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REVIEW BY THE DIRECTOR OF METEOROLOGY

PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

The year 2003-04 was one of significant change with the Bureau having its first new director in twenty-five years as well as preparing for a move of headquarters from its present tenancy in the Melbourne CBD to accommodation at 700 Collins St in the Melbourne Docklands precinct.

The Bureau successfully met the challenges of providing general weather and climate forecasts for the community and specifically for a number of significant events, including, the on-going drought in southeast Australia, significant thunderstorm events in Melbourne and Sydney and a number of tropical cyclones.

Some other notable achievements included:

- the Bureau taking responsibility for the National Tidal Centre;
- the installation of several new radar facilities as part of the Radar Network and Doppler Services Upgrade Project;
- completion of the new High Performance Computing and Communications Centre;
- involvement in a major new international cooperative venture on Earth Observations;
- involvement in one new and several prospective Cooperative Research Centres;
- undertaking an AusAID funded capacity building exercise in Pacific Island Countries to enable them to create their own seasonal forecasting capabilities;
- involvement in a dispersion modelling exercise to investigate the ramifications of a potential terrorist attack;
- collaboration on the new Australian Water Data Infrastructure Project to enable integrated access to a range of water related data and information; and
- the continued development of the new Oceanographic Services program.

The Bureau's performance exceeded many of the performance targets identified in the 2003-04 Portfolio Budget Statements. These targets will need to be revised in future to stretch the Bureau's performance and promote continuous improvement.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Many challenges continued to face the Bureau in 2003-04. Examples included:

- the relocation of the Bureau's Head Office and Victorian Regional Office to 700 Collins St, Docklands;
- the significant requirement for climate-related information by agriculturalists and water resource managers as a consequence of the drought in southeast Australia;
- changes in observation programs such as the relocation of the Launceston Meteorological Office;
- establishing continuing efficiencies to provide more complete and user-targeted products and services; and
- improving the Bureau's overall communications capability.

FINANCIAL RESULTS

Following its prescription on 12 September 2002 under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*, the Bureau of Meteorology appeared as a separate entity in the 2003-04 Budget papers.

Through the 2003-04 Budget, the Government renewed its commitment to the 1999-2000 Budget initiative on World Class Weather Forecasting, which was aimed at consolidating implementation of the key recommendations of the 1996 Slatyer Review of the Operation of the Bureau of Meteorology, and committed a further \$62.2m over five years to the upgrade of Australia's weather radar network.

Further information on the financial performance of the Bureau of Meteorology is available in the financial statements, commencing on page 127.

OUTLOOK FOR 2004-05

The Bureau of Meteorology will continue to provide high quality weather and related forecasts to the Australian community as its highest priority. Associated with this, there will be a number of on-going and new issues including:

- commissioning new equipment, e.g. rooftop satellite antennae, automatic weather stations, wind profilers, radars;
- dealing with an ageing yet operationally vital infrastructure that is beyond its economic lifetime, and which must be replaced;
- settling into the new headquarters at 700 Collins St;
- streamlining of the Bureau observation program;
- finding further efficiencies in Bureau programs to enable improved products and services to be delivered with fewer staff; and
- involvement in a collaborative Earth System Simulation project with the CSIRO, Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO) and other Australian scientists.