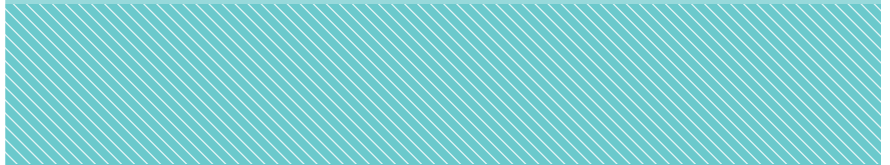




CHAPTER 5

OUR PEOPLE AND OUR ORGANISATION



This chapter outlines the Tribunal's performance in meeting the goals in the 2009-10 Organisational Plan for its people and the organisation, and also reports on human resource management and the Tribunal's administration and governance.

OUR PEOPLE

During the reporting year, the Tribunal worked towards meeting the goal:

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

Human resource management

Staffing

At 30 June 2010 the Tribunal had 162 staff: 114 ongoing and 48 non-ongoing. Nineteen of the non-ongoing staff were engaged to undertake duties that are irregular or intermittent. For information on the classification levels, full time/part time status, gender and location of the staffing complement, see Appendix 2.

The Tribunal's ongoing staffing complement remained relatively stable during the reporting period, increasing by two compared over the previous year. There were 25 employment opportunities notices gazetted in 2009-10, for six ongoing and 19 non-ongoing vacancies. A large proportion of the non-ongoing placements were for short-term positions for legal graduates who work with members of the Tribunal, usually for 12 to 18 months. The Tribunal's learning and development and performance management programs foster staff retention.

Agency-wide and individual employment agreements

The Tribunal's collective workplace agreement, the *Administrative Appeals Tribunal Agency Agreement 2009-10*, expired on 30 June 2010. A further one-year union collective agreement was negotiated in 2009-10 and a successful ballot conducted on 7 June 2010.

The new agreement offered a 3 percent annual salary increase and a sign-on bonus, and continues to promote a high standard of user

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 improvements in technology.

The number of employees covered by the collective agreement, Australian Workplace Agreements and other employment instruments at 30 June 2010 is shown in Table A2.3, Appendix 2, which also details salary ranges for APS employees and staff covered by these arrangements.

In 2009-10, six employees received a performance bonus linked to a performance agreement: the Tribunal's only Senior Executive Service employee, three staff at Executive Level 2 and two staff at Executive Level 1. The Tribunal paid \$54,516 in bonuses. Privacy considerations preclude the publication of the quantum of bonuses paid at each classification level.

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

Senior Executive Service Officer remuneration

Remuneration for the Tribunal's only Senior Executive Service position, the Assistant Registrar, is based on comparison with the remuneration for staff in similar Australian Government agencies. The remuneration package allows the occupant to cash out certain items, in accordance with common Australian Government practice.

Non-salary benefits

Non-salary benefits in the Agency Agreement included:

- two days of paid leave between Christmas Day and New Year's Day, other than for skeleton staff who maintained basic registry functions
- two additional weeks of paid maternity/parenting leave
- ability to participate in a Transport Loans Scheme
- health and well-being benefits such as flu vaccinations, and
- study assistance.

The Studies Assistance Scheme allows ongoing staff to apply for full or partial reimbursement of fees and costs, as well as time off work to attend lectures, tutorials and examinations. During the reporting year, 12 staff were approved for undergraduate or postgraduate studies in accounting, business education, law, management, public administration and policy, and workplace training. The cost of reimbursing study fees and charges was \$14,200, and approximately 830 study hours were approved for all purposes.

Performance management program

In accordance with the Performance Management Program, all ongoing staff are required to have performance agreements, and may advance through the salary scale if they obtain 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.

Appraisals for all staff are conducted in accordance with the Performance Management Guidelines, and salary advancement is based on performance.

Salary packaging

Salary packaging is available to staff pursuant to two policies covering different products; one administered externally by McMillan Shakespeare, and the other administered internally by the Human Resources Section. During the reporting year, 52 staff took advantage of the salary packaging arrangements.

Ethical standards

Tribunal staff are required to act in accordance with the Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct, and the Tribunal encourages staff to understand and apply them. The Australian Public Service Values, Code of Conduct and explanatory materials are on the intranet, and in recruitment guidelines and induction materials. In 2009–10, staff also attended training on the content and

application of the Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct.

Learning and development

The Tribunal is committed to a learning and development environment that maintains high professional standards and helps members and staff stay up-to-date with developments relevant to their work. The Tribunal has a number of programs that assist members and staff in their roles and that contribute to improving the productivity and achievements of the Tribunal, as detailed below.

Members' professional development

The Tribunal's Members' Professional Development Program ensures members continue to develop and enhance their knowledge and skills. Based on a framework of competencies developed by the Tribunal, the program covers induction, mentoring, appraisal, and other professional development opportunities.

The high standing of the program is evident in the number of requests from other Australian tribunals for information about the Tribunal's work in this area.

The Professional Development Committee regularly reviews the program and advises on its development. At the date of this report, the committee is working on a proposal for the evaluation of the Members' Professional Development Program.

The New Member Induction Program helps new members enjoy a smooth transition into the Tribunal. The Professional Development Committee regularly reviews and improves the program to ensure that sessions meet the participants' needs. A program was held in November 2009 with Deputy President Hack and Senior Member Friedman moderating.

The Mentoring Scheme assists newly-appointed members gain a better understanding of the workings of the Tribunal and their role, while promoting the Tribunal's objectives. Senior Member Bell coordinated the scheme in 2009–10.

The Appraisal Scheme combines self-assessment and peer review, giving members

the opportunity to reflect upon their practice and consider options for further professional development. Deputy President Jarvis coordinated the scheme.

A range of learning activities is offered to members for ongoing professional development. Registries arrange meetings at which members, staff or invited speakers give presentations on topical issues. The participation of other registries by videoconference or telephone facilitates shared learning.

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

Administrative Appeals Tribunal National Conference 2010

The Tribunal’s biennial national conference, held in March 2010, is an important professional development activity for the

Tribunal. It offers a unique opportunity for members, Conference Registrars and District Registrars to come together to discuss Tribunal practice, share information and experiences and undertake continuing education.

The theme of the 2010 conference was ‘Learning from different perspectives’. Keynote addresses were given by three international guests, participants in the IASAJ Congress (see page 36), about the systems of administrative law in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Similarities and differences with the Australian system were explored in formal sessions and informal exchanges. Workshops on improving case management in the Tribunal formed another significant element of the conference. The program also included presentations on access to justice, confidentiality and privacy issues, recent developments in the law and concurrent evidence.

Conference Registrars’ professional development

Conference Registrars participate in a range of internal and external learning activities to maintain their knowledge and expertise. These include a monthly learning circle at which one or two Conference Registrars lead discussion on a topic of interest.

Preliminary work has commenced on the development of a Conference Registrars’



Tribunal members, international speakers and senior staff at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal National Conference.

Professional Development Program that will embed professional development within a performance improvement framework, align with the statutory imperatives of the Tribunal and complement the Members' Professional Development Program.

National staff conference 2010

The Tribunal held a national conference for staff in June 2010. The conference affords staff the rare opportunity to meet face to face, build relationships and skills, and collaborate in workshops.

The theme of the conference, 'Case Management: Shared Expectations and a Shared Responsibility', reflected the Tribunal's current focus on improving case management. Workshops encouraged staff to develop ideas to contribute to this process. Other aspects of the program included a workshop on team work and collaboration and sessions on recent developments in law and procedures, ethical issues for public servants, record keeping and security. The conference was a great success.

Staff learning and development

The Tribunal is committed to ensuring that staff have access to learning and development opportunities that meet the identified learning needs of employees, align with the

Organisational Plan and reflect the values of the Tribunal and the Australian Public Service. The learning and development calendar offers internal and external opportunities such as courses, seminars, workshops and conferences. The active contribution by staff to the programs ensures they meet the Tribunal's needs and represent value for money.

Collaborative learning has proven an effective learning and development tool as the popularity of the Members' Support Staff Network, for legal and administrative staff, shows.

The Tribunal continues to improve the range of online training materials available within the Tribunal, this year providing access to information on ergonomic principles for setting up the workspace and for safe manual handling as part of the Staff Induction Program, and a package promoting a greater understanding of the challenges associated with mental illness.

The Tribunal offers a Studies Assistance Scheme giving interested staff access to development opportunities. See page 41 for more detail.

Membership of learning communities

The Tribunal continues to work collaboratively with other tribunals and courts on staff training initiatives through its leadership of the



Tribunal staff make valuable use of their time together at the national staff conference to collaborate as they renew, and forge new, working relationships.

Commonwealth Tribunals and Courts Learning and Development Forum.

Together with the Social Security Appeals Tribunal, the Tribunal developed an introduction to diversity in the workplace program which is available to all staff on the intranet.

In February 2010, the Tribunal conducted seminars on working effectively with users in the Brisbane and Sydney registries, and these were attended by staff from the Family Court, Federal Court, Migration Review Tribunal, Refugee Review Tribunal, National Native Title Tribunal, Social Security Appeals Tribunal and Veterans' Review Board.

In June 2010, the Tribunal offered places to other tribunals for a seminar on building resilience, and Tribunal staff also participated in learning and development activities conducted by other members of the Forum.

The Tribunal is represented on the Australasian Committee for Court Education Committee, working with other courts and tribunals to share learning and development strategies and activities, including customised programs; develop professional development programs and other initiatives; and contribute to position papers when relevant.



Every year the Tribunal aims to participate in Law Week activities. This year, the Sydney Registry and Principal Registry staff took part in the Walk for Justice to launch Law Week 2010. The walk coincided with other walks in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth. Pictured during the Sydney walk are (L-R) Alison Connor, Diana Weston, Claire Doherty, Adele Veness, Lloyd Doherty, Steven Mulipola, Carolyn Krochmal.

Resources for members and staff

Tribunal Practice Manual

The Tribunal is developing a practice manual on its role and functions that complements 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's practice manual will provide members and Conference Registrars with a readily-accessible overview of law and practice in areas such as practice and procedure, immigration, social security, tax, veterans' affairs and workers' compensation. It will include references to legislation and policy, case law and other resources. The manual will assist the Tribunal to carry out its functions in a fair, just, timely, informal and economical manner. Drafting and editing of the manual was substantially completed in the reporting year. The manual will be launched in 2010-11.

Registry Procedures Manual

The *Registry Procedures Manual* is a detailed 'best practice' guide for staff on processing applications, from lodgement to finalisation. It also covers a range of other matters, including confidentiality and privacy obligations when handling files, procedures for appeals to the Federal Court, handling complaints and processing requests for information under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*. The manual facilitates a nationally consistent approach to processing cases.

During the reporting year, the Tribunal updated the content and presentation of the manual, developing a more comprehensive and user-friendly version. The revised manual is scheduled for release before the end of 2010.

A positive, safe and productive workplace that values diversity

Occupational health and safety

The Tribunal is committed to providing and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment for its employees through cooperative, consultative relationships. It is also committed to promoting and

developing measures that ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees at work. This commitment covers members, appointed under the Administrative Appeals Tribunal Act, and staff, engaged under the Public Service Act.

The Tribunal recognises its duties and responsibilities to its employees (and contractors and third parties in certain circumstances) under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991*, *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*, and the Occupational Health and Safety Code of Practice 2008.

Health and safety management arrangements

The Tribunal’s Health and Safety Management Arrangements cover the legislative requirements: informing employees, reviewing effectiveness, certification of employee representatives and dealing with disputes; implementation; workplace responsibilities; designated work groups and health and safety representatives; OH&S risk management arrangements and training; and the date of effect.

- Consultative arrangements

The Arrangements were developed in consultation with the Health and Safety

Committee, members and staff, and include contributions from Tribunal members who are medically-qualified. They took effect from 30 July 2008. The Tribunal reviewed the arrangements in 2009, consulting with members and staff. The Arrangements also contain resolution procedures for establishing or varying a Designated Work Group.

The draft Arrangements were distributed to members and staff by email and on the intranet for consultation. The Arrangements are available on the intranet for all members and staff.

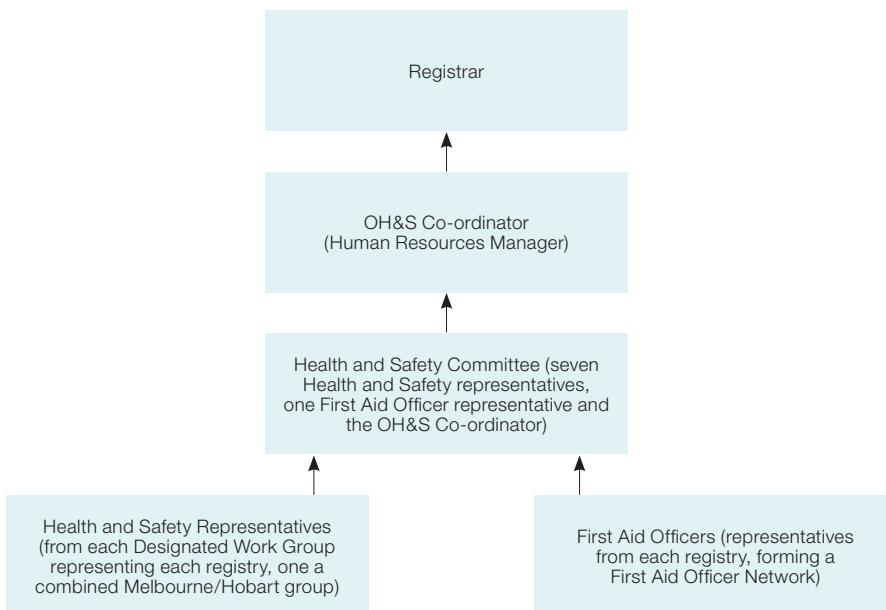
- Dispute resolution mechanisms

The Arrangements provide for dealing with disputes arising in the course of consultations under the OH&S Act (other than section 24) between the Tribunal and its staff, or representatives of the employee (when requested by the employee). The parties may seek resolution through mediation with an appropriate senior manager of the Tribunal.

OH&S initiatives

The Tribunal continued its program of promoting health and well-being of its employees in their time at the Tribunal.

Figure 5.1 OH&S management structure



Initiatives in the reporting year included vaccinations against flu (including swine flu), eye-sight testing, providing taxis to ensure personal safety in certain circumstances, an Employee Assistance Program and assistance with return to work costs for both compensation and non-compensation conditions.

Assistance for group or individual participation in health and fitness-related physical activities was also provided with support of the Melbourne running/walking teams. The Melbourne Registry Women's Running Team had their most successful result in the Corporate Cup 2010 Autumn Season, winning both the Most Improved and Fastest Team categories in their Division.

The Tribunal's 2009-10 Agency Agreement provided for a National Consultative Committee to improve consultation with staff on workplace issues. The committee met twice during the year. The first issue identified by the committee for action is a review of unplanned absences with the aim of reducing its use over time. Improvements in monitoring and reporting capacity to be implemented in 2010-11 will allow the Tribunal to conduct a better analysis of the issue.

The Tribunal continued its commitment to health and safety training, offering training to health and safety representatives (seven were trained during the year) and initial and refresher training to first aid officers (14 were trained during the year). Staff in all registries were trained in the use of automated external defibrillators.

OH&S inspections

Health and Safety Representatives conducted regular formal and informal inspections within their registries, finding no specific registry issues that had a national impact or required significant central involvement.

The Tribunal offers assessments and remedial action when occupational health and safety problems are identified.

Notification reports, investigations and claims

The Comcare Guide to Incident Reporting is supplemented by Tribunal instructions.

The Tribunal had no notifiable incidents – accidents causing death, serious personal injury or incapacity, or dangerous occurrences – to report during the year (see Table 5.2). The most recent notifiable incident, in October 2008, was a dangerous occurrence but Comcare did not take any further action.

As in the previous two years, Comcare did not conduct any investigations in relation to the Tribunal during the reporting year.

Case management of compensation matters are conducted either in-house or by external service providers, depending on the location and the complexity of the matter. Two compensation claims accepted by Comcare in 2009-10 are expected to have minimal impact in the future.

Workplace harassment

The Tribunal's commitment to preventing and eliminating all forms of harassment in the workplace is set out in the Prevention and Elimination of Workplace Harassment Policy

Table 5.2 Notifiable incidents

Notifiable incidents	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Accidents causing deaths, serious personal injury or incapacity	0	0	0
Dangerous occurrences	1*	1	0
Total	1*	1	0

* Note: As a result of an administrative error, this incident was not identified in recent annual reports.

which articulates the Tribunal's expectations of members, managers and staff in preventing and dealing with workplace harassment. Managers and supervisors are actively encouraged to be familiar with, promote and support the Tribunal's policy and strategies for dealing with harassment.

The Tribunal's five Workplace Harassment Contact Officers have received appropriate training and operate as a national network. They are available for all members and staff to contact.

Benevolent trust

The Tribunal is a caring employer that 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. During the year one staff member sought and was given assistance by the Trust.

Productivity gains

The Tribunal is pursuing technological and employee health-related initiatives, described elsewhere in this report, to increase productivity in its operations.

The productivity gains emanate from the Tribunal's investments in: members and staff to ensure they have access to the health and well-being initiatives they require; the workplace so that it meets their occupational health and safety needs; and the technology and training for members and staff to do their work more efficiently. In particular, the Tribunal implemented new financial management and human resources systems in the latter part of 2009–10.

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 Workplace Diversity Plan which is under review and

planned for implementation in 2010–11. The Workplace Diversity Committee met during the reporting year and minutes from meetings are made available to members and staff.

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

Reconciliation Action Plan

The Tribunal aims to promote reconciliation by increasing employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians in the Australian Public Service consistent with the *National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation* as well as promoting awareness of the Tribunal's services among Indigenous Australians. The Tribunal is reviewing the Reconciliation Action Plan in 2010–11. The plan is on the Tribunal's website, www.aat.gov.au.

The Tribunal reviewed its Indigenous Employment Strategy in 2009. The results will help the Tribunal determine the most appropriate approach for 2010–11, which may include participation in a portfolio-wide initiative.

Commonwealth Disability Strategy

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy is designed to help agencies improve the access to their services and facilities for people with disabilities. The Tribunal performs the roles of an employer and a provider. See Appendix 11 for the summary of the Tribunal's performance in its role as a provider during 2009–10.

Disability Action Plan

The Disability Action Plan reflects and implements the Tribunal's commitment to the principles of workplace diversity and equality of access and is based on the Commonwealth Disability Strategy. The plan shows performance indicators for various aspects of the Tribunal's role as an employer and provider. The Tribunal is reviewing and updating the plan.

OUR ORGANISATION

The Tribunal worked to meet its goal as an organisation during the reporting year:

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

This section describes how the Tribunal met this goal, including 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 and Security.

Financial management

The Tribunal's audited financial statements for 2009-10 appear from page 53.

Although the Minister for Finance and Deregulation approved a deficit of \$1.7m for the 2009-10 financial year, tight management of expenses meant the Tribunal's financial performance came in well under budget. A smaller than budgeted increase in salary costs, compared with the previous year, led to a lower than expected expenditure on salary. The commencement of some technology projects was also deferred pending further consideration of the Tribunal's technology strategy.

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.

No major work was undertaken this financial year but some minor security work was completed in Melbourne, Perth and Sydney.

In Canberra and Sydney, as per the terms of the existing leases, rent reviews led to increases of 4.3 and 12.5 percent respectively, in line with market expectations and included in budget planning.

Purchasing

The Tribunal observes the core principles of the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and relevant best practice guidelines in its purchasing activities. Regular reviews of the Chief Executive Instructions ensure they conform with the procurement guidelines as 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's competitive procurement processes 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. The purchasing guidelines require at least three quotes for goods or services that do not involve major purchases or contracts.

Consultants

The Tribunal employs consultants when the required skill or specialist capacity is not available internally. Consultants are engaged using the procurement methods specified in the Chief Executive Instructions including open tender, select tender or direct sourcing depending on the circumstances, timelines and the identified need for a consultant.

During 2009-10, the Tribunal entered into four new consultancy contracts with a total actual expenditure of \$155,132. Two ongoing consultancy contracts were active during 2009-10, for a total actual expenditure of \$55,832. Table 5.3 sets out the Tribunal's total actual expenditure on all consultancies in the three most recent reporting years. All contract amounts include GST.

Table 5.3 Total actual expenditure on consultancy contracts

Year	Total actual expenditure (incl GST)
2007–08	\$199,014
2008–09	\$113,566
2009–10	\$210,964

Appendix 10 shows the one new consultancy let by the Tribunal during 2009–10 valued at \$10,000 or more, 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. 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.

There were no contracts of \$100,000 or more let in 2009–10 that did not include a clause providing for the Auditor-General to have access to the contractor's premises.

There were no contracts of more than \$10,000 (including GST) or standing offers exempt from being published on the AusTender website on the basis that they would disclose exempt matters under the Freedom of Information Act.

Annual reports contain information about actual expenditure on contracts for consultancies. Information on the value of contracts and consultancies is available on the AusTender website www.tenders.gov.au.

Risk management

Audit and fraud control

The Tribunal's Audit Committee meets periodically to oversee the audit policy and plan for the forthcoming year. The Committee advises the Registrar on matters such as the financial statements and fraud control, and commissions internal audits on operational activities.

Each year, the Tribunal's independent internal auditor reviews the operations most at risk and at most common risk, and audits these operations.

During the reporting year, the internal auditor audited the Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth registries and scrutinised assets, attendance records and payroll, bank accounts, hospitality, payments and receipting, purchasing and security. Principal Registry finance and human resources operations are also audited annually. No major risks were identified by the audits.

The Audit Committee has implemented sufficient processes to enable the Registrar to complete the Certificate of Compliance for the 2009–10 financial year. The Registrar certifies that the Tribunal has prepared risk assessments and fraud control plans and has procedures in place 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, but cover is provided should that occur. In line with a general trend in the industry, the insurance premium decreased again in 2009–10.

Risk assessment review

The Tribunal has completed a risk assessment review examining all business risks that may have an impact on national operations. The review covered registry operations, public interaction, 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 that was issued in June 2009 and is available on the Tribunal's intranet for all members and staff.

Officers who have delegated responsibility under the plan are given a backup of the plan to use should internet access be unavailable. The benefits of this strategy were highlighted during the reporting year when a technical problem resulted in some downtime for the

network. Information in the plan used to locate maintenance contractors minimised the chance of a longer period of disruption.

Risk management training

As part of its risk management program, the Tribunal included training in risk management and business continuity and other finance-related topics for participants at the national staff conference in June 2010. The success of the training has led to plans to include more detailed training in a targeted program planned for 2010–11.

Security

The Tribunal places a high priority on security. The following measures ensure that members, staff and visitors are in safe and secure environments when in Tribunal offices: Tribunal offices are secure; duress alarms in conference and hearing rooms and at registry counters will protect members and staff in the event of an incident. The Tribunal's fee-for-service agreement with Chubb Security Pty Limited provides additional security services for alternative dispute resolution processes and hearings as required. These services were arranged on several occasions during the year as a precautionary measure.

The Tribunal has arrangements with the Family Court and the Federal Court to use their court rooms and security arrangements for hearings that include a security risk, and used them on several occasions during the year, 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*.

The Tribunal continued to implement the recommendations of the 2006–07 review, by T4 Protective Security, of the Tribunal's physical security arrangements. The review was designed to ensure that the Tribunal takes appropriate measures to protect members, staff, the public and Australian Government records and assets from attack or unwanted intervention. T4 Protective Security will assess the completed work to ensure that it meets the required standards.

Information technology

The focus of the Tribunal's information technology projects in 2009–10 was to ensure that the software is modern, efficient and housed on latest technology hardware in a secure data centre, and supports the Tribunal's work.

The Tribunal introduced a range of enhancements to its case management system (TRACS) and developed and implemented a new case management reporting system; upgraded the security of the Sydney computer centre; installed new file server hardware; assisted the move to a new payroll system, and the upgrade to the Tribunal's financial management system. The Tribunal also implemented a new Help Desk system to enhance the service provided by the IT Section to Tribunal members and staff.

Library and information services

Library Committee

The Library Committee oversees the acquisition of library materials, making selection decisions that are guided by the Collection Development Policy and the budget.

The Committee supports the Tribunal by identifying and selecting materials that constitute a relevant, up-to-date and well-balanced resource. It gives priority to items regularly cited in Tribunal hearings, frequently requested by members for legal research or for writing decisions, that support the administrative function of the Tribunal and current research, and that answer requests for information.

The Committee met in March 2010, and the members of the acquisitions sub-committee liaised regularly about purchases.

Library network

The library network provides library and information services to all Tribunal members and staff through the Principal Registry library in Brisbane, and District Registry libraries in Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. Professional librarians organise and manage the collection, and assist members and staff with their information needs.

The library network provides access to online legal and reference resources made available through the Tribunal intranet which, along with the external website, is managed by the Electronic Publishing Officer who is also a librarian.

During the reporting year the library network acquired, catalogued and distributed the new paper and electronic materials added to the collection; maintained the Tribunal's intranet and internet sites; and managed electronic delivery of Tribunal decisions to publishers, government agencies and other interested parties, as well as the AustLII website.

Policy and Research

The Tribunal has a dedicated Policy and Research Section to provide advice and assistance to the President, Registrar and Assistant Registrar on legal and policy issues affecting the Tribunal. The section also provides information and assistance to members and staff on legislative changes, case law developments, and practice and procedure issues. In addition, it manages litigation when the Tribunal is named as a party; monitors appeals from Tribunal decisions; produces regular resource materials; coordinates reporting on Tribunal performance; supports Tribunal committees; and educates external users on the Tribunal at legal education seminars.

During the reporting year the section updated the Tribunal's external communication products, including the brochures, advised on the ongoing development of the functionality and reporting capacity of the Tribunal's electronic case management system, coordinated the Mooting Competition and developed national summons procedures.

