forum, was formed in 2005. The major achievement of the forum in the reporting period has been the development of an e-learning diversity and inclusion program.

The major outcome of the memorandum of understanding has been the ability of the Tribunal to collaborate with the Federal Court, the Social Security Appeals Tribunal, the Migration Review Tribunal/Refugee Review Tribunal and the Veterans' Review Board on mutually beneficial training programs and lower training costs.

Australian Committee for Court Education

The Tribunal has a nominated representative on the Australian Committee for Court Education (ACCE). The Tribunal's representative was a member of the sub-committee of ACCE which reviewed specialist court competencies. This led to the development of new competencies which will form the basis for the delivery of accredited training. This improvement in the applicability of competencies to both court and tribunal staff has been designed to increase participation in the Certificate IV in Government (Court Services) and the Diploma in Government (Court Services) and the mobility of staff across Australian jurisdictions. ACCE will monitor interest in these courses across jurisdictions.

Tribunal Practice Manual

The Tribunal is developing a practice manual relating to its role and functions that will complement the COAT Practice Manual for Tribunals. The COAT manual covers topics that

are of general relevance to tribunals, including statutory interpretation, procedural fairness, conducting hearings and making decisions.

The Tribunal Practice Manual will provide members and Conference Registrars with a readily-accessible overview of law and practice in a number of areas, including practice and procedure and the major jurisdictions. It will include references to legislation and policy, case law and other resources.

The manual is being drafted by members of the Tribunal to ensure it has a practical focus. Significant progress was made during the reporting year on the parts of the manual relating to general practice and procedure, family assistance and social security, immigration and veterans' affairs.

The first edition of the manual is planned for completion in 2009–10.

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 Health and Safety Committee which includes appropriately trained 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.

The Tribunal finalised its Occupational Health and Safety Policy and the new Health and Safety Management Arrangements began on 30 July 2008. Following extensive consultation with members and staff, a revised First Aid Policy began on 18 June 2009.

Necessary refresher training has been undertaken by some members of the Health and Safety Committee and First Aid Officers during the year. Automated External Defibrillators were purchased for each Tribunal registry during 2008–09, and targeted but voluntary training made available to all members and staff.

Workplace assessments are undertaken by providers such as the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service for the benefit of staff where occupational health and safety problems are identified. Assessments are conducted in relation to matters such as posture, workstation set-up and equipment requirements. Remedial action is implemented. Case management of compensation matters is conducted either in-house or by external service providers, depending on the location and the complexity of the matter.

The Comcare Occupational Health and Safety Incident Reporting Guidelines are in place, supplemented by Tribunal instructions. There was one incident reported to Comcare during 2008–09 about possible exposure to tuberculosis in the Perth Registry which proved to be negative. There were no investigations into the Tribunal's operations.

Productivity gains

The Tribunal is pursuing several initiatives designed to increase productivity gains in its operations. The primary initiatives are technological and employee health-related.

The Tribunal is reviewing the provision of HR and Finance systems, and is planning to implement new arrangements to provide additional functionality, such as Employee and Manager Self Service, and improved reporting functionality.

The Tribunal is committed to health and well-being strategies aimed at improving employee health and promoting a healthy and productive workforce. In addition to current strategies such as vaccinations, eyesight testing and the Employee Assistance Program, the Tribunal is looking to undertake a review of unplanned absences.

The Tribunal's electronic case management system, TRACS, has undergone further enhancement (see the Information Technology section). This has provided additional functionality to its users. Over time, the system is expected to facilitate a range of more efficient work practices and time-saving measures.

Administrative Appeals Tribunal Benevolent Trust

The Tribunal is a caring employer which supports its people. To that end, a benevolent trust, funded by voluntary contributions from members and staff and managed by elected trustees, was established in 2003 for the purpose of assisting any members or staff and their immediate families who may require financial assistance. In 2008–09, the trustees approved grants of assistance to two staff members who had been affected by misfortune and illness.

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 other activities.

Brisbane staff participated in a lunchtime mixed soccer competition, and yoga classes were arranged for staff in Sydney.

Workplace diversity

The Tribunal recognises that people have different qualities, skills, qualifications and experience. Valuing and making proper and effective use of these differences can improve the workplace for individuals and enhance the overall performance of the Tribunal. These attitudes are reflected in the Tribunal's Workplace Diversity Plan which can be viewed on the Tribunal's website. An initiative to review the plan was implemented during 2008–09. The revised plan is expected to be finalised shortly and implemented during 2009–10.

The Tribunal's Workplace Diversity Committee comprises staff representatives and a Tribunal member, and is chaired by the Assistant Registrar. It continues to be involved in the Tribunal's Indigenous Employment Strategy. The committee met once during the reporting year and minutes from meetings are made available to members and staff via the intranet.

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



Brisbane's lunchtime mixed soccer team: BACK ROW l-r Chris Oliver, Alan Wallis, David Kearns (coach), Hugh Abrahams, Don Smyth, Adam Meyer, FRONT ROW l-r Michael Borg, Veronica Limu, Belinda Scarth-Johnson, Lynne Stalley, Jacqueline Woods, Michael Buckingham.

Reconciliation Action Plan

The Tribunal's Reconciliation Action Plan aims to promote reconciliation through the engagement of Indigenous employees and promoting awareness of the Tribunal's services among Indigenous Australians. The plan is available on the Tribunal's website (www.aat.gov.au).

Indigenous traineeship

The Tribunal's Indigenous Employment Strategy provides 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. A review of the strategy was commenced in the first half of 2009, the results of which will be used in planning for the Tribunal's third Indigenous traineeship which is due to commence in the second half of 2009.

Efforts will be made in 2009-10 to re-establish Indigenous traineeships for eligible school-aged candidates.

Workplace Harassment Contact Officer network

The Tribunal has four Workplace Harassment Contact Officers, including one Tribunal member. The trained officers operate as a national network. Tribunal members and staff are able to contact any Workplace Harassment Contact Officer within the network.

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

Commonwealth Disability Strategy

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy is designed to help agencies improve access to their services and facilities for people with disabilities. The Tribunal performs the roles of an employer and a provider. Appendix 11

provides a summary of the Tribunal's performance in its role as a provider during 2008-09.

Disability Action Plan

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

Human resource management

Workplace planning, staff retention and turnover

The Tribunal's training and development and performance management programs foster staff retention and professional development. The Tribunal's ongoing staffing complement was relatively stable during the reporting period, declining by two. There were 20 employment opportunity notices gazetted in 2008-09, for eight ongoing vacancies and 12 non-ongoing vacancies.

Agency-wide and individual employment agreements

The Tribunal's collective workplace agreement, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal Agency Agreement 2006-2009 which offered 4.2 per cent annual salary increases, nominally expired on 30 June 2009. A one-year union collective agreement was negotiated during 2008-09 with a successful ballot being conducted on 30 June 2009. The new agreement offers a 3.5 per cent annual salary increase. It continues to promote a high standard of client service and staff development. It also seeks to improve productivity and efficiency while reducing costs through in-house programs and initiatives, particularly those associated with the continuing development of the purpose-designed electronic case management system, TRACS, and the implementation of replacement human resources and financial management information systems.

The number of employees covered by the Agency Agreement and Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) at 30 June 2009 is in Table A2.3 in Appendix 2. That table also sets out the salary ranges for APS employees by classification level and for all staff members covered by AWAs. Other conditions of service are similar or identical to those in the Agency Agreement.

During 2008-09, seven employees covered by AWAs received a performance bonus linked to a performance agreement: the Tribunal's only Senior Executive Service employee, three staff members at Executive Level 2 and three staff members at Executive Level 1. As only a small number of employees received a performance bonus, the quantum of bonuses paid at each classification level is not published for privacy reasons. The Tribunal paid \$55,159.14 in bonuses for the 2008-09 year.

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

Senior Executive Service Officer remuneration

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

Performance Management Program

All ongoing Tribunal staff members have performance agreements in accordance with the Performance Management Program and Training and Development Plans. Depending on performance during the appraisal period, ongoing staff members may advance through the salary scale if they have obtained a performance assessment of fully effective or higher. The program is linked to the Agency Agreement. Salary levels for non-ongoing staff are reviewed on the expiration of their contracts or the completion of 12 months service, whichever is earlier. Salary advancement is based on performance.

Appraisals are completed for all staff in accordance with the Performance Management Guidelines, taking into consideration leave of absences and other approvals for extensions.

Non-salary benefits

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

- two days of paid leave between Christmas Day and New Year's Day during which the Tribunal operates a skeleton staff to maintain basic registry functions
- two additional weeks of paid maternity/parenting leave
- ability to participate in a Transport Loans Scheme
- health and well-being benefits such as influenza vaccinations, and
- study assistance.

Ongoing staff members are eligible to apply for study assistance which can include limited time off work to attend lectures, tutorials and examinations, as well as full or partial reimbursement of fees and costs. During 2008-09, 17 staff members were accredited as approved students under the Tribunal's Studies Assistance Scheme. Most approvals related either to undergraduate or postgraduate studies in law. Other approved courses included accounting, education, business, management, public administration and policy, and workplace training. The cost of reimbursing study fees and charges was \$17,470. Approximately 847 study hours were approved for all purposes, such as attendance at lectures and tutorials, study leave and exam leave.

During the year the Tribunal reviewed the Studies Assistance Scheme, and the new policy was approved on 15 October 2008. The revised policy comprehensively details employee entitlements for both study leave and the financial assistance available to eligible staff. It addresses different types of studies, such as on- and off-campus, online, thesis and intensive. It continues to provide higher study leave benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Salary packaging

Salary packaging is available to Tribunal members and staff pursuant to two policies covering different products: one policy is administered externally by the commercial firm McMillan Shakespeare and the other is administered internally by the Human Resources Section. During the reporting year, 59 employees took up the opportunity to access salary packaging arrangements.

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 understand and apply them. The Australian Public Service Values, Code of Conduct and explanatory materials are available to staff on the intranet. Additionally, recruitment guidelines and induction materials include information on them. Staff attended specific training during the reporting period in relation to the content and application of the Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct.

OUR ORGANISATION

The Tribunal's goal as an organisation is outlined in the Organisational Plan:

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

This section describes activities that the Tribunal undertook to meet this goal, as well as other information on the Tribunal's administration and governance.

Finance and property

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

Financial management

The Tribunal's audited financial statements for 2008-09 appear from page 55.

The Tribunal's financial performance was well under budget due to tight management of expenses. While the Tribunal was approved to operate at a loss, the Registrar's continued review of costs as well as the deferral of some information technology projects led to a positive result. There was a lower than expected increase in salary costs compared with the previous year, and supplier costs remained stable.

Property

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

A minor refurbishment of the registry in Adelaide was completed during 2008-09 and some minor issues were addressed in the Canberra premises. The Tribunal has no plans for any further significant refurbishment in the medium term.

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, which are maintained on the Tribunal's intranet, are reviewed to ensure that they conform to the current procurement guidelines. They are a valuable tool for staff with purchasing duties and have been used as a model by several other agencies.

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

Consultants

The Tribunal employs consultants when the required skills or specialist capacity are not available within the Tribunal. 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 is used depending on the circumstances, timelines and the identified need for a consultant.

During 2008-09, the Tribunal entered into one new consultancy contract with a total actual expenditure of \$8,943. Eight ongoing consultancy contracts were active during 2008-09, for a total actual expenditure of \$104,623. Table 5.1 sets out the Tribunal's total actual expenditure on all consultancies in the three most recent reporting years. All contract amounts include GST.

Table 5.1 Total actual expenditure on consultancy contracts

Year	Total actual expenditure (incl GST)
2006-07	\$232,662
2007-08	\$199,014
2008-09	\$113,566

Appendix 10 shows the new consultancy let by the Tribunal during 2008-09, and the number and aggregate value of consultancies valued at \$10,000 or more for the three most recent reporting years.

Reporting on purchases

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

Table 5.2 lists the contracts of \$100,000 or more that were current in 2008-09 and did not include a clause providing for the Auditor-General to have access to the contractor's premises.

Table 5.2 Contracts of \$100,000 or more in 2008-09

Contractor	Value of Contract	Reason why standard access clauses were not included in the contract
Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley	\$114,000	Standard accommodation booking contract
Mossop Group	\$627,000	Standard industry building contract
Telstra	\$564,000	Standard Telstra contract

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

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

Each year, the Tribunal's independent internal auditor reviews the operations at most risk, and at most common risk, and undertakes audit activities related to these operations. During the reporting year, the internal auditor undertook audits of the Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney registries. Areas scrutinised included assets, attendance records and payroll, bank accounts, hospitality, payments and receipting, purchasing and security. Audits of Principal Registry finance

and human resources operations are also undertaken each year. No major risks were identified as a result of the audits.

The Audit Committee has implemented sufficient processes to enable the Registrar to complete the Certificate of Compliance for the 2008-09 financial year. The Registrar certifies that the Tribunal has prepared risk assessments and fraud control plans and has in place procedures that provide for fraud prevention, detection, investigation, reporting and data collection in compliance with the Commonwealth Fraud Control Guidelines.

Insurance

The Tribunal is insured through Comcover. In general terms, the Tribunal has a low risk of insurance exposure and a limited likelihood of major disruption to its services. However, cover is provided should that occur. In line with a general trend in the industry, the insurance premium decreased again in 2008-09.

Risk management assessment

The Tribunal has completed a risk assessment review examining all business risks that may impact on the Tribunal's national operations. The review covered registry operations, public interaction and information systems and links with the fraud control plan. These assessments provided the basis for a comprehensive review of the Tribunal's Business Continuity Plan which was issued in June 2009. This plan is available on the Tribunal's intranet for all staff and members. Officers with delegated responsibility under the plan will be supplied with the plan on a portable USB device for use in the event that internet access is unavailable.

Risk management training

Risk management was a priority for the Tribunal in the reporting period. Comcover provided tailored in-house training in Risk Management Fundamentals, and more than one-third of Tribunal staff participated.

Security

The Tribunal's office areas are access-controlled. Duress alarms are installed in conference and hearing rooms and at registry

counters to protect Tribunal members and staff in the event of an incident. The Tribunal has a fee-for-service agreement with Chubb Security Pty Limited to provide additional security services for Tribunal alternative dispute resolution processes and hearings as required. During the year, security services were arranged on several occasions as a precautionary measure.

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

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

T4 Protective Security reviewed the Tribunal's physical security arrangements in 2006-07 to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to protect Tribunal members, staff, the public and Australian Government records and assets from attack or unwanted intervention. Implementation of the recommendations of the review commenced in 2008-09, and proceeded as available resources permitted.

Information technology

Network upgrade

The Tribunal selected a new supplier of wide area data network services in 2008-09, moved to a new network type and upgraded the bandwidths to provide sufficient capacity for future data growth. These improvements were made without any significant increase in running costs.

Upgrade to servers

The Tribunal began a project to replace its servers with new servers to reduce the risk of faults and to improve throughput performance. The Tribunal chose Hewlett Packard 'blade' technology and VMWare software to introduce virtualisation techniques. This technology allows the Tribunal to make more efficient use of the hardware to meet its needs.

The project increases centralisation of the servers into its Sydney computer facility, enabling simpler technical management and lower costs. It will also enable secondary projects to proceed towards further improvement of security of the hardware, software and data.

TRACS

The Tribunal continued to improve its case management system (TRACS) in 2008-09. Improvements included more efficient procedures for updating case details, several new reports to enable better monitoring of cases, and the resolution of a number of small defects in the system.

The Tribunal is developing a fee processing module to provide for a more efficient transfer of information from the seven registries to the Finance Section. A trial of bar-code technology for use in tracking files has also commenced.

Cost efficiencies

The Tribunal looks for ways to provide its information technology services in a cost effective manner. In addition to the improved value for money from the new network and hardware technology, participation in the centralised procurement of Microsoft licences has reduced costs. The Tribunal will consider other areas of alignment with other government agencies if improved value can be gained without reduction of quality of services.

For the 2008-09 financial year, the Tribunal's IT services were provided within the original budget.

IT staffing strategy

The Tribunal's approach to ensuring effective management and support of its IT operations is to maintain a small team of staff focused on strategy and project management. The staff assess the operational needs of the Tribunal and design and implement effective software systems. If the required expertise is not available in-house, the Tribunal's maintenance agreements with suppliers includes on-site work by contractors for short periods.

Library and information services

Library Committee

The Library Committee is responsible for the selection of library materials. Selection decisions are guided by the Collection Development Policy and the budget.

The Committee aims to support the operation of the Tribunal by identifying and selecting materials that constitute a relevant, up-to-date and well-balanced resource collection. To achieve this, priority is given to the selection of materials that are regularly cited in Tribunal hearings, frequently required by members for legal research or for writing decisions, support the administrative function of the Tribunal, support current research, and answer specific requests for information.

The Library Committee met twice during the reporting year, in December 2008 and June 2009. Members of the acquisitions sub-committee liaised regularly about the purchase of additional hard-copy and online resources.

Library network

The library network provides library and information services to Tribunal members and staff in all registries. The network consists of the Principal Registry library in Brisbane and District Registry libraries in Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. Libraries are staffed by professional librarians who organise and manage the collection, and assist members and staff with their information needs.

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

Achievements of the library network in the reporting year include:

- acquiring, cataloguing and distributing new paper and electronic materials in response to Library Committee recommendations for the collection

- completion of a project to provide electronic copies of all Tribunal decisions to the AustLII website
- maintaining the Tribunal's intranet and internet sites, and
- ongoing management of the process of electronic delivery of Tribunal decisions to publishers, government departments and agencies and other interested parties.

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:

- preparing advice, correspondence and submissions relating to matters affecting the Tribunal
- developing Tribunal policy on legal and operational issues
- monitoring appeals from Tribunal decisions
- producing and maintaining Tribunal resource materials, including the jurisdiction list, procedure manuals and the weekly bulletin
- coordinating reporting on Tribunal performance, including producing statistical information on the Tribunal's workload
- managing projects and providing support to Tribunal committees
- providing information and training to the Tribunal's Conference Registrars and other staff on legal, policy and technical matters, and
- giving presentations on the Tribunal at legal education seminars.

Key achievements for the reporting year included:

- developing, and coordinating consultation on, the draft guidelines relating to expert evidence and the draft practice direction relating to taxation of costs
- progressing the review of the Tribunal's communication products
- assisting with the ongoing development of the functionality and reporting capacity of the Tribunal's electronic case management system, TRACS
- coordinating the Mooting Competition, and
- working with the Tribunal's Conference Registrars and the Learning and Development Officer to present a seminar during Law Week in Sydney on evidence at the AAT.