

The background features a complex, abstract composition of overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in various shades of grey and white. These shapes create a sense of depth and movement, with some areas appearing darker due to the layering. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

Chapter 5:

Our people and our organisation

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Our people

The Tribunal's goal in relation to this key result area, as outlined in its Organisational Plan 2003–04, is to:

have a professional culture, a positive and productive workplace that values diversity.

This section of the report describes the key strategies and targets which the Tribunal has adopted in seeking to achieve this goal. It also provides information in relation to the activities of the Professional Development Committee and more general information relating to human resource management in the Tribunal.

Training and development

There have been many initiatives undertaken during the reporting year aimed at maintaining and enhancing the skill and knowledge base of members and staff. These include:

- meetings of the Professional Development Committee
- the National Members' Conference in Launceston in October 2003
- establishment of, and recruitment to, the new position of Learning and Development Officer
- the Conference Registrars' Annual Conference in May 2004
- training on taxation of costs in the Tribunal
- ad hoc professional development seminars for members and staff on issues of interest
- biannual District Registrars' meetings

- attendance of members and staff at relevant external conferences, including the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration's Tribunals' Conference and the annual conference of the Australian Institute of Administrative Law
- participation of members and staff in relevant external training courses run by the Australian Public Service Commission, Lawyers Engaged in Alternative Dispute Resolution, and others
- sponsorship of one senior staff member to attend the Public Sector Management course.

Professional Development Committee

The President established the Professional Development Committee to consider and make decisions on issues relating to the professional development of Tribunal members. The Committee comprises the President, a diverse group of members from different Tribunal registries with an interest in professional development, and the Registrar. The Committee was supported during the reporting year by staff of the Tribunal's Policy and Research Section.

The Committee met in October 2003 and February 2004. Issues considered by the Committee included:

- the appointment of a Learning and Development Officer
- professional development scheme and activities for Tribunal members
- the nature and content of the induction program for new members
- the development of a practice manual for Tribunal members.

Significant developments that occurred during the reporting period relating to matters considered by the Committee are outlined separately in this section of the report.

Learning and Development Officer appointment

In February 2004, the Professional Development Committee endorsed the recruitment of a Learning and Development Officer. Ms Athena Ingall was appointed as the Learning and Development Officer on 28 June 2004. Ms Ingall will be involved in the professional development of members and staff and she will report to the Manager, Human Resources. The position will coordinate and guide the formulation of an organisation-wide learning, development and mentoring strategy that aligns with the Tribunal's Organisational Plan. Different streams will cater for the diverse development needs of members and staff.

Induction program for new members planned

On 27 May 2004 the Attorney-General, announced a round of appointments and reappointments to the Tribunal that would take effect on and after 1 July 2004. With a number of new members among the appointees, the Tribunal commenced preparations for a group induction program for the new members to be held in Sydney in early July 2004. The program is designed to introduce new members to the Tribunal, its practices and procedures, major jurisdictions, staffing and resources, and the expectations and responsibilities of Tribunal members. The program will be delivered by experienced Tribunal members and senior staff.

Tribunal practice manual project

The Tribunal has identified the development of a practice manual for Tribunal members as one of its strategies. The manual is intended to be a resource that will provide practical guidance to Tribunal members on performing their duties under the AAT Act and under other legislation that confers jurisdiction on the Tribunal.

As was noted in Chapter 4 of this report, the Council of Australasian Tribunals (COAT) has identified the development of a practice manual for tribunal members as its first major project. It has been acknowledged that the content of the manuals for the Tribunal and COAT may overlap and that the scope for contiguous development of the manuals should therefore be explored.

The Tribunal engaged the Centre for Judicial Studies to undertake preliminary development and scoping work relating to the audience, educational objectives, content, style and production of the Tribunal and COAT practice manuals. In relation to the COAT practice manual, the consultant recommended the development of a manual that comprises three parts:

- generic principles of tribunal practice – to be produced by COAT
- principles relating to the operations and jurisdiction of each particular tribunal – to be prepared by each tribunal
- personal notes – to be prepared by each individual member.

The Tribunal practice manual would be developed to form the second part of an overall practice manual produced by COAT. Further work on the manual will be undertaken in the next reporting period.

Taxation of costs training

The Tribunal has the power to tax costs where it has made an order that costs be paid in accordance with section 67 of the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (the SRC Act). The Tribunal may also make costs orders and tax costs under a limited number of other statutes, although this is much less common than in compensation cases.

As a result of an increase in the number of applications for taxation of costs, it became apparent that the Tribunal currently had limited expertise in this area, with only a small number of Conference Registrars and District Registrars having undertaken them in the past. Some registries had no staff qualified to undertake taxation, resulting in staff from other registries being called upon to assist.

Training in taxation of costs was undertaken in May 2004. This training was provided to the Registrar, the Assistant Registrar, all Conference Registrars and several District Registrars.

Tribunal conferences

National Members' Conference

A feature of the reporting year was the Tribunal's biennial National Members' Conference, which was held in Launceston from 19 to 22 October 2003. The conference was opened by the Attorney-General and was attended by 90 members and staff.

A major theme of the conference was effective decision writing. Justice Linda Dessau of the Family Court of Australia led a full-day session on this topic, assisted by Justice Bernard Warnick, also of the Family Court, and Judge Tom Wodak of the County Court of Victoria. Other topics included: work-life balance and grappling with decision making, presented by Professor Trevor Waring, a psychologist and Deputy Chancellor of the University of Newcastle; the concurrent

evidence study in the New South Wales Registry; and issues relating to the warrants and proceeds of crime functions. The Tribunal's committees met on the final day of the conference.

On the final night of the conference, a formal dinner was held with guest of honour Sir Gerard Brennan, former Chief Justice of the High Court and the first President of the Tribunal. Sir Gerard presented certificates of service to those present who had been with the Tribunal for more than 15 years.

Conference Registrars' Annual Conference

In May 2004, the Tribunal held its Conference Registrars' Annual Conference in Sydney. The purpose of the conference is to bring together Conference Registrars from around Australia to explore trends in the Tribunal's workload, discuss relevant cases and changes in legislation, raise areas of interest and undertake formal training. The overall objectives of the conference include improving internal communication, promoting consistency in national practice and procedure, and supporting the learning and development needs of Conference Registrars.

The 2003–04 conference covered issues such as:

- taxation of costs
- developing a code of practice for Conference Registrars
- achieving work-life balance.

The conference also provided an opportunity for liaison with major user groups, including Centrelink, Comcare, the Military Compensation and Rehabilitation Service and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

District Registrars' biannual meetings

District Registrars' national meetings are held on a biannual basis to coincide with the Tribunal committee meetings. During the reporting year, District Registrars' meetings were held in Launceston in October 2003 and in Melbourne in February 2004. As with the Conference Registrars' Annual Conference, the purpose of the meetings is to improve internal communication, promote consistency in national practice and procedure, and support both the local and overall organisational needs of the Tribunal.

A positive and diverse workplace

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traineeship

The Tribunal is developing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) clerical traineeship in which a one-year employment opportunity will be offered to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person. It is proposed that the trainee will be employed to learn basic clerical job skills and to prepare for a career in the Australian Public Service or elsewhere. While the Tribunal will be unable to offer guaranteed follow-on employment at the end of the traineeship, it is hoped that the trainee will be in a position to compete for any appropriate vacancies that might arise in the Tribunal. It is expected that the strategy will be finalised and the traineeship will commence in the 2004–05 financial year.

Workplace Diversity

In November 2003, the Tribunal developed a new Workplace Diversity Plan for the next three years.

The Tribunal, through its Workplace Diversity Plan, recognises that all people have different qualities, skills, qualifications, experience and attitudes to work, and that valuing and making proper and effective use of these differences can improve the workplace for individuals, and enhance the overall performance of the Tribunal.

The plan can be viewed from the Tribunal's website at www.aat.gov.au/CorporatePublications/WorkplaceDiversityPlan.htm.

The Tribunal's Workplace Diversity Committee, which comprises both members and staff, met four times during the reporting year. Minutes from the meetings are made available to members and staff via the intranet. Appendix 2 lists the equal employment opportunity categories of staff, including the number of ATSI employees, where such information has been volunteered by staff.

Revised Disability Action Plan

During the reporting year, the Disability Action Plan 2003–06 replaced the Tribunal's 2001 Disability Action Plan, setting out the Tribunal's commitment to comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. The revised plan builds on and endorses the Tribunal's commitment to the principles of workplace diversity and equality of access. It addresses issues such as ensuring that electronic and printed material is available in appropriate formats and that standards of client service set out in the Client Service Charter, including those relating to the complaints process, are relevant to people with disabilities. When needed, the Tribunal provides applicants with electronic assistance for the hearing-impaired, multi-media options for sight-impaired people, and aids for those with a physical disability. Reasonable adjustment provisions cater for special needs in employment, induction and training of members and staff. The plan can be viewed from the Tribunal's website at www.aat.gov.au/CorporatePublications/DisabilityActionPlan.htm.

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate the Tribunal's performance against the Commonwealth Disability Strategy.

Harassment policy issued

All members and staff of the Tribunal are entitled to a workplace free from intimidation and harassment. The Tribunal's commitment to the prevention and elimination of all forms of harassment in the workplace is supported by its Prevention and Elimination of Workplace Harassment Policy, which was issued in March 2004. This policy sets out the Tribunal's expectations of managers, members and staff in preventing and dealing with workplace harassment, and encourages all managers and supervisors in particular to be familiar with, and to actively promote and support, the Tribunal's policy and strategies for dealing with harassment.

Tribunal benevolent fund established

A benevolent trust managed by elected trustees was established in late 2003. This trust, funded by voluntary contributions from staff and members, is available to assist in circumstances where a staff member or a member of their immediate family suffers misadventure or illness from any cause. The trust has already been able to assist one staff member who suffered a family tragedy.

Tribunal sporting achievements

The Tribunal encourages the health and wellbeing of staff by providing contributions towards the registration of Tribunal teams in various sporting competitions and activities. This year, the Victoria Registry walking team and women's running team had an excellent result, finishing in first and third place, respectively, in the Melbourne City Sports Autumn 2004 Corporate Cup. The New South Wales Registry's 'AATCATS' soccer team also performed well in their debut in the Lunchtime Legends competition.

Human resource management

Workplace planning, staff retention and turnover

Some of the significant developments during the reporting period relating to workplace planning included:

- an increased emphasis on timeliness of performance appraisals and monitoring
- implementation in the Queensland Registry of a registry work reorganisation (to adopt a single case officer system) as a productivity improvement under paragraph 4 of the Agency Agreement
- minor reviews of staffing allocations and classifications, undertaken as required.

The Tribunal's training and development and performance management programs continued to contribute towards fostering staff retention and professional development. The Tribunal's staffing complement was again quite stable, leading to increased familiarity with and enhanced performance of duties.

Individual and agency agreements

The AAT's new Agency Agreement commenced on 1 July 2003. The three-year agreement, which expires on 30 June 2006, offers 4 per cent annual salary increases. The agreement continues to promote a high standard of client service and the development of highly skilled staff. It seeks to improve productivity and efficiency while reducing cost through specific in-house programs and initiatives.

During the year, three staff members, including the Tribunal's only Senior Executive Service employee, were covered by individual Australian Workplace Agreements. Two of these agreements provided for the payment of a performance bonus linked to a performance agreement. In addition, the Registrar of the Tribunal is eligible for a performance bonus under the Principal Executive Officers Determination set by the Remuneration Tribunal. Because there is only one person at each level, the bonuses at each level are not published for privacy reasons. The total value of bonuses paid by the Tribunal was \$22,908.

Salary ranges for all staff covered by Australian Workplace Agreements are included in Table 2.1 in Appendix 2. Other conditions of service are similar or identical to those contained in the Agency Agreement.

The Tribunal does not have a performance pay or bonus system for employees covered by the certified agreement.

Performance Management Program

In accordance with the Tribunal's Performance Management Program, all staff have performance agreements. Depending on their performance during the appraisal period, staff are able to advance through their salary pay scale, up to the maximum of the salary range. The program is linked to the Agency Agreement. Appraisals were completed by 30 June 2004 for all staff except those who were on leave at the appraisal time.

A total of 26 staff were eligible for performance-related salary advancement and these increments were paid in July, where possible.

Staff also have individual development plans, linked to their performance agreements, which identify training and development needs.

Senior Executive Service officer remuneration

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

Non-salary benefits

Under the certified agreement, staff were provided with the following non-salary benefits.

- Two days of paid leave is provided to most staff between Christmas and New Year. A skeleton staff operates to maintain basic registry functions.
- All ongoing staff are eligible to apply for study assistance. Approved students have access to assistance that can include limited time off work for attendance at lectures, tutorials and examinations and may include full or partial reimbursement of fees and costs. Nine staff were accredited as approved students under the Tribunal's study assistance scheme during 2003–04. Approved courses included accounting, commerce, law, information technology, public relations and dispute resolution. The cost of reimbursing study fees and charges was less than \$10,000 and the total hours of study leave approved were 440 hours.
- Two additional weeks of paid maternity/parenting leave are provided.
- Healthy lifestyle incentives, such as reimbursement for healthy lifestyle checks and influenza vaccinations, are provided.

Productivity gains

The Tribunal is undertaking several staged actions to further improve productivity across its staffing operations. The newly engaged Learning and Development Officer will begin work on a broad-based learning and development program, which will aim to address the identified learning needs of employees. Specific training to improve personal and office-wide skills will be targeted.

Work reorganisation in the registries continues.

In Queensland, a registry work reorganisation pilot in which a case officer looks after matters in their entirety from application to finalisation has been implemented. This continues the arrangements set up in New South Wales and Western Australia.

Members' Handbook issued

In March 2004, an updated Members' Handbook was issued to all full-time and part-time members. The handbook is a general guide to the terms and conditions of office of members of the Tribunal. Member terms and conditions are generally determined by the Remuneration Tribunal under the Judicial and Related Officers Determinations, although some auxiliary determinations also apply.

Training database

Tribunal staff have intranet access to a reference database of training and development opportunities available across Australia. A database recording staff attendance at training and development courses is maintained. Both these tools will aid the new Learning and Development Officer's role in the Tribunal.

Commonwealth Disability Strategy

In the context of the Commonwealth Disability Strategy, the Tribunal is assessed as performing the roles of an employer and a provider. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 summarise the Tribunal's performance in 2003–04.

Table 5.1 Commonwealth Disability Strategy – the Tribunal’s performance in employer role

Performance indicator	Performance measures	Performance for 2003–04
Employment policies, procedures and practices comply with the requirements of the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> .	All employment policies, procedures and practices meet the requirements of the Act.	Policies were reviewed and were found to comply with the requirements of the Act.
Recruitment information for potential job applicants is available in accessible formats on request.	All recruitment information requested is provided in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessible electronic formats • accessible formats other than electronic. Average time taken to provide accessible information in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • electronic format • formats other than electronic. 	100% available via fax, email and mail or by downloading from the Tribunal’s website. As set out in the <i>World Wide Web Access: Disability Discrimination Act Advisory Notes</i> , Website Accessibility Priority 1 and 2 checkpoints have been met. Telephone typewriter service is also available for use by hearing-impaired job applicants. All requests, both electronic and otherwise, are dispatched within 48 hours of receipt of requests.
Agency recruiters and managers apply the principle of reasonable adjustment.	All supervisors and managers are provided with information on reasonable adjustment; reasonable adjustments to the workplace are made to accommodate the needs of staff with disabilities.	All staff and managers of the Tribunal have access to information about reasonable adjustment in the Staff Selection Manual, Disability Action Plan and Reasonable Adjustment Policy, available on the Tribunal’s intranet. Adjustments have been made to accommodate hearing-impaired staff.
Training and development programs consider needs of staff with disabilities.	All training and development programs consider needs of staff with disabilities.	All in-house training programs consider the needs of staff and members with disabilities. The Tribunal also ensures that all externally organised events have facilities for disabled members or staff.

Table 5.1 Commonwealth Disability Strategy – the Tribunal’s performance in employer role
(continued)

Performance indicator	Performance measures	Performance for 2003–04
Training and development programs include information on disability issues as they relate to the content of the program.	All training and development programs include information on disability issues as they relate to the program.	All Tribunal in-house training and development courses include information on disability issues where relevant.
Complaints/grievance mechanism, including access to external mechanisms, in place to address issues and concerns raised by staff.	Established complaints/grievance mechanisms, including access to external mechanisms, in operation.	The formal process for dispute resolution is contained in the AAT Agency Agreement 1 July 2003 – 30 June 2006. In addition, there is provision for internal and external review of actions in the <i>Public Service Regulations 1999</i> .

Table 5.2 Commonwealth Disability Strategy – the Tribunal’s performance in provider role

Performance indicator	Performance measures	Performance for 2003–04
Providers have established mechanisms for quality improvement and assurance.	Evidence of quality improvement and assurance systems in operation.	The following mechanisms ensure that quality of service to clients is maintained and improved: quarterly reporting and review of timeliness standards; performance management of staff; outreach service to self-represented applicants; and user liaison meetings at local, national and agency head level.
Providers have an established service charter that specifies the roles of the provider and consumer, and service standards that address accessibility for people with disabilities.	Established service charter that adequately reflects the needs of people with disabilities in operation.	The Tribunal has an established charter, which sets out its commitment to providing equitable access to all clients. The charter is available in pamphlet form (including in large print) and on the Tribunal’s website.
Complaints/grievance mechanism, including access to external mechanisms, in place to address issues and concerns raised about performance.	Established complaints/grievance mechanisms, including access to external mechanisms, in operation.	The Tribunal has a formal complaints mechanism which includes provision for external complaint to the Ombudsman.

Occupational health and safety

The Tribunal gives high priority to the health and work safety of its members and staff. To assist in monitoring occupational health and safety (OH&S), and in accordance with Comcare requirements, the Tribunal has a National Health and Safety Committee, with staff representatives from each registry. The Committee meets regularly by telephone, and agenda items include site reports, incident reporting and recent information releases from Comcare.

Workplace assessments are undertaken by the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service for the benefit of staff where problems are identified, including posture issues, workstation set-up and equipment requirements. Remedial action is recommended and implemented. Case management of compensable matters is conducted in-house or outsourced, depending on the location and the complexity of the matter.

The new Comcare OH&S Incident Reporting Guidelines are in place along with Tribunal instructions. During the year there were no reportable incidents.

Ethical standards

Tribunal staff are required to act in accordance with the Australian Public Service (APS) Values and the APS Code of Conduct.

The APS Values and the APS Code of Conduct are available to staff on the intranet and are referred to in Tribunal publications. Recruitment guidelines include information on the APS Values and APS Code of Conduct.

Our organisation

The Tribunal's goal in this area, as outlined in its Organisational Plan 2003–04, is to:

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

This section of the report outlines achievements of the Corporate Support, Information Services and Technology, and Policy and Research sections in pursuit of the above goal. It also provides more general information on the Tribunal's administration and governance.

Organisational Plan

In 2003–04, the Tribunal developed the Organisational Plan, which set out the Tribunal's:

- vision, mission and values
- key result areas
- goals
- strategies
- key targets
- outcomes.

The plan was developed in consultation with all staff and members. The plan will be reviewed annually. A copy of the plan, including a statement of the Tribunal's achievements against the plan, is at the end of Chapter 1.

Corporate Support

The Corporate Support area of the Tribunal is divided into the Financial Management Section and the Human Resource Management Section.

Financial management

Audited financial statements appear as part of this annual report at pages 63 - 101.

The financial statements include reports on the outputs identified in the 2003–04 Budget. These outputs are:

- applications finalised without hearing
- applications finalised with hearing.

The 2003–04 financial year was a year of consolidation for the Tribunal, leading to the planning of a number of major acquisitions in 2004–05. Three significant purchases related to information technology were made during the reporting year: upgrading of the Tribunal's desktop systems to Windows XP, the purchase of new software licences for a further four years, and the replacement of all printers.

Risk management

Audit and fraud control

The Tribunal's Audit Committee meets periodically to oversee the audit policy and plans for the forthcoming year. Its responsibilities include providing advice to the Registrar on a range of matters, including the financial statements provided to the Auditor-General and fraud risk assessment, and commissioning internal audits on operational activities.

The Tribunal has in place approved risk assessment and fraud control plans and procedures that provide for fraud prevention, detection, investigation and reporting. A new Fraud Control Plan was prepared internally and was agreed to by the Committee. The Chief Executive Instructions are being completely reviewed and will be reissued during the 2004–05 financial year. The Tribunal's Chief Executive Instructions form the model for several other agencies' instructions.

During the reporting year, the Tribunal's internal auditor undertook audits of the Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia Registries and the Principal Registry in Queensland. Areas scrutinised included payments, receipting, bank accounts, payroll, attendance records and hospitality. No major risks were identified as a result of the audits.

Insurance

The Tribunal's property and assets are insured through the Commonwealth's Comcover arrangements. In general terms, the Tribunal has a low risk of insurance exposure and a limited likelihood of major disruption to its services, although cover is provided should that occur. As in the previous year, the insurance premium was subject to an increase but the Tribunal's cover has been maintained at its previous level.

Security

The Tribunal has fee-for-service agreements with both the Australian Protective Service and Chubb Security Pty Ltd to provide ad hoc security guarding for Tribunal hearings on an as-needed basis. Specific guarding services were sought only once nationally during the year and no incidents of a security nature occurred in any Tribunal hearing or in any registry. The Tribunal's premises are access-controlled and duress alarms are installed, with monitoring by Chubb Security Pty Ltd, to protect staff and members in the event of any incident during hearings or conferences.

The Tribunal has entered into an agreement with the Family Court of Australia to use its court rooms and security arrangements if the Tribunal becomes aware of a particular risk or threat to the conduct of a hearing.

The Australian Protective Service also undertakes security vetting of staff whose duties require security clearance in compliance with the *Commonwealth Protective Security Manual 2000*.

Property

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

Leases on all commercial sites, except Canberra, continue until mid- to late 2005–06. The Canberra lease expired on 30 June 2004. After a market search of premises in the Civic precinct the Tribunal accepted an offer from its current landlord to sign a new lease for a 10-year period at commercially acceptable terms. The new lease, commencing 1 July 2004, will be accompanied by a refurbishment of the premises to ensure that it remains a workable fit-out for another decade.

The Sydney and Melbourne leases expire in December 2005. A property consultant was engaged from a public tender exercise and has commenced property searches in both cities for the best market deal to enable the Tribunal to operate from affordable premises on leases for up to another 10 years.

Leases in Adelaide and Perth fall due in early to mid-2006. Work has commenced to engage a property consultant to undertake property searches to secure suitable premises for the Tribunal in those cities.

Purchasing

Although the Tribunal has a limited purchasing profile, the core principles of the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and Best Practice Guidelines are observed, and the Tribunal ensures that purchases are in accordance with the Chief Executive Instructions. The Chief Executive Instructions are being completely reviewed to ensure that they remain current, valid documents for ongoing use.

For major purchases or contracts, the Tribunal uses competitive practices to ensure value for money, as well as open and effective competition. All significant purchases are put to open or, if appropriate, selective tender and, as is required by the Tribunal's purchasing guidelines, at least three quotes are ordinarily obtained for services or goods required. In 2003–04, all purchases over \$2,000 were gazetted as required.

With regard to information technology purchases, the Tribunal generally uses the Endorsed Supplier Arrangement to source likely suppliers of goods and services. Our adherence to the principle of using only endorsed suppliers has resulted in some firms joining the Endorsed Supplier list in order to tender for our business.

Exempt contracts

There were no contracts in excess of \$2,000 (inclusive of goods and services tax) or standing offers that were exempt from being published in the Purchasing and Disposal Gazette on the basis that they would disclose exempt matters under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Consultants

The Tribunal employs consultants when the required skills are not available within the Tribunal.

Table 5.3 sets out the consultancies used by the Tribunal during the year.

Table 5.3 Consultancies used in 2003–04

Name of consultant	Contract price for consultancy \$	Payments made in 2003–04 \$	Selection process, including whether publicly advertised	Nature and purpose
E-Global	13,585	13,585	Limited tender	Website design
Interiors Australia	15,818	15,818	Limited tender	Office space planning
Data#3	196,450	100,000	Open tender	Windows/server upgrades
Citadel Securix	33,440	0	Limited tender	Information technology network risk assessment
e.Law	70,950	0	Limited tender	Case project workshops and tender specifications
Centre for Judicial Studies	16,628	16,628	Direct engagement	Advice relating to development of practice manual
GS Corporate Services Pty Ltd	49,874	49,874	Limited tender	Internal audit and accounting advice
United KFPW	100,000	0	Open tender	Property consultancy services
Corporate Real Estate Services	10,520	10,520	Limited tender	Property consultancy services

Contracting out

During the reporting year, the Tribunal did not contract out to another organisation the delivery of any government activities that it had previously performed.

Discretionary grants

The Tribunal has no discretionary grant programs.

Advertising and market research

The Tribunal has no item to declare under section 311A of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. Non-campaign advertising expenditure for the year was \$13,700 paid to hma Blaze Pty Ltd for the newspaper advertising of tenders and for recruitment advertisements.

Environmental performance

Under section 516A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, agencies are required to report on ecologically sustainable development and environmental matters. The Tribunal is a review body and, as such, does not administer policy that has any major detrimental effect on the environment. The Tribunal attempts to limit its impact on the environment in day-to-day administrative functions by ensuring that energy usage and wastage of resources are minimised. Results to date are encouraging in that energy usage is moderate compared with usage in similar organisations.

The Tribunal is a partner in the development of an environmental management system (EMS) for Commonwealth Law Courts buildings nationally. An EMS review of several Law Courts buildings has been conducted and a first-stage implementation plan is being prepared for consideration in 2004–05. A policy for national use will be developed subsequently.

Information services and technology

The Information Technology section was very busy during the reporting year, as shown by the following projects.

Upgraded information technology office environment

The Tribunal upgraded all its office systems to the latest software. Every registry's network is now running on Windows 2003 and uses Microsoft Office 2003 and Exchange 2003 for office automation processes. The upgrade involved 23 servers and over 200 personal computers. The Tribunal's fleet of 80 printers was also replaced with new models. This new environment ensures that the Tribunal can communicate effectively within its offices and with any external organisation.

Case management system

The Tribunal formally announced in February that it would commence a project to look into the feasibility of implementing a new case management system. The current system (called AATCAMS) has served the Tribunal very well for 17 years; however, the demands of new business methods (particularly e-business concepts) cannot be met by the existing system.

Workshops were held in June and will be held in July 2004 to provide members and staff with an opportunity to contribute knowledge about the current system and to determine desirable features for the new system. A consulting firm experienced in case management systems is assisting the Tribunal with the workshops and has brought added knowledge about the technical system goals the Tribunal should be seeking to achieve.

In the meantime, several enhancements were made to AATCAMS, particularly the reporting module, so that the Tribunal's performance can be more clearly analysed and interpreted.

Tribunal website

Information about Tribunal decisions, daily listings, assistance with procedures for using the Tribunal and other related Tribunal information is available on the Tribunal's website (www.aat.gov.au).

In 2003–04 the website received a major facelift to enable key information to be accessed faster. On the basis of the statistics gathered during the year, the website has proved to be popular with people seeking information.

E-business strategy

In recognition of the desire to align its information technology strategy with that of other tribunals and courts, the Tribunal is monitoring the Federal Court's work on its eCourt strategy.

As the Tribunal's new case management system is developed, the Tribunal will look to introduce e-business concepts to provide up-to-date and efficient processing of applications and exchange of documentation between the Tribunal and parties.

Business continuity plan

The Tribunal is currently developing a business continuity plan for its information technology systems to ensure that it can efficiently recover from any disaster. The plan will ensure that the mission-critical needs of each registry will be quickly restored regardless of the nature of any adverse event.

The first phase of the project involves a security review of current information technology operations to ensure that all government security guidelines are being followed.

Information Technology Steering Committee

In 2003–04 the Tribunal formed a new committee designed to oversee information technology strategies for major projects and to provide advice in relation to the information technology planning function. Membership of the steering group includes members and staff covering all registry functions.

Library and information services

During the reporting year, the Library continued to provide support to members and staff primarily through the seamless delivery of library materials and legal reference and research services.

At the request of the Library Committee, a library user survey was conducted to identify and target service delivery to user needs.

Other achievements during the reporting year included:

- completion of an upgrade to Horizon, the computerised library and information management system
- enhancement of the Tribunal's intranet, particularly through the inclusion of an increased range of members' information
- development and provision of online legal research training to Tribunal members and staff, particularly through the use of the intranet facility
- efficient management of the process of electronic delivery of Tribunal decisions to publishers, government agencies and other interested parties.

Policy and Research Section

The Policy and Research Section provides the President, Registrar and Assistant Registrar with advice and assistance in relation to legal and policy issues affecting the Tribunal. It also provides information and assistance to Tribunal members and staff in relation to relevant legislative changes, case law developments and practice and procedure issues. The primary responsibilities of the section include:

- undertaking research and preparing advice, correspondence and papers relating to matters affecting the Tribunal
- monitoring and coordinating appeals from decisions of the Tribunal
- producing and maintaining resource materials, including the Tribunal's jurisdiction list and procedure manuals
- coordinating reporting on Tribunal performance, including producing statistical information on the Tribunal's workload

- managing projects and providing support to Tribunal committees
- assisting with the delivery of training for Tribunal staff.

Key achievements for the reporting year included:

- improvements to internal reporting on the Tribunal's workload
- ongoing monitoring of, and support for, the concurrent evidence study being conducted in New South Wales, and the preparation of external presentations on the study
- contributions to the Tribunal's participation in COAT and the Tribunal Efficiencies Working Group, and the preparation of submissions to external bodies
- implementation of procedures and systems for collecting information on the representation of non-agency parties from 1 July 2004.

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

