

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Major changes to the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislation were made during the year, with the most significant being the removal of workers' compensation journey claims from the *Safety, Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 1988*, the renaming of the OHS legislation and the incorporation of new sections on Electricity, Driver Fatigue, Construction Work and Working at Heights in the associated Regulations.

OHS Committees have long been established in Head Office and the Regions, and continue to meet regularly and make valuable contributions towards the health and safety of all Bureau employees. Elections for Head Office Health and Safety Representatives were undertaken in early 2007 as required under the OHS Act. Training for these Representatives and First Aid Officers and Fire Wardens was provided as required.

Two new OHS procedures documents - OHS Issue Resolution Procedure and Lightning Safety Guidelines - were developed and issued during the year. Several other policy/procedures documents including Personnel Protective Equipment, Accident Reporting and Investigation, Handling of Dangerous Goods, Risk Management and Electrical Testing and Tagging were either formulated or reviewed and these were made available to managers and staff for consideration.

A major national review of the adequacy of the current framework for managing OHS as it impacts on the Bureau's Observations and Engineering Programs was completed during the year. A number of recommendations covering a wide range of OHS related issues were being considered by management as the financial year came to a close.

Online training courses in OHS for employees and managers continued to be rolled out during the year with 77 per cent of employees having now completed the legal compliance course and 62 per cent the management training course.

Bureau-funded influenza vaccinations continued to be available to staff during the second half of the year as part of the Bureau's Health Promotion Policy, with a slight increase in the uptake compared with previous years.

The Bureau's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) continued to be used regularly by staff, and some family members, to address a variety of work-based and outside-work problems. EAP tip sheets are available to employees to access via the Bureau's intranet. The tip sheets cover a range of topics including managing stress, assertiveness skills, self esteem strategies and healthy relationships. Managers/Team Leaders continued to refer employees to the EAP, indicating a good appreciation of the benefits of the EAP amongst the management group.

All Bureau Head Office and Regional Office EAP contracts went out to tender during the year, with new EAP Providers engaged for the Northern Territory and Western Australia. New EAP Provider contracts for the other States will follow.

The Bureau's Workers' Compensation premium rate for 2006-07 was set at 0.97 per cent, reduced from 1.24 per cent in 2005-06, compared with 1.77 per cent (unchanged from 2005-06) for the Commonwealth overall. There were 25 new compensation claims received during the reporting period compared with 31 in the previous year. This continues the trend of a slight reduction in premiums over recent years, due, in part, to recent legislative amendments, removing workers' compensation cover for most journey claims. Lost time averaged 2.30 weeks this year compared with the previous average of 2.39 weeks. Compensation claims were predominantly for body stressing injuries followed by a number of falls, slips and trips injuries and a small number of protracted mental stress cases. The average cost of claims has increased from \$16,325 to \$34,942. The total cost of claims has increased from \$506,075 to \$873,571 this year, with mental stress claims continuing to be the major contributing factor.