

CHAPTER 5

OUR PEOPLE AND OUR ORGANISATION



OUR PEOPLE

The Tribunal worked to maintain professional standards and a positive, safe and productive workplace that values diversity.

Human resource management

Staffing

At 30 June 2011 the Tribunal had 155 staff: 102 ongoing and 53 non-ongoing of whom 22 were engaged to undertake duties that are irregular or intermittent. More detail on staffing, including classification levels, full-time/part-time status, gender and location is in Appendix 2.

The total staffing complement in 2010-11 was relatively stable.

There were 22 employment opportunity notices gazetted in 2010-11, 11 for ongoing vacancies and 11 for 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 training and development and performance management programs foster staff retention and professional development.

Agency-wide and individual employment agreements

The Tribunal's collective workplace agreement, the *Administrative Appeals Tribunal Agency Agreement 2010-2011*, was in force throughout 2010-11. Negotiations commenced in 2011 for a replacement three-year enterprise agreement but were not finalised until after 30 June 2011. A majority of staff voted in favour of the new agreement in a ballot conducted between 8 and 10 August 2011. The *Administrative Appeals Tribunal Agency Agreement 2011-2014* was approved by Fair Work Australia on 22 August 2011.

The number of employees covered by the Agency Agreement, Australian Workplace Agreements and other flexible employment arrangements at 30 June 2011 is shown in Table A2.3, Appendix 2, along with their salary ranges.

The Tribunal paid \$43,602 in bonuses in 2010-11. Five employees covered by AWAs

or other flexible work arrangements received a performance bonus linked to a performance agreement: the Tribunal's only Senior Executive Service officer, two Executive Level 2 officers and two Executive Level 1 officers. The total bonus paid at each classification level is not published for privacy reasons because of the small number of employees involved.

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 one Senior Executive Service position: the Assistant Registrar. Remuneration for that position 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 under the Agency Agreement included:

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

Under the Studies Assistance Scheme, ongoing staff may apply for assistance which can include limited time off work to attend lectures, tutorials and examinations, and full or partial reimbursement of fees and costs. The scheme allows staff to develop their own capability, as well as that of the Tribunal, through vocational education at pre-tertiary, undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Most staff participating in the scheme undertook legal studies, while some pursued studies in public sector management, education and training. In the reporting period, 12 staff gained approval for financial support, which amounted to \$13,876.

Performance management program

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

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

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

Salary packaging

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

Conduct and ethics

The Tribunal's *Agency Agreement 2010–2011* contained a commitment that all employees accept a responsibility to contribute to Tribunal outcomes by adhering to and promoting the APS Values and Code of Conduct, and demonstrating behaviours consistent with the Values and the Code. In addition, managers are to provide employees with the tools they need to do their work efficiently, effectively, ethically and creatively. The *Members Handbook* refers to members being subject to the APS Code of Conduct as it applies to their treatment of and behaviour towards staff of the Tribunal.

The Tribunal provides online training on the APS Values and Code of Conduct to all staff, with access to the Australian Public Service Commission induction module *Your Guide to Working in the Australian Public Service* as well as an internal eLearning package with reference to ethical conduct. All new employees are provided with a copy of the APS Values and Code of Conduct, as well as relevant excerpts from the *Crimes Act 1914* and must sign a statement asserting that they have read and understood these provisions.

The APS Values, Code of Conduct, Chief Executive Instructions and other material relevant to ethical conduct are incorporated, as appropriate, into relevant Tribunal policies, guidelines and instructions and are available on the Tribunal's intranet.

Learning and development in the Tribunal

Learning and development are a priority for the Tribunal. During the reporting year, the Tribunal refined ongoing activities and implemented new initiatives to meet the needs of members and staff.

Members' Professional Development

The Members' Professional Development Program is a comprehensive program based on a framework of competencies developed for the Tribunal. The program comprises induction, mentoring, appraisal and other professional development opportunities. Senior Member Narelle Bell continued as the Coordinator of the Mentoring Scheme in 2010–11, and Deputy President Deane Jarvis continued as the Appraisal Scheme Coordinator.

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

A range of learning activities is offered to members to help them stay up-to-date with developments relevant to their work. Members attended in-house professional development sessions organised by individual registries

as well as the regional conferences which are referred to below. They also participated in external seminars, workshops and other professional development activities.

Tribunal members share their expertise with their peers, members of other tribunals and the wider profession through participation in organisations such as the Council of Australasian Tribunals (COAT). Members also learn from colleagues working in other jurisdictions by attending conferences, including the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration/COAT Tribunals' Conference and the annual Australian Institute of Administrative Law conference.

The Tribunal's Professional Development Committee advises on the Members' Professional Development Program. It met in September and November 2010, and May 2011.

The Tribunal's evaluation strategy informs program improvement. For example, regular revision of the New Members' Induction Program has been based on information gathered from the new members who participated in the program, presenters and the Professional Development Committee. The Tribunal employs summative evaluations as required.

In September 2010, the Professional Development Committee endorsed a proposal to evaluate: the program's progress and results; whether the program meets the Tribunal's and members' needs; and the program's strengths and weaknesses.

The second edition of the *Members' Professional Development Handbook* will be published in August 2011.

Regional conferences

The Tribunal's regional conferences are important professional development opportunities, and are attended by members, Conference Registrars, District Registrars and Principal Registry staff. A number of common topics were covered at each of the conferences – sessions on case management, statutory interpretation and strategic planning – as well as topics for each conference.

Guest presenters gave expert and thought-provoking presentations. Dr Arthur Glass, Emeritus Fellow, Faculty of Law at the University of New South Wales, spoke on the psychology of decision making at the Canberra/Sydney conference; Dr Lester Walton, a consultant psychiatrist, spoke at the Hobart/Melbourne conference about the experience of giving expert evidence before the Tribunal from the witness's perspective; and Professor Tess Cramond explored the subject of pain management at the Brisbane conference. Members and staff also gave presentations on a range of topics including recent case law, the Tribunal's inquisitorial role and its application to medical issues, and practical issues that arise in Tribunal alternative dispute resolution processes.

Staff learning and development

Organisation-wide staff learning and development reflects the Tribunal's values and seeks to meet the learning needs of individuals and teams in all registries.

Staff attended in-house programs as well as external seminars, workshops, conferences and other activities. Sessions were delivered in a variety of modes on topic areas that included Tribunal practice and procedure issues, self-management skills, videoconferencing as a communication tool, and cultural awareness and diversity.

The Tribunal has developed a grammar, editing and proofreading program that is tailored to meet the needs of staff who engage in legal editing. The content of the courses was developed by a small working group with advice from Senior Member Narelle Bell. The courses were delivered by the Tribunal's Communications Project Manager in all registries early in 2011. Staff from other courts and tribunals also attended. The program will be repeated during the next reporting period.

Also during the year:

- some staff undertook a medical terminology course by distance learning – a new initiative in response to requests to develop individual and team expertise in this area
- middle and senior managers completed a project management course, in

May 2011, to enhance the Tribunal's project management capability and

- District Registrars developed their leadership capability by participating in a leadership development program delivered through a learning circle.

Regular evaluations of studies assistance and development activities gain feedback about participants' reaction to the activity, their learning and improvements in job performance as a result of the activity.

Conference Registrars' Professional Development Program

Conference Registrars perform a unique role in the Tribunal. They conduct alternative dispute resolution processes such as conferences, conciliations and mediations and have primary responsibility for managing applications during the pre-hearing process. They assist parties to try to reach an agreed outcome and, where this does not occur, prepare cases for another ADR process or hearing.

The Tribunal aims to ensure that Conference Registrars have clear outcomes to achieve and that they achieve broadly consistent practice. To this end the Tribunal established a Working Party of Conference Registrars to develop a program that promotes their accountability and professional development.

The Tribunal's Conference Registrars' Professional Development Program will be based on a framework of competencies and will include induction, mentoring, reflective learning, peer review and performance appraisal. Conference Registrars will be supported by regular training programs to develop personal skills and meet professional development needs.

The program will be presented to the President for approval and implementation in 2011–12.

Membership of learning communities

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

The Tribunal is represented on the Australasian Committee for Court Education so that it can work 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 relevant position papers.

Resources for members and staff

AAT Practice Manual

After extensive effort by members and staff, the Tribunal published a practice manual which gives members, Conference Registrars and staff an overview of the law and the Tribunal's practice and procedure in the most common areas of the Tribunal's jurisdiction. It contains references to legislation and policy, case law and other resources and will assist the Tribunal to carry out its functions in a fair, just, timely, informal and economical manner.

The *AAT Practice Manual* complements the *Practice Manual for Tribunals*, produced by the Council of Australasian Tribunals, which covers topics of general relevance to tribunals such as statutory interpretation, procedural fairness, conducting hearings and making decisions.

Registry Procedures Manual

The *Registry Procedures Manual* is a detailed 'best practice' guide for staff for processing applications from lodgement to finalisation, and facilitates a nationally consistent approach to processing cases. It also covers matters such as 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*.

During the reporting year, the Tribunal continued updating the content and presentation of the manual, developing a more comprehensive and user-friendly version. The Tribunal's Practice and Procedure Committee approved the establishment of a Registry Procedures Manual Committee, comprised of members and staff, which is responsible for approving the final content of the manual. The revised manual is scheduled for release progressively throughout 2011–12.

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 for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of employees while at work. This commitment to employees covers members, appointed under the *Administrative Appeals Tribunal Act 1975*, and staff, engaged under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

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.

Consultative arrangements

The Tribunal's Health and Safety Management Arrangements were developed in consultation with the Health and Safety Committee, members and staff, and include contributions from Tribunal members who are medically-qualified.

The Arrangements are available to all members and staff, on the Tribunal's intranet.

Dispute resolution mechanisms

The Health and Safety Management Arrangements provide for dealing with disputes arising in the course of consultations under the Occupational Health and Safety 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.

There are dispute resolution procedures for establishing or varying a Designated Work Group.

OH&S initiatives

The Tribunal's 2010-11 Agency Agreement provided for improved consultation with staff on various workplace issues including occupational health and safety.

Health and wellbeing initiatives available to all employees included vaccinations for flu in general and swine flu, eye-sight testing, providing taxis to increase personal safety in certain circumstances, the Employee Assistance Program, and assistance with return to work costs.

In accordance with the Tribunal's Health and Safety Management Arrangements, elections were held in the Designated Work Groups for the roles of Health and Safety Representatives and Deputy Representatives. The elections were open to all eligible members of the Designated Work Groups and generated some changes to the composition of the Health and Safety Committee.

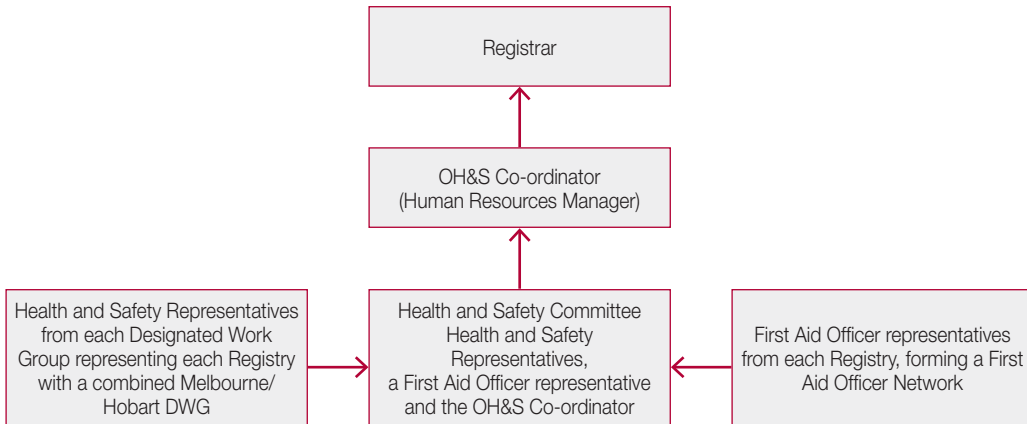
Health and Safety Representatives, their Deputies and First Aid Officers completed appropriate OH&S training. The Tribunal also continued to use training videos on ergonomics and manual handling in the office as part of its new starter induction program. Staff were also trained in the use of automated external defibrillators.

Reactive and preventative workstation assessments and training, by providers such as CRS Australia, benefit staff when occupational health and safety problems are identified, and include assessments and remedial action.

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 central involvement.

Figure 5.1 OH&S management structure



Notification reports, investigations and claims

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

The Tribunal had no notifiable incidents to report in 2010–11. Notifiable incidents are defined as deaths, dangerous occurrences, serious personal injury and incapacity. The most recent notifiable incident, recorded as a dangerous occurrence, was in October 2008. No further action was taken by Comcare in regards to that incident, see Table 5.2.

No investigations were undertaken by Comcare during the year, as was the case in the previous three years.

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. No compensation claims were lodged with Comcare in 2010–11.

Workplace harassment

The Tribunal’s commitment to preventing and eliminating all forms of harassment in the workplace is set out in the Prevention and Elimination of Workplace Harassment Policy which articulates the Tribunal’s expectations of members, managers and staff in preventing and dealing with workplace harassment.

Managers and supervisors are actively encouraged to be familiar with, promote and support the Tribunal’s policy and strategies for dealing with harassment.

The Tribunal Workplace Harassment Contact Officer is a qualified lawyer and mediator experienced in resolving disputes and dealing with harassment issues. The officer is available for all members and staff, and all discussions are confidential.

Benevolent Trust

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

During this reporting period the trust received five requests from staff for financial assistance: three for grants and two for interest-free loans. The Trustees approved three grants to cover medical expenses, medical imagery and medical consultations on behalf of immediate family members of two persons seeking assistance, and made two interest-free loans. The first loan was a short-term loan which was repaid in full, and the second loan is being repaid in instalments.

Productivity gains

The Tribunal is pursuing several initiatives to increase productivity gains in its operations. The primary initiatives focus on technology and employee health, and others focus on administration and better ways of doing business.

In 2010-11, the Tribunal completed the implementation of new HR and Finance

systems that have improved functionality, and promise better technical support, than previous systems. Enhanced reporting capability within both systems will contribute to the Tribunal's strategic planning framework and the increased automation in each system offers higher productivity and more accurate data. The Tribunal will continue its program of improvements in 2011-12.

Table 5.2 Notifiable incidents

Notifiable incidents	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Accidents causing deaths, serious personal injury or incapacity	0	0	0
Dangerous occurrences	1	0	0
Total	1	0	0

The Tribunal is committed to health and well-being practices and initiatives that improve employee health and promote a healthy and productive workforce. The Tribunal aims to analyse data from the improved attendance recording functionality in the new HR system in order to develop and implement appropriate strategies to reduce unplanned absences.

Improvements to the Tribunal's electronic case management system, TRACS, have provided additional functionality for users. The Tribunal's program of continuous improvement of the system generates more efficient work practices and time-saving measures.

Workplace diversity

Valuing and making proper and effective use of the different qualities, skills, qualifications and experiences of members and staff can improve the workplace for individuals and the performance of the Tribunal in general. These attitudes are reflected in the Tribunal's Workplace Diversity Plan, which was reviewed and updated by the Diversity Committee this year. The committee, whose members include both members and staff, meets each quarter, and minutes from meetings are made available to members and staff.

During the year, on the recommendation of the committee, the Tribunal engaged Catherine Healy to train all staff and members in appropriate workplace behaviour. The training covered issues such as bullying and harassment, discrimination, relevant legislation, policies and procedures, and attendees found the training to be highly beneficial.

Appendix 2 shows the number of staff who fall into the various equal employment opportunity categories.

Reconciliation Action Plan

The Tribunal promotes reconciliation by seeking to increase employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians in the Australian Public Service, consistent with the *National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation*, and to raise awareness of the Tribunal's services among Indigenous Australians. The Tribunal is reviewing its Reconciliation Action Plan.

The Tribunal also endorsed the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department Indigenous Statement of Commitment, which aims to improve training and career development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Changes to disability reporting in annual reports

Since 1994, Commonwealth departments and agencies have reported on their performance as policy adviser, purchaser, employer, regulator and provider under the Commonwealth Disability Strategy. Reporting on the employer role transferred to the Australian Public Service Commission's *State of the Service Report* and the *APS Statistical Bulletin* in 2007–08. These reports are available at www.apsc.gov.au. From 2010–11, departments and agencies are no longer required to report on these functions.

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy has been overtaken by a new National Disability Strategy which is a 10-year national policy framework for improving life for Australians with disability, and their families and carers. A national level report tracking progress for people with disability will be produced by the Standing Council on Community, Housing and Disability Services to the Council of Australian Governments, and will be available at www.fahcsia.gov.au. The Social Inclusion Measurement and Reporting Strategy, agreed by the Government in December 2009, will also include some reporting on disability matters in its regular *How Australia is Faring* report and, if appropriate, in strategic change indicators in agency annual reports. More detail on social inclusion can be found at www.socialinclusion.gov.au.

OUR ORGANISATION

This part of the report deals with systems and processes that maximise effective and efficient use of Tribunal resources. It also sets out information relating to the Tribunal's administration and governance.

Financial management

The Tribunal's audited financial statements for 2010–11 follow this chapter.

The Minister for Finance and Deregulation approved a deficit of \$0.5m for the 2010–11 financial year, the majority of which was utilised. The Tribunal continued to manage its expenditure carefully, focusing on its core business aims. Some planned technology projects were deferred to 2011–12.

Property

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

Minor fit-out work was carried out in the Brisbane, Canberra and Perth Registries.

In Adelaide and Melbourne, as per the terms of the existing leases, rent reviews led to increases of eight and six percent respectively – in line with market expectations.

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 to the procurement guidelines as they are an essential tool for staff with purchasing duties and have been used as a model by several other agencies.

The Tribunal's competitive procurement processes ensure value for money for major purchases or contracts, as well as proper and effective competition. Open tender processes are employed unless the circumstances indicate that a select tender is appropriate. 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 according to the circumstances, timelines and the identified need for a consultant.

During 2010–11, the Tribunal entered into two new consultancy contracts with a total actual expenditure of \$42,131. Two ongoing consultancy contracts were active, for a total actual expenditure of \$57,496. 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.

Appendix 10 shows the two new consultancies let by the Tribunal during 2010–11 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 on the Tribunal’s website, in accordance with the Senate order on agency contracts.

Table 5.3 Total actual expenditure on consultancy contracts

	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11
Total actual expenditure (incl GST)	\$113,566	\$210,964	\$ 99,627

There were no contracts of \$100,000 or more let in 2010–11 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 regularly to review operations, and to plan and approve the audit policy for the forthcoming year. The committee also advises the Registrar on matters such as the financial statements and fraud control.

Each year, the Tribunal’s independent internal auditor undertakes an audit program covering a range of transactions to give assurance that the Tribunal’s systems are complying with the FMA Act and the Chief Executive Instructions. Any identified issues are addressed by management and reviewed by the Audit Committee.

During the reporting year, the internal auditor conducted an internal audit in the

Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney Registries. The Principal Registry finance and human resources operations are also audited annually. No major issues or 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 2010–11 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. Due to the Tribunal’s low risk and low claim rate, there was only a small increase in the insurance premium in 2010–11.

Risk assessment

The Tribunal regularly assesses its risk position, such as for business risks that may have an impact on national operations. These assessments include registry operations, public interaction, information systems and links with the Fraud Control Plan. They provide the basis for amendments to the Business Continuity Plan which is updated as required and is 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 the Tribunal's intranet be unavailable.

To further minimise risk to ongoing operations, the Tribunal is preparing local Business Continuity Plans for each registry, in consultation with the members and staff based in those registries.

Risk management training

As part of its risk management program, the Tribunal provided project management training to senior managers as part of their professional development. The training included detailed training for managing risks associated with significant projects. Plans are also underway to develop some in-house online programs for all Tribunal staff.

Security

The Tribunal places a high priority on security. To ensure that members, staff and visitors are in safe and secure environments when in Tribunal offices, the offices are secure, and 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. If necessary the Tribunal can also access arrangements with the Family Court and the Federal Court to use their court rooms and security arrangements for hearings that may involve a security risk. Both these services were arranged on several occasions during the year as a precautionary measure.

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

Information technology

The focus of the Tribunal's information technology projects in 2010–11 was on ensuring that hardware and software were

up-to-date, the network was secure and fully supported the Tribunal's work.

During the year, the Tribunal: rolled out new software and hardware; enhanced reporting capacity on its caseload with a new business intelligence reporting system; upgraded the servers, the physical security for server rooms and the PABX system; assisted with the upgrade of the financial management system and human resources management system; and continued to develop a range of enhancements to its case management system.

Library and information services

Library Committee

The Library Committee oversees the maintenance and development of the library collection, settles the Collection Development Policy and makes decisions on the acquisition of new library materials.

The Committee met in November 2010 and May 2011, and liaised throughout the year in relation to purchases. During 2010–11 the Committee oversaw a comprehensive review of library materials and services to ensure that the library is an effective information resource for Tribunal members and staff.

Library Network

The Library Network provides library and information services to 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. The libraries are staffed by professional librarians who organise and manage a collection of hard copy and electronic resources, and assist Tribunal members and staff with their information needs.

The Electronic Publishing Officer, a librarian based in the Principal Registry library, manages the Tribunal's internet and intranet. Library staff are also responsible for managing the electronic delivery of Tribunal decisions to publishers, the AustLII website, government departments and agencies, and other interested parties.

Key achievements of the Library Network in the reporting year included:

- the review of library materials and services, including a comprehensive user survey, which resulted in amendments to the Tribunal's Collection Development Policy, changes to materials held, recommendations for additional training in online resources and the ongoing investigation of more effective ways to manage and deliver information to library users
- implementation of the new template for the Tribunal website to incorporate new branding and design features that also enhanced the site's accessibility
- a restructure of the website to implement the Information Publication Scheme under the Freedom of Information Act, improving access to the documents required to be published under that scheme.

Policy and Research

The Tribunal's Policy and Research Section provides 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. It manages litigation when the Tribunal is named as a party; monitors appeals from Tribunal decisions; produces resource materials; coordinates reporting on Tribunal performance; supports Tribunal committees; educates external users on the Tribunal at legal education seminars; and manages and advises on communications.

During the year the section updated and developed the Tribunal's external communication products, developed templates to maintain consistency with the Tribunal's new look and contribute to improved productivity, advised on the ongoing development of the functionality and reporting capacity of the Tribunal's electronic case management system, implemented procedural changes associated with amendments to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal Regulations, and co-ordinated the Tribunal's contribution to the Information Publication Scheme under the Freedom of Information Act.