

CHAPTER

05

OUR ORGANISATION AND OUR PEOPLE

This part of the report sets out information relating to the governance and administration of the Tribunal, including human resource management. It also provides information on actions undertaken during the reporting period to meet Goals Two and Three in the Tribunal's Strategic Plan 2011–2014 which relate to our organisation and our people:

- to manage our resources strategically and effectively, and
- to maintain a professional, productive, rewarding and safe workplace.

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

The Tribunal has structures, policies and practices in place which contribute to sound corporate governance. See pages 11 to 16 in Chapter 2 for information on the Tribunal's senior executives and committees that comprise Tribunal members and staff. Information relating to the Tribunal's Audit Committee is set out below.

CORPORATE PLANNING

The Tribunal commenced a planning process in 2010–11 which culminated in the adoption of the Tribunal's Strategic Plan 2011–2014 in August 2011. The plan sets out vision and mission statements for the Tribunal as well as the Tribunal's core values and behaviours. Strategic priorities have been identified in relation to our users, our people, our organisation and our relationships and the plan specifies a range of actions associated with these priorities.

The Tribunal developed work plans for the specific actions that would be progressed in the next 12 months. These plans have been monitored and reviewed periodically. Key actions completed during the reporting period are noted in Chapter 1 of this report.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Tribunal's audited financial statements for 2011–12 follow this Chapter.

The Tribunal has reported an operating surplus of \$1.505 million in 2011–12 prior to unfunded depreciation charges. The surplus is a result of once-off savings in property costs, reduced usage of part-time members during the year and several vacant positions. The Tribunal continues to focus on its core business aims.

PURCHASING

The Tribunal observed the core principles of the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and relevant best practice guidelines in its purchasing activities in 2011–12. 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.

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 or the purchase is covered by a mandatory whole-of-government purchasing agreement. Minor purchases and contracts below the mandatory tender threshold are guided by the Chief Executive Instructions. In general, at least two quotes are required for small purchases and three for larger purchases together with an assessment of the need that justified the purchase request and an analysis of why the selected quote will achieve best value for money.

CONSULTANTS

The Tribunal engages consultants where it lacks specialist expertise or when independent research, review or assessment is required. Consultants are typically engaged to investigate or diagnose a defined issue or problem, carry out defined reviews or evaluations, or provide independent advice, information or creative solutions to assist in the Tribunal's decision making. Prior to engaging consultants, the Tribunal considers the skills and resources required for the task, the skills available internally and the cost-effectiveness of engaging external expertise.

Decisions to engage consultants in 2011–12 were made in accordance with the Financial Management and Accountability Act and related regulations, the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and relevant internal policies.

During 2011–12, the Tribunal entered into nine new consultancy contracts involving total actual expenditure of \$231,657.30. Two ongoing consultancy contracts were active for a total expenditure of \$21,680.25.

Table 5.1 sets out the Tribunal's total actual expenditure on all consultancies in the three most recent reporting years. All amounts include GST.

TABLE 5.1 TRENDS IN EXPENDITURE ON CONSULTANCY CONTRACTS

	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12
Total actual expenditure (incl GST)	\$210,964	\$99,627	\$253,338

REPORTING ON PURCHASES

All purchases were reported as required. There were no contracts valued at 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.

Details of all contracts involving consideration to the value of \$100,000 or more are on the Tribunal's website in accordance with the Senate order on agency contracts.

There were no contracts valued at \$100,000 or more let in 2011–12 that did not include a clause providing for the Auditor-General to have access to the contractor's premises.

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 Financial Management and Accountability 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 Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth Registries. The Principal Registry finance and human resources operations are also audited annually. No major issues or risks were identified by the audits.

The Tribunal reviewed and updated its Fraud Control Plan, including its Fraud Risk Register, in 2011–12.

During the reporting year, the Audit Committee's charter and checklists were updated in light of the Australian National Audit Office's revised Better Practice Guide on Public Sector Audit Committees. New arrangements for membership of the Audit Committee commenced on 1 July 2012 with the appointment of an independent chairperson.

CERTIFICATION OF TRIBUNAL FRAUD CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS

I, Philip Kellow, certify that I am satisfied that for 2011–12 the Tribunal:

- has prepared fraud risk assessments and fraud control plans,
- has in place appropriate fraud prevention, detection, investigation, reporting and data collection procedures and processes that meet the specific needs of the Tribunal, and
- has taken all reasonable measures to minimise the incidence of fraud in the Tribunal and to investigate and recover the proceeds of fraud against the Tribunal.



Philip Kellow
Registrar
17 September 2012

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 2011–12.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

The Tribunal regularly assesses its risk position, particularly for business risks that may have an impact on national operations. These assessments encompass registry operations, public interaction and information systems, and link with the Fraud Control Plan. The Tribunal reviewed and updated its Risk Management Plan and associated risk register in 2011–12.

The Tribunal's national Business Continuity Plan was updated during the reporting period 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.

The Tribunal substantially completed the preparation of local Business Continuity Plans for each registry in 2011–12. These were developed in consultation with the members and staff based in those registries.

During the reporting year, the Tribunal engaged external consultants The Birchman Group to review its business continuity and disaster recovery planning and processes in relation to its ICT systems. Interviews and a scenario exercise were conducted with key Tribunal staff as part of the review. The Tribunal will implement recommendations arising from the review in 2012–13.

MAINTAINING ETHICAL STANDARDS

The APS Values and Code of Conduct, aspects of the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and other standards relevant to ethical conduct are incorporated, as appropriate, into Tribunal policies, guidelines and instructions. The APS Values and Code of Conduct are available on the Tribunal's intranet. Online training relating to them is available to all staff and forms a specific part of the Tribunal's induction process. 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 confirming that they have read and understood them. As part of the 2012 National Staff Conference, attendees completed a workshop on identifying fraud to increase awareness of current legislation and expected behaviours.

The Tribunal's Agency Agreement 2011–2014 includes 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.

PROPERTY AND SECURITY

The Tribunal operates from commercially-leased premises in Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, and from the Commonwealth Law Courts buildings in Brisbane and Hobart. No major or minor fit-out works were carried out during 2011–12.

The Tribunal places a high priority on security. To assess its compliance with the Commonwealth Protective Security Policy Framework, the Tribunal commenced a security risk review in 2011–12. Recommendations from the review will be considered during 2012–13.

A number of measures are currently in place to enhance physical security. Tribunal office areas are secure and duress alarms are installed in conference and hearing rooms and at registry counters to protect members, staff and others 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 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. 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 Policy Framework.

MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

This section reports on the Tribunal's effectiveness in managing and developing its staff to achieve its objectives.

STAFFING OVERVIEW

At 30 June 2012 the Tribunal had 155 staff: 102 ongoing and 53 non-ongoing, of whom 16 were engaged to undertake duties that are irregular or intermittent. A detailed breakdown of staffing by classification level, full-time/part-time status, gender and location is in Appendix 2.

Table 5.2 shows the Tribunal's staffing numbers over the three most recent reporting years. Total numbers have remained relatively consistent over time.

TABLE 5.2 TRENDS IN TOTAL STAFFING NUMBERS

	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12
Ongoing	114	102	102
Non-ongoing (irregular/intermittent)	48 (19)	53 (22)	53 (16)
Total	162	155	155
Classification			
SES	1	1	2
Executive Level	34	34	32
APS Level	127	120	121
Total	162	155	155

In general, the Tribunal has a stable ongoing staffing complement. The Tribunal experienced higher than usual turnover of ongoing employees in 2011–12 with 14 employees leaving the Tribunal. The majority of these separations were the result of staff moving to positions in other Australian Government agencies and retirements.

There were 32 employment opportunity notices gazetted in 2011–12, 14 for ongoing positions and 18 for non-ongoing positions, an increase of 10 overall from 2010–11. In part, this additional recruitment activity arose from a restructure of the Tribunal's Principal Registry. A majority of the non-ongoing opportunities were for short-term positions for legal graduates who work with members of the Tribunal, usually for 12 to 18 months, and casual registry staff.

The number of Senior Executive Service positions in the Tribunal increased from one to two in 2011–12 as part of a restructure of the Tribunal's Principal Registry.

EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENTS AND ARRANGEMENTS

The Tribunal's collective workplace agreement, the *Administrative Appeals Tribunal Agency Agreement 2011–2014*, was approved by Fair Work Australia on 22 August 2011 and came into force on 29 August 2011.

As at 30 June 2012, four employees are the subject of determinations made under section 24(1) of the *Public Service Act 1999* and one employee is covered by an Australian Workplace Agreement.

The number of employees covered by the Agency Agreement and by individual employment arrangements at 30 June 2012 is shown in Table A2.3 of Appendix 2. Table A2.3 also shows the salary ranges available for the Tribunal's employees by classification level.

SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE OFFICER REMUNERATION

Remuneration for the Tribunal's Senior Executive Service officers is determined having regard to the remuneration for SES staff in similar Australian Government agencies. The remuneration package allows the occupant to cash out certain items, in accordance with common Australian Government practice.

PERFORMANCE PAY

The Tribunal paid \$39,378 in bonuses in 2011–12. Four employees who had entered into individual employment arrangements received a performance bonus linked to a performance agreement: one Senior Executive Service officer, one Executive Level 2 officer 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.

NON-SALARY BENEFITS

Non-salary benefits available to the Tribunal's employees in 2011–12 under 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 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 full or partial reimbursement of fees and costs as well as limited time off work to attend lectures, tutorials and examinations. Non-ongoing staff may apply in certain circumstances for limited time off work for study purposes. 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.

Staff participating in the Studies Assistance Scheme in 2011–12 undertook studies in financial management, general tribunal services, law, learning and development, protective security and technology services. In the reporting period, seven staff gained approval for financial support which amounted to \$16,851.50.

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. 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 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.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE TRIBUNAL

Learning and development are a priority for the Tribunal. During the reporting year, the Tribunal undertook a wide range of activities 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. The Professional Development Committee advises on the Members' Professional Development Program. It met in November 2011 and March 2012.

The Tribunal held a New Member Induction Program in early June 2012. Over the course of two and a half days, nine new members were introduced to the Tribunal, its jurisdiction, practice and procedure and given information about the resources available to support them.

The mentoring scheme involves pairing a more experienced member with each new member to assist newly-appointed members gain a better understanding of the workings of the Tribunal and their role. Senior Member Narelle Bell was the Coordinator of the Mentoring Scheme in 2011–12.

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. Deputy President Deane Jarvis was the Appraisal Scheme Coordinator in 2011–12.

A range of learning activities was offered to members during 2011–12 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 National Conference which is referred to below. They also participated in external seminars, workshops and other professional development activities.

The second edition of the Members' Professional Development Handbook was published in July 2011. The handbook outlines the components of the program and provides practical advice on its operation.

CONFERENCE REGISTRARS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Conference Registrars perform an important 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's Conference Registrars' Professional Development Program is based on a framework of competencies and includes induction, mentoring, reflective learning, peer review, performance appraisal and a template performance agreement. The first edition of the program handbook was published in August 2011. It outlines the components of the Conference Registrars' Professional Development Program and provides practical assistance with its operation.

The Tribunal conducted the first round of peer review processes in 2011–12 and these are contributing to the annual performance appraisal cycle. Conference Registrars were given access to a range of internal and external professional development activities in 2011–12, including an intensive one-day internal seminar on tax law and practice in June 2012.

STAFF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Learning and development for staff 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 conferences, seminars, workshops and other activities.

Internal training sessions were delivered in a variety of modes during the reporting year and included training on grammar, editing and proofreading, how to use the Tribunal's new decision template and training on new procedures relating to use of email and SMS. A large number of staff completed updated Word and Excel training offered by external providers.

The District Registrars continued to use the 'Coaching Ourselves' learning program to guide and promote discussion, reflection and knowledge sharing about management and leadership. A second learning circle comprising Deputy District Registrars and team leaders is now holding regular teleconferences using this tool.

Regular evaluations of studies assistance and development activities are undertaken to obtain feedback about participants' reaction to a particular activity, their learning and improvements in job performance as a result of the activity. The Tribunal is also developing its capability to develop and deliver e-learning and blended learning programs by enhancing the skills of a small core of staff in using e-learning authoring software.

CONFERENCES

2012 AAT NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Tribunal held its biennial national conference in March 2012. The conference offers a unique opportunity for members, Conference Registrars, District Registrars and Principal Registry staff to come together to discuss Tribunal practice, share information and experiences and undertake continuing education.

The theme of the 2012 conference was 'Tribunal Craft'. The conference commenced with a thought-provoking workshop on communicating and interacting with parties from diverse cultural backgrounds conducted by Dr Margaret Byrne. Other sessions covered working with self-represented parties, giving oral decisions, using case appraisal and neutral evaluation effectively, conducting a hearing, the role of specialist members, the use of concurrent evidence and the use of technology in the Tribunal.

2012 NATIONAL STAFF CONFERENCE

The Tribunal held a national conference for staff in June 2012. The conference affords staff the opportunity to meet face-to-face, build relationships and develop their knowledge and skills.

The conference program included sessions on the Tribunal's Chief Executive Instructions and finance procedures, recent developments in law and procedures, information on Tribunal initiatives relating to communication and access for Indigenous Australians, and workshops on improving health and wellness at work. Interactive sessions on working with self-represented parties and the use of technology in the Tribunal encouraged staff to actively review their practices and share ideas with their peers.

MEMBERSHIP OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES

The Tribunal continues to work collaboratively with other Australian 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 shared training opportunities for participant tribunals and courts.

The Tribunal is represented on the Australasian Committee for Court Education where it works 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.

WORK 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 introducing and promoting measures for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of employees while at work.

The Tribunal implemented a range of initiatives relating to health and safety in 2011–12 and, in particular, activities relating to the commencement of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* on 1 January 2012.

The Tribunal took a number of steps to ensure that members and staff understand the new legislation and their duties under it. Comcare's e-learning program for workers was made available to all members and staff on the Tribunal's intranet. Staff were also briefed on the changes at the National Staff Conference. A specific training session was conducted with Tribunal managers. Most Health and Safety Representatives completed mandatory training (relating to their role) through external accredited providers. The Tribunal engaged the services of an external consultant, Greg Seberry & Associates Pty Ltd, to review the Tribunal's health and safety arrangements and documentation following the commencement of the new legislation. The Tribunal is working to implement the consultant's recommendations during 2012–13.

Health and wellbeing initiatives available to all employees included flu vaccinations, eyesight testing, providing taxis to increase personal safety in certain circumstances, the Employee Assistance Program and assistance with return to work costs. During the National Staff Conference, the Tribunal launched the 10,000 Steps Program. This activity encourages staff to undertake more walking as part of their daily routine to enjoy the health benefits of low-impact exercise.

The Tribunal continued to make available to members and staff e-learning modules on manual handling and ergonomics in the office. A review of manual handling and the size of case files was carried out in the Melbourne Registry during the reporting period leading to changes in relation to the movement and storage of files in that registry. Changes at a national level arising from this work will be pursued in 2012–13. Workstation assessments and training were undertaken in all registries and remedial action implemented as required.

All Tribunal First Aid Officers completed training in 2011–12 and received particular training in the use of external defibrillators which are available in all registries.

The Tribunal's Health and Safety Committee met four times during the reporting year. Minutes of meetings are made available to all members and staff on the Tribunal's intranet. 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.

The Tribunal continues to have a low number of compensation claims as reflected in Table 5.3 below. 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.

TABLE 5.3 TRENDS IN COMPENSATION CLAIMS

	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12
Number of accepted claims	1	1	1

NOTIFIABLE INCIDENTS AND INVESTIGATIONS

There were no notifiable incidents that the Tribunal was required to report to Comcare in 2011–12 under either the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* or the Work Health and Safety Act. Comcare did not undertake any investigations in relation to the Tribunal during the reporting year, nor did it issue any notices to the Tribunal.

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.

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 and through the work of the Diversity Committee, which reviews the plan and looks for opportunities to promote the benefits of an inclusive work

environment. The committee, whose members include both members and staff, met in October 2011 and February 2012. Minutes from both meetings were made available to all members and staff.

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

PRODUCTIVITY GAINS

The Tribunal pursued several initiatives in 2011–12 to increase productivity in relation to its operations. The Tribunal's new Agency Agreement introduced changes to the working arrangements for Executive Level staff: 'Working Flexibly' provisions replaced those dealing with access to flextime. The 'Working Flexibly' arrangements reflect the greater autonomy Executive Level employees have in relation to managing the completion of their work and provide a mechanism for recognising additional work they may be required to undertake from time to time as a result of their responsibilities.

The Tribunal maintained its commitment to health and wellbeing initiatives that aim to improve employee health and reduce unplanned absences. The reported level of unplanned absences improved in 2011–12.

Technology initiatives also contribute to productivity gains. The Tribunal continued to benefit from the implementation of new functionality in its HR systems, including electronic attendance recording for staff. Improvements to the Tribunal's electronic case management system, TRACS, which will result in more efficient work practices and time-saving measures were identified and developed.

The Tribunal anticipates that the development and implementation of a suite of integrated technology systems and online services will improve productivity over time. Significant progress occurred in 2011–12 on the development of an online facility that will allow parties, their representatives and the public to access basic information about Tribunal cases.

BENEVOLENT TRUST

The Tribunal's 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 2011–12, the trust received four requests from staff for financial assistance: two requests for grants and three for interest free-loans. The trustees approved two grants and made three interest-free loans.

INFORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Tribunal's Information and Development Section is responsible for communication, legal and policy matters, library and information management and technology services. The Section worked on a range of projects during the reporting year which contributed to the achievement of the Tribunal's priorities in the Strategic Plan 2011–2014.

COMMUNICATION

The Tribunal has one part-time officer with responsibility for:

- developing and implementing strategies to meet the Tribunal's internal and external communication needs, and
- developing and managing the Tribunal's main information channels and products: website, brochures, fact sheets and publications such as the annual report.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Work commenced on the development of an internal communication strategy for implementation in 2012–13. With members and staff spread geographically across seven registries, a key focus will be to develop new tools to increase communication across the Tribunal.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

The Tribunal received 17 media enquiries relating to cases before the Tribunal in the reporting period from newspaper, radio and television outlets. Information was provided within 24 hours in relation to the majority of enquiries.

TEMPLATES AND PUBLICATIONS

In 2011–12, the Tribunal introduced a new style template for its decisions which has improved the functionality of the template and the readability of the decisions, particularly when they are converted to HTML on the AustLII website. With the introduction of the Tribunal's jurisdiction to review decisions of the Norfolk Island Government, a new fact sheet was developed which provides general information on the Tribunal and its processes for Norfolk Island residents.

WEBSITE

During the reporting period, the Tribunal's website generated over 400,000 hits, an increase of over 23,000 compared with the previous period. The recent user satisfaction study commissioned by the Tribunal included questions relating to the website. Most applicants who had accessed the website said they were able to find the information they were looking for. Most representatives had accessed the AAT website at least once in the previous six months. The overwhelming majority said the website was quick and easy to use.

LEGAL AND POLICY

The Tribunal's Legal and Policy area provides advice and assistance to the President, Registrar and Executive Directors 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, and supports Tribunal committees.

During the reporting year, the area:

- coordinated the finalisation of the Tribunal's guidelines relating to expert evidence and the constitution of the Tribunal,

- developed information resources relating to the Tribunal's jurisdiction to review decisions of the Norfolk Island Government,
- advised on the ongoing development of the functionality and reporting capacity of the Tribunal's electronic case management system,
- coordinated the first annual update of the *AAT Practice Manual*, and
- undertook significant work on revising the Tribunal's Registry Procedures Manual.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

LIBRARY NETWORK AND LIBRARY COMMITTEE

The Library Network consists of the Principal Registry library in Brisbane, and District Registry libraries in Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. The Network provides library and information services to all Tribunal members and staff, legal professionals appearing before the Tribunal and self-represented parties. Library staff also organise and publish the information on the Tribunal's internet and intranet sites and manage the electronic delivery of Tribunal decisions to publishers, government departments and agencies and other interested parties.

During 2011–12, the Library Network delivered library orientation training for new members and members' support staff, organised training sessions on a number of legal and medical research databases, negotiated access to a wider range of online information and implemented the email notification service, AAT Alerts, on the AAT website.

The Director, Library and Information Services also supports the Library Committee which oversees the development of the Tribunal's library collection, including making decisions on the selection of new library materials guided by the Collection Development Policy and within the context of the Tribunal's overall budget. The Committee met in November 2011 and March 2012, and liaised throughout the year, in relation to purchases. During the reporting year, the Committee also monitored the implementation of recommendations arising from the review of library materials and services conducted in 2010–11 which has reduced duplication of print information and improved Tribunal-wide access to online information.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The Tribunal engaged external consultants Recordkeeping Innovation Pty Ltd in May 2012 to conduct a review of its information and records management practices and assist the Tribunal develop a strategy to improve its practices. Interviews and workshops were conducted with Tribunal members and staff to identify current operations and assess information and knowledge management requirements. The Tribunal is examining the recommendations arising from the review and will settle its strategy in the next reporting period.

During the reporting year, the Tribunal also commenced a review of its records authority approved under the *Archives Act 1983* in consultation with the National Archives of Australia. A reference group has been established within the Tribunal to assist in identifying the records that should be covered in the Tribunal's specific authority. The Tribunal will continue work on the review in 2012–13.

TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

The Tribunal's technology services staff manage the planning, implementation and support of computer hardware and software used by the Tribunal, including general infrastructure and networks across Australia and the maintenance and development of the Tribunal's business systems. They are also responsible for the technical aspects of making telecommunications services available for the Tribunal and its personnel.

The technical services area undertook a range of projects in 2011–12 designed to ensure that the Tribunal's hardware and software are up-to-date, the network is secure and the Tribunal is fully supported to undertake its work.

Key achievements during the year included:

- preparing the Tribunal for the implementation of the next Internet protocol (IPv6),
- upgrading server room air-conditioning and UPS systems,
- managing the review of the Tribunal's ICT business continuity and disaster recovery planning and processes,
- commencing the rollout of a unified communications system within the Tribunal which provides desktop instant messaging, voice and video capability, and
- continuing to develop and implement a range of enhancements to the Tribunal's case management system.

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