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 1400 staff are located right across Australia, its offshore islands and Antarctica. The Bureau employs a wide range of professional, technical and administrative staff including many specialists 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 every day of the year.

Like its staff, the Bureau’s asset base is widely dispersed. It includes observing instruments, computing and communications systems, software, land and buildings, some of which are in remote locations such as the field offices at Casey, Davis and Mawson in the Antarctic, or sited on coral reefs in the Pacific Ocean. In an environment characterised by technological change and rapid obsolescence, the Bureau manages assets with a replacement value of approximately $350m.

This complex array of human, capital and other financial resources demands 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 2004-05 is provided below.

WORKFORCE PLANNING AND STAFF RETENTION AND TURNOVER

The Bureau, for the most part, continued to enjoy the organisational benefits of an effective, well-trained and highly committed workforce despite the continuing pressures of reduced staffing levels, increasing workloads and increasing external demands for services. Whilst staff turnover rates have generally continued to be 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 continued 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 presents a significant workforce planning challenge for the organisation.

As in past years, the Bureau placed a strong emphasis on workforce planning to maintain its key service operations and corporate objectives within the constraints of a continually tightening staffing situation. The Bureau’s staff age profile, characterised by a strong early 50s peak resulting primarily from the high level of staff retention and the limited recruitment possible over the past two decades, continues to be a factor in workforce planning. Therefore, the Bureau’s 2004-05 recruitment program was aimed at employing sufficient qualified staff to replace the loss of expertise that will occur over the next few years and at the progressive re-establishment of a balanced age profile across the organisation.
The recruitment of specialist staff groups (Meteorologists, Observers and Technicians) was maximised consistent with resource allocations, with a view also to achieving a balanced recruitment outcome for the other categories of staff employed in the Bureau. This has proved to be particularly difficult as recruitment programs have been limited by overall constraints on staffing resources and have fallen short of fully offsetting staff attrition.

In recognition of the ongoing need for the holistic management of staff performance and to train staff for future roles, the Bureau continued to give emphasis to the strategic development of its workforce. In particular, the Bureau worked towards formulating a succession planning process to develop staff at all levels for those roles crucial to achieving the organisation's outcomes. Similarly, work continued on preparing a new learning and development strategy using the management principles contained in the APS framework.

The focus of both of these strategies was to meet future requirements by developing sufficient numbers of suitably qualified staff having the essential skills, knowledge and attributes to fill critical roles, at both senior management and other levels.

A number of other initiatives are being utilised to varying degrees. They include leadership and management training, greater emphasis on 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 a workforce with appropriate professional, specialised technical and management 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 Forces 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 2004 and 2005, 30 and 22 inductees respectively undertook initial training (training courses are conducted in each calendar year). Of these, 37 were studying the 40-week Graduate Diploma in Meteorology course (including seven from the RAN and ten from overseas), nine were undertaking the 30-week Technical Officer (Observer) course and six the Technical Officer (Engineering) course.

Throughout the year, approximately 500 staff received specialised technical or professional in-service training. This included training in first-in maintenance, electrolysers, autosondes and Digicora III for Technical Officers (Observer); and radar, National Restricted Electrical License (NREL), Digicora III and frontline management for Technical Officers (Engineering). Meteorologists throughout the regions received professional in-service training in the use of Doppler radar data, the National Thunderstorm Forecast Guidance system and competencies 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.

In-house and online training continued to have high take-up rates with more than 850 staff participating in short management development training courses, ranging in length from one day to one week. These courses covered such areas as project management, change management, time management, client service, policy development, presentation and communication skills, and performance management. In addition, a series of seminars was developed to assist the implementation of the Bureau’s Staff Performance Management Scheme. More than 1200 staff accessed online training in areas such as APS Values and Code of Conduct, Equal Employment Opportunity, Occupational Health and Safety and the Trade Practices Act.

A Bureau-specific Management Education Program (MEP) was conducted by the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers Australia (APESMA) in conjunction with Latrobe University. The MEP provides formal qualifications at the Certificate and Graduate Certificate levels with 19 staff enrolled during 2004-05. Under the Bureau’s Studybank scheme, now in its 14th year, 79 staff enrolled or continued as part-time students. Two staff were awarded scholarships to further their tertiary studies on a full-time basis and another two staff were awarded part-time scholarships.

Other training activities included workshops linked to the Bureau’s Radar Network and Doppler Services Upgrade Project (RND SUP) held in three states to support the introduction of capabilities and new services. Also, Bureau staff provided meteorological courses at RAAF training bases in Pearce (Western Australia) and East Sale (Victoria). Some 230 RAAF pilots, air traffic controllers, navigators and flying instructors undertook meteorological training courses during 2004-05.

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, RMIT University and the University of Melbourne.
The BMTC continued to provide reciprocal lecturing arrangements on specialised graduate-level meteorology courses with Monash University. Owing to the relocation of the Bureau’s Head Office during the year, it was not possible to run the one-week Synoptic Laboratory for Monash and Melbourne University students in July. A BMTC staff member provided a course on convection for Monash University postgraduate students.

INTERNATIONAL TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The Bureau maintained its strong involvement in the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Education and Training Program and attended key coordination meetings and training symposia. The BMTC conducted a three-week WMO workshop on Tropical Cyclones and Public Weather Services for 17 NMHS staff from the Asia-Pacific Region, and also contributed to the development of several WMO education and training initiatives covering satellite meteorology and aviation meteorology. In support of the Bureau’s International Activities Program, BMTC staff provided workshops and lectures at WMO seminars and conferences in the United States and Malaysia. The Computer Aided Learning in Meteorology (CALMET) conference in the United States covered the latest techniques employed in the development of CAL packages with an emphasis on developing material that could be used within NMHSs, whilst the WMO Education and Training Seminar focused on improving the training skills and knowledge of NMHS trainers in the Asia-Pacific Region.

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

The National Meteorological Library maintains a pre-eminent collection of key meteorological books, reports and journals published in the English language and acts as the national archive for all meteorological books and reports published in Australia. In accordance with its Collection Development Policy, the Library continued to coordinate the collection of reports and journals from other National Meteorological Services.

The National Meteorological Library’s main collection is at the Head Office Library in Melbourne with smaller collections held in the Bureau’s Regional Offices, the Canberra and Townsville Meteorological Offices, and the Cape Grim Baseline Air Pollution Station, Tasmania. Over the year, 1100 books and reports were added to the Library collection and 379 current journal titles were received, of which 284 were made available in electronic format. The increased range of electronic resources is particularly valuable to Bureau staff outside the Melbourne Head Office. The Library also provides services to other government agencies, universities, organisations with a particular interest in the science of meteorology, and the general public, and has more than 600 registered borrowers Australia wide.

Library staff assisted with the information management aspects of the Bureau’s internal and external web sites and continued the development of a database of now more than 1000 meteorological pictures, held in the library catalogue, Meteoric. The Library continued to acquire and archive historical material into its Preservation Collection. Electronic table-of-contents and full-text journal article alerting services continued to be distributed nationally to Bureau staff.

The National Meteorological Library continued to contribute its holdings to the national bibliographic database via the National Library of Australia’s Kinetica service, with more than 25,000 holdings now submitted. The library services inter-library loan requests from libraries in Australia and overseas, and is a member of the National Library’s Kinetica Document Delivery Service, which facilitates electronic transfer of requests between libraries. The library catalogue, Meteoric, is also made freely available to the general public via the Bureau’s Internet site.

The National Meteorological Library located at the Bureau’s Head Office in Melbourne.
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The proposed changeover to new Australian Equivalents of International Financial Reporting Standards (AEIFRS) commenced in 2004-05. This required the preparation of fresh opening balances for 2004-05 as a base for generating the financial statements for 2004-05 according to the new standards. However the financial statements in this annual report refer to current standards and the new standards will apply from the 2005-06 financial year. The AEIFRS financial reports for 2004-05 will provide the comparative values for the 2005-06 statements.

The Bureau commenced the implementation of a new Human Resources Management (HRM) and payroll system during the year. Changes to allow the financial system to capture and report on employee expenses and provisions are being implemented concurrently.

An Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) performance audit of the management of net appropriation agreements identified funding authorisation issues relating to the application of Sections 31 and 32 of the Financial Management and Accountability (FMA) Act at the Prescription of the Bureau on 12 September 2002. These issues are discussed more fully in appropriation note 18.1 to the financial statements for 2004-05 in this annual report.

Streamlining of end-of-financial-year processes and audit continued in 2004-05 with the aim of a mid-July reporting schedule. Where possible, financial data were processed and reconciled by the end of May to minimise the workload in finalising the year’s accounts at the end of June. The external auditor also reorganised their schedule to meet the progressively tighter reporting deadlines.

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

During the year, the Management Information System (MIS) was enhanced to provide a wide range of reports delivered via the Bureau’s intranet. The available suite includes cash and accrual views as well as asset accounting, including asset replacement program reports.

Achievements included:

• automatic daily generation of several hundred reports;
• provision of interactive reports for in-depth analysis of expenditure and development of customised reports;
• production and publication of an interactive, online help facility for the system;
• a successful internal education and awareness exercise, including visits to all Regions. A number of sharply focused reports have been developed for end users as a result; and
• development and publication of a suite of reports to support the transition to program-based Budgeting.

The MIS is also being prepared to report on human resource information derived from the new Human Resource Management and payroll system.
PURCHASING

The purchasing of goods and services by the Bureau is conducted in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and the Chief Executive’s Instructions. Delegations and procedures are in place to ensure effective control and management of the procurement process.

The Bureau takes a coordinated approach to contract development and management. The process brings together the necessary procurement, financial and legal expertise to assist all areas of the Bureau on contracting and purchasing matters.

In the 2004-05 financial year, purchase orders to the value of $49.1 million were raised. The value of goods and services purchased from small/medium business is more than 10 per cent of the total procurement raised for the 2004-05 financial year.

ASSET MANAGEMENT

From the 2005-06 reporting period, the management of assets will need to be in accordance with the Australian Equivalents of International Reporting Standards (AEIFRS). A significant requirement of AEIFRS is that make-good and site restoration costs against the value of an asset are recognised. An exercise to value the make-good component of Bureau premises and instrumental sites was undertaken during the year in preparation for the change over to the AEIFRS.

Other significant asset management initiatives undertaken during the year included:

• the revaluing of key asset classes on a Fair Value basis;
• a stock take of Head Office and South Australia Regional Office assets;
• a progressive update of the location of assets in the Asset Register; and
• the commissioning of $50m in assets under construction.

Property resource and leasehold management in 2004-05 involved civil works and fit-out 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.

A major project during the year was the continuing fit-out of the Bureau’s new accommodation at 700 Collins St, after the formal relocation in August. The construction of the wintergarden areas and management of the ongoing process of defect rectification constituted the majority of the work.

Other property and leasehold activities progressed during the year included:

• the construction of a new meteorological field office at Cobar (New South Wales);
• the installation of new meteorological radar facilities at Gladstone (Queensland), Port Hedland (Western Australia) and Tennant Creek (Northern Territory);
• site preparation for the introduction of a wind profiler radar at Canberra Airport; and
• the construction of a new Doppler meteorological radar facility at Buckland Park (South Australia).
CONSULTANTS

The selection and engagement of consultants is treated in the same way as the procurement of other goods and services and is conducted in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and the Chief Executive’s Instructions. Where competition exists and it is efficient to do so, selection on an open tender approach to the market is adopted, and is approved on a case-by-case basis.

Consultants are normally engaged where the necessary skills or expertise are not available within the Bureau and are not required permanently, but may also be engaged to provide independent advice to the Bureau or to supplement existing resources to meet critical deadlines. For these reasons, the availability of suitable consultants for a particular task can be very limited.

During 2004-05, 87 new consultancy contracts were entered into and involved total actual expenditure of $498,052. In addition, five ongoing consultancy contracts were active during the 2004-05 financial year involving total actual expenditure of $251,933. Details of consultancies in excess of $10,000 are provided in Appendix 11.

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 2004-05.

EXEMPT CONTRACTS

There were no contracts or standing offers from the Bureau that were exempted by the Chief Executive from being published in the Purchasing and Disposal Gazette on the basis that it would disclose exempt matters under the Freedom of Information Act 1982.