

## CORPORATE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The operation of a national meteorological service is resource intensive, especially for a country the size of Australia. To undertake all the activities of the Bureau, approximately 1450 staff are located right across Australia from the unit based at Sydney Airport, to the Giles Meteorological Office situated about 750 kilometres west-southwest of Alice Springs on the edge of the Gibson Desert. The Bureau employs a wide range of professional, technical and administrative staff including many specialist staff who have skills and training specific to the Bureau environment. A significant proportion of staff work shifts to maintain a round-the-clock nation-wide weather watch and to provide ongoing forecasts 365 days a year.

Like its staff, the Bureau's asset base is widely geographically dispersed. It includes observing instruments, computing and communications systems, software, land and buildings. Some of these assets are located on remote sites such as the Field Offices at Casey, Davis and Mawson in the Antarctic, or on coral reefs in the Pacific Ocean. In an environment characterised by rapid technological change and obsolescence, the Bureau manages assets with a replacement value of approximately \$350m.

This complex array of human and capital resources and other financial resources demand robust resource management. The Bureau's ongoing challenge in corporate resource management is to carry out its statutory functions to acceptable levels within a resource constrained environment. More information on specific aspects of the Bureau's resource management activity during 2003-04 is provided below.

## WORKFORCE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

For the most part, the Bureau continued to enjoy the organisational benefits of an effective, well-trained and highly committed workforce despite the continuing pressures of reduced staffing levels. Whilst staff turnover rates have generally been quite low compared with most other Australian Public Service (APS) agencies, a major organisational challenge facing the Bureau over the next 5-10 years is the continual maintenance of the scientific quality and integrity of its operations and services in the face of an ongoing loss of experience and reducing staff numbers. The maintenance of critical mass in many important specialist aspects of the Bureau's operations, as key long-serving specialist staff retire over the next few years, also presents a challenge for the organisation.

As in past years, the Bureau placed a strong emphasis on workforce planning to ensure that its key service operations and corporate objectives were achieved within the constraints of a continually tightening staffing situation. The Bureau's staff age profile, which is characterised by a strong early 50s peak, and which has resulted, primarily, from the high level of staff retention and the limited recruitment possible over the past two decades, continued to be a factor in workforce planning. The Bureau's 2003-04 recruitment

program was aimed, therefore, at ensuring there were sufficient qualified staff to replace the loss of expertise that will occur over the next few years, and at the ongoing re-establishment of a balanced age profile across the organisation. The recruitment of specialist staff groups (Meteorologists, Observers and Technicians) was maximised consistently within resource allocations and a balanced recruitment outcome was achieved for the other categories of staff employed in the Bureau.

In recognition of the ongoing need to manage staff performance in a more holistic manner and to train staff for future roles, the Bureau continued to give emphasis to the strategic development of its workforce. In particular, the Bureau commenced a succession planning process to develop staff at all levels for roles that are crucial to achieving the organisation's outcomes. The Bureau also commenced work on a new learning and development strategy using the principles contained in the APS framework for managing learning and development. These strategies should ensure that there are sufficient numbers of suitably skilled staff, at both senior management and other levels, to meet the future needs of the organisation. Other initiatives during the year included leadership and management training, career planning, coaching and mentoring programs, job rotations, job assignments and intensified development of employees who demonstrate leadership potential.

## TRAINING

The primary objective of the Bureau's training program is to meet current and emerging needs for staff with appropriate management skills and specialised technical and professional skills. A secondary objective is to provide specialised meteorological training to Defence Forces personnel and to the staff of overseas National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs).

To meet these objectives the Bureau of Meteorology Training Centre (BMTC) provides:

- specialised postgraduate meteorological training in operational forecasting for new staff of the Bureau, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and overseas NMHSs;
- technical and general training in specialised meteorological support duties and systems for new Bureau technical staff, trainees from overseas, Defence Force personnel and approved external participants;
- in-service training to maintain professional and technical meteorology-related skills, and to provide management and development training for all categories of Bureau staff;
- curriculum development and the development and delivery of new courses for all training activities, including Computer Aided Learning (CAL) and web-based modules; and
- consultative services on the education and training aspects of major new Bureau projects.

The BMTC also manages the operation of the National Meteorological Library.

## INTERNAL TRAINING ACTIVITIES

During 2003 and 2004, 50 and 31 trainees respectively undertook initial training (initial training courses are conducted in each calendar year). Of these, 51 were studying the 40-week Graduate Diploma in Meteorology course (including six from the Navy and nine from overseas), 17 were undertaking the 30-week Technical Officer (Observer) course and 13 the Technical Officer (Engineering) course.

Approximately 440 staff received specialised technical or professional in-service training. This included courses, amongst others, in First-in Maintenance, Electrolyser, Autosonde and Digicora III training for Technical Officers (Observer); and Radar, National Restricted Electrical License (NREL) training and Frontline Management for Technical Officers (Engineering). Professional in-service training undertaken by Meteorologists included the Advanced Forecaster Course and training in the National Thunderstorm Forecast Guidance system as well as competency training throughout the regions for the forecasting of severe thunderstorms, tropical cyclones and fire weather. A five-day Introductory Meteorology course was conducted for non-meteorological staff to provide an improved understanding of the context for their work.

More than 1030 staff undertook short, in-service management development training courses, ranging in length from one day to one week. These courses covered such areas as project, change or time management, client service, policy development, presentation and communication skills, and performance management. A series of seminars was developed to focus on APS Values and the APS Code of Conduct.

A Bureau-specific Management Education Program (MEP) was conducted by the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers Australia (APESMA) and LaTrobe University. The MEP provides formal qualifications at the Certificate and Graduate Certificate levels. During 2003-04, 16 staff were enrolled in the MEP. During the 13th year of the Bureau's Studybank scheme, 71 staff enrolled or continued as part-time students. Two staff were awarded scholarships to further their tertiary studies on a full-time basis.

Workshops held for the first time this year focused on the National Thunderstorm Forecast Guidance System. These workshops were linked to the Bureau's Radar Network and Doppler Services Upgrade Project (RNDSUP).

Bureau staff at Pearce (Western Australia) and East Sale (Victoria) Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) training bases provided meteorological training for RAAF personnel. Some 210 RAAF pilots, air traffic controllers, navigators and flying instructors undertook meteorological training courses during 2003-04.

In support of the Bureau's corporate strategic objective of commitment to university education in meteorology and related fields, the BMTC maintained strong links with several tertiary education institutions, in particular with Monash University, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and the University of Melbourne.

The BMTC continued to provide reciprocal lecturing arrangements on specialised graduate-level meteorology courses with Monash University. A one-week Synoptic Laboratory seminar was conducted for honours and post-graduate students, to provide them with some insight into operational forecasting procedures, with 10 attendees from Melbourne and Monash universities, and five from interstate universities.



*A Bureau officer shows the 2004 Graduate Diploma in Meteorology trainees an instrument enclosure.*

#### INTERNATIONAL TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The Bureau maintained a strong involvement in the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Education and Training Programme and attended key coordination meetings and training symposia. The BMTC conducted a five-day WMO workshop for Regional Meteorological Training Centre instructors from Africa, and also contributed to the development of several WMO education and training initiatives covering satellite meteorology and access to training resources and material.

In support of the Bureau's international activities, the BMTC conducted a two-week Computer Aided Learning (CAL) Workshop. The workshop covered the latest techniques employed in the development of CAL packages with an emphasis on developing material that could be used within the resources available to NMHSs participants.

A joint project with the US Cooperative Program for Meteorological Education and Training (COMET) continued the development of severe weather Web-based case studies. These studies form part of the series of severe weather training modules now used by Bureau forecasters around Australia.

## PRODUCTIVITY GAINS

During 2003-04 the Bureau negotiated a new Certified Agreement (CA) covering all Bureau staff other than those on individual Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs). The agreement, ratified by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) on 26 May 2004, will deliver two pay rises of 4 per cent each over a two-year period. It helps to keep Bureau salaries competitive with mainstream APS rates in return for a number of productivity and efficiency improvements.

The productivity and efficiency initiatives contained in the CA represent a combination of ongoing initiatives from previous agreements and newly negotiated initiatives to achieve productivity improvements and cost savings. They include:

- the successful transition to the Bureau's new Central Computing Facility in 2004;
- implementation of a Bureau-wide managed desktop environment and establishment of appropriate support arrangements;
- implementation of knowledge management systems to capture the skills of the Bureau's experienced workforce and to investigate and implement streamlined workflows;
- modernisation and re-balancing of observing networks to enable the increased productivity in the Bureau's observing functions;
- continuation of the process of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of weather services;
- streamlining human resource management practices and procedures as opportunities arise, with the aim of simplifying personnel rules, lowering processing costs and freeing up human resources staff to allow a greater effort on strategic personnel and human resource management activities;
- completion of the program of centralisation of all appropriate Regional management services support activities in Head Office, over a one to three-year-period; and
- agreement to a general facilitative clause that allows the Bureau to examine options for possible new organisational and staffing arrangements and streamlining of work practices, as they arise during the life of the agreement, that would contribute to improved efficiency.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ISSUES

An overriding objective for 2003-04 was to have in place financial management processes and policies consistent with the operation of a Prescribed Agency. Processes were improved, in particular those relating to the preparation of month-end and year-end financial statements. Particular attention was given to improving the quality and frequency of reconciliation of data in the financial system. Benchmarks for financial processing were, in some areas, exceeded. The percentage of payments by means of Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), for example, increased to 95 per cent, compared with the benchmark of 90 per cent.

The progressively tighter reporting schedule set by the Department of Finance and Administration has required improvements in closing off the books at month and year-end

and the development of new approaches in order to provide timely audit information and draft financial statements.

The ability to respond to the new requirements for financial management was in part assisted by the progressive restructuring of the Finance and Supply Section, which handles much of the information required for effective internal program management and external reporting.

### MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

In 2003-04, significant progress was made on the redesign and redevelopment of the Bureau's Management Information System (MIS), following the implementation of a new Financial Management System in 2001 and the purchase and configuration of new MIS infrastructure late in 2002-03. Achievements in 2003-04 included:

- automated production, on a daily basis, of summarised and detailed expenditure/revenue reports for each Branch and Region;
- production of expenditure/revenue reports for the three previous financial years;
- development of customised reports, based on internal orders, that can be used to track asset purchasing, projects and activities of specific interest; and
- progress towards the development of a reporting suite for maintenance work on the Bureau's extensive national plant and equipment holdings.

### PURCHASING

The purchasing of goods and services by the Bureau was conducted in accordance with instructions issued by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The instructions required procurement staff to adhere to the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and Best Practice Guidance. Senior procurement staff were authorised by the CEO to oversee and exercise delegations to the extent necessary to ensure compliance with all relevant procurement policies. Internal processes and documentation provided the basis for effective control and management of the purchasing process. Purchase orders to the value of \$39.3m were raised in 2003-04. Procurement and probity advice was readily available in-house to all project teams involved with major procurement. Contracts of \$100,000 or more in value were published on the Bureau's website:(<http://www.bom.gov.au/bep/>) as required by Senate Order J 4358-9.

### ASSET MANAGEMENT

Several significant asset management initiatives were undertaken during the year:

- assets were revalued on a Fair Value basis as distinct from the Deprival Value basis;
- a stocktake of Head Office assets was conducted;
- the need to retain some fully depreciated assets was assessed;

- new processes and procedures were implemented to ensure the timely commissioning of assets under construction and the capture of completed assets in the asset register; and
- the Bureau's asset management processes and procedures were consolidated in an Asset Management Manual, to be issued in 2004-05.

Property resource and leasehold management in 2003-04 involved civil works and fitout programs required to provide adequate and energy-efficient operational environments, improvements to staff accommodation and security, ongoing rationalisation of national property assets, and continued refinement of property asset management and reporting systems.

The main project in 2003-04 was the fitout of the Bureau's new Head Office and Victoria Regional Office accommodation at 700 Collins Street Docklands Victoria, ahead of the formal move planned for July 2004. This involved the exploration of ways in which the Bureau's special needs, including the Central Computing Facility, workshops and laboratories, and 24 x 7 operational areas might best be accommodated. Extensive consultation was undertaken with staff, consultants and the developers to ensure both the base building and the fitout were appropriate for organisational requirements.

Other property and leasehold projects progressed during the year included:

- the construction of a new residence at Norfolk Island;
- the installation of new meteorological radar facilities at Mt Gambier (South Australia), Cape Range (Learmonth, Western Australia) and Bowen (Queensland); and
- the introduction of a Profiler Radar at Launceston Airport and the establishment of a new Meteorological Office within the Launceston central business district (in parallel, the office located at Launceston Airport was closed).

## CONSULTANTS

The total number of consultancy service contracts arranged by the Bureau was 74. The total expenditure on consultancy services during the year was \$559,670.17. The most common reasons to engage consultants were the need for specialised, technical and professional skills or knowledge, and the need for work to be conducted independently. Details of consultancies in excess of \$10,000 are provided in the following table.

<b>Name of Consultant</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Contract Price (\$) (Incl GST)</b>
Andrews Marketing Group	VHF Marine Weather Services User Survey	11,305.00
Australian Government Solicitor	Indonesia IMGEP Tender Process	23,866.00
Australian Government Solicitor	Weather Channel Advice	14,717.00
Australian Government Solicitor	National Tidal Centre Staffing Issues	10,315.00
Australian Government Solicitor	Finance Lease Issues	11,244.00
Australian Government Solicitor	Staffing Issues WA	18,257.00
Blake Dawson Waldron Lawyers	Legal advice and preparation of documents	19,696.39
Delbeato Young Pty Ltd	Market Research into Coastal Waters Forecasts	41,379.00
Lawson and Treloar	Regional Climate study including wave heights, current water temperature and tides	15,291.90
Michael Cawood & Associates Pty Ltd	Review of Flood Warning System Development Priorities	94,517.50
Systems Engineering Australia Pty Ltd (Dr Bruce Harper)	Storm Tide Prediction System for the Northern Territory	150,000.00*
Montlaur Project Services Pty Ltd	Various consultancies associated with relocation to 700 Collins St	23,017.50
* Co-funded with Emergency Management Australia (EMA) and Northern Territory Emergency Service (NTES).		

## COMPETITIVE TENDERING AND CONTRACTING

This is the process of contracting out the delivery of government activities previously performed by a Commonwealth agency to another organisation. No contracts in excess of \$100,000 were issued in 2003-04.