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 professional, technical and administrative staff are employed right across Australia, its offshore islands and Antarctica, including many specialists who have skills and training specific to the fulfilment of the Bureau’s functions. 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 Antarctica, or sited on coral reefs in the Pacific Ocean. The Bureau manages assets with a total replacement value of approximately $350m.

In an environment characterised by ongoing technological change, this array of human, capital and financial resources demands robust 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 2005-06 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 2005-06 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.

Several 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 Force 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 2005 and 2006, 22 and 33 inductees respectively undertook initial training (training courses are planned on a calendar year basis to align with the availability of graduates from the tertiary education sector). Of these, 27 were studying the 40-week Graduate Diploma in Meteorology course (including seven from the RAN and four from overseas), 20 were undertaking the 30-week Technical Officer (Observer) course and eight the Technical Officer (Engineering) course.

Throughout the year, approximately 550 staff received specialised technical or professional in-service training. This included training in first-in maintenance, electrolysers, autosondes and Digicora III training for Technical Officers (Observer); Electrical Equipment in Hazardous Areas, National Restricted Electrical Licence (NREL) and Hogen (Hydrogen Generator) for Technical Officers (Engineering); and frontline management for Technical Officers. 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 840 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 600 staff accessed online training in areas such as APS Values and Code of Conduct, Equal Employment Opportunity, Occupational Health and Safety and Trade Practices.

A Bureau-specific Management Education Program (MEP) was conducted by the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers Australia (APESMA) in conjunction with La Trobe University. The MEP provides formal qualifications at the Certificate and Graduate Certificate levels with 19 staff enrolled during 2005-06. Under the Bureau’s Studybank scheme, now in its 15th year, 55 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 three staff were awarded part time scholarships.

Other training activities included workshops linked to the Bureau’s Radar Network and Doppler Services Upgrade Project (RNDSUP) in three states to support the introduction of new services and capabilities. Also, Bureau staff provided meteorological courses at RAAF training bases in Pearce (Western Australia) and East Sale (Victoria). Some 280 RAAF pilots, air traffic controllers, navigators and flying instructors undertook meteorological training courses during 2005-06.

In support of the Bureau’s 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. BMTC conducted a one-week Weather Forecasting Workshop for Monash and Melbourne University students in July and BMTC staff members provided lectures to postgraduate students on convection (Monash) and remote sensing (La Trobe).

INTERNATIONAL TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The Bureau maintained a strong involvement in the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Education and Training Program and attended key coordination meetings for training in satellite meteorology and aviation training. The BMTC conducted a four-week workshop for forecasters from the China Meteorological Administration (CMA) on advanced nowcasting techniques and interpretation of radar data, in preparation for the forecasting and briefing services required for the Beijing Olympics in 2008. BMTC staff also contributed to the development of several WMO education and training initiatives covering satellite meteorology and e-learning.

In support of the Bureau’s international activities, BMTC staff provided workshops and lectures at a WMO Education and Training Seminar in Turkey that focused on improving the training skills and knowledge of NMHS trainers in that region.

A joint project with the US Cooperative Program for Meteorological Education and Training (COMET) continued the development of web-based training modules that include case studies of severe weather events in Australia.

Forecasters from the China Meteorological Administration are welcomed to a four-week workshop in the Bureau of Meteorology Training Centre in preparation for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.
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 endeavours to archive all meteorological books and reports published in Australia. In accordance with its Collection Development Policy, the Library also collects 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 Cape Grim Baseline Air Pollution Station, Tasmania. The Library supports the programs of the Bureau of Meteorology but also provides services to other government agencies, universities, organisations with a particular interest in the science of meteorology, and the general public, and has almost 700 registered borrowers Australia wide.

Over the year, 1400 books and reports were added to the Library collection and 243 current journal titles were received, of which 178 are now available in electronic format. Electronic table-of-content and full text journal article alerting services are also distributed nationally to Bureau staff. The increased range of electronic resources is particularly valuable to Bureau staff outside the Melbourne Head Office.

Working with the Bureau of Meteorology Public Affairs Unit, the Library continues to support access to more than 1700 meteorological images listed in the library catalogue, Meteonic. An ongoing policy of acquiring and maintaining historical meteorological material has also meant a substantial increase in items in the Preservation Collection.

The National Meteorological Library continued its policy of acquiring and maintaining historical meteorological material for the use of generations to come (photo courtesy of Bruce Miller).
The National Meteorological Library continues to contribute its holdings to the national bibliographic database via the National Library of Australia’s Libraries Australia service, with more than 26,354 holdings now submitted. The library services inter-library loan requests from libraries in Australian and overseas, and is a member of Libraries Australia 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.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The 2005-06 financial year saw the introduction of the Australian Equivalents of International Financial Reporting Standards (AEIFRS) for the preparation of the 2005-06 financial statements. In adopting the new standards the Bureau was required for the first time to make assessments of make good provisions for Bureau assets sites when these are no longer required, asset impairment, and discounting of recreation leave provisions.

The appropriate accounting treatment for some of the AEIFRS requirements was complex and took some time to resolve with auditors. The accounting treatment for a payable for $25.464m identified in the Bureau’s 2004-05 statements was also resolved. This payable resulted from the Bureau spending funds in the absence of an effective Section 32 direction to transfer the funds from the Department of the Environment and Heritage to the Bureau of Meteorology on the Bureau’s Prescription in 2002. The issue was finally closed with a direction of the Finance Minister that the amount of $25.464m did not need to be repaid since it had been spent on the purposes for which the money had originally been appropriated.

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

During the year, the Management Information System (MIS) was further enhanced, with a wide range of reports now being delivered via the Bureau’s intranet.

Particular achievements included:

- redevelopment of standard daily financial reports to provide both program and organisational unit perspectives;
- further development of customised reports for special interest users, such as the Regional Observations Managers and the Regional Computing Managers;
- production of a set of training materials suitable for delivery to targeted users and for general inclusion in a corporate training package for new staff;
- promotion of MIS capabilities to Bureau managers through presentations at corporate planning and information workshops;
- significant progress with the development of key human resource reports - staff-position listings and average staffing level reports in particular - following implementation of a new Human Resource Management System; and
- configuration and successful testing of disaster recovery procedures.
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 2005-06 financial year, purchase orders to the value of $30.6m were raised. The value of goods and services purchased from small/medium business is more than 10 per cent of the total procurement for the 2005-06 financial year.

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) audited the Bureau for compliance in the 2005-06 financial year. A final audit report will be issued in 2006-07.

ASSET MANAGEMENT

In the 2005-06 reporting period, the management of assets was 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. A continual assessment for impairment of assets is also required under 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 the Bureau’s Training Centre and Store Warehouse assets; and
• the commissioning of $30.1m in assets under construction.

Property resource and leasehold management in 2005-06 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 outcome during the year was the finalisation of the Bureau’s new accommodation at 700 Collins St. 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 new meteorological field offices at Mackay (Queensland) and Willis Island (Coral Sea);
• the installation of new meteorological radar facilities at Dulbydilla (Queensland);
• construction of a wind profiler radar at Canberra Airport; and
• the construction of a new Doppler meteorological radar facility at Mt Stapylton (Queensland).
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 2005-06, 61 new consultancy contracts were entered into involving total actual expenditure of $315,799. In addition, six ongoing consultancy contracts were active during the 2005-06 financial year, involving total actual expenditure of $374,708. 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 2005-06.

EXEMPT CONTRACTS

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