

COMMONWEALTH DISABILITY STRATEGY

This report has been prepared to align with the reporting guidelines prescribed in the Commonwealth Disability Strategy. It addresses performance against the indicators for the five key roles performed by Commonwealth organisations, i.e. policy advisor, regulator, purchaser, provider and employer. In practice, the Bureau fulfils four of these five core roles – policy advisor, purchaser, provider and employer.

ROLE: POLICY ADVISOR

The Bureau advises the Australian Government on policies and programs on matters involving meteorology.

1. New or revised policy/program proposals assess the impact on the lives of people with disabilities prior to decision.

Following the release of the Bureau's new look Internet homepage, further studies and reviews were arranged throughout the reporting period of the accessibility and usability of the website, and changes were made in the light of the information gained. Assistance was sought from agencies such as Vision Australia.

2. People with disabilities are included in consultation about new or revised policy/program proposals.

Where new or revised policy/programs affected people with disabilities, they were consulted about the proposals prior to implementation.

In collaboration with Emergency Management Australia, and with the continued involvement of peak bodies for people with disabilities, further progress was made in the development of designs for 'Standard Emergency Warning Signal' (SEWS) symbols for people who need weather warnings in pictorial format.

3. Public announcements of new, revised or proposed policy/program initiatives are available in accessible formats for people with disabilities.

The Bureau makes public announcements through media statements for broadcast via radio and television and insertion in newspapers, magazines and journals. All media statements were archived on the Bureau's external website, being easily accessed from the homepage under the heading of 'News' by date posted and subject matter. The web address is <http://www.bom.gov.au/announcements/#Media>.

All media statements issued by the Bureau included the name, telephone number and email address of a Bureau person to contact for further information, and information can also be obtained through the Corporate Communications Unit. Media statements can be easily made available to people in different formats such as facsimile message.

ROLE: REGULATOR

The Bureau administers the Meteorology Act, and is responsible for Australia's participation in a number of international conventions, treaties and agreements, but has no formal regulatory responsibilities in respect of disability matters.

ROLE: PURCHASER

The Bureau purchased equipment and services to support the achievement of its corporate objectives.

1. Publicly available information on agreed purchasing specifications is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities.

Bureau public tender notifications were advised through the APS Gazette online service and in appropriate local press for works and services required in remote localities. These notices included a contact name, phone number and email address for further information. These notices were available in different formats such as electronic or hard copy, with most requests being responded to on the day of receipt.

2. Processes for purchasing goods or services with a direct impact on the lives of people with disabilities are developed in consultation with people with disabilities.

People with disabilities were consulted, as appropriate, in the development of specifications and evaluation of tenders.

3. Purchasing specifications and contract requirements for the purchase of goods and services are consistent with the requirements of the 'Disability Discrimination Act 1992'.

Specifications made particular reference where required. The Bureau's standard contract conditions for goods and services included the provision that the tenderers must comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

4. Publicly available performance reporting against the purchase contract specifications requested in accessible formats for people with disabilities is provided.

Any such requests were addressed. Reporting formats accommodated any special needs.

5. Complaints/grievance mechanisms, including access to external mechanisms, in place to address concerns raised about the providers' performance.

All major Bureau contracts included dispute resolution clauses and also arbitration and termination provisions. If a contractor were to breach the Disability Discrimination Act, this would be seen as a breach of the contract and subject to remedial action.

ROLE: PROVIDER

The Bureau made available to the Australian public, forecasts, information, advice, publications and other material related to weather and climate. Information about Bureau services was available in accessible formats on the Bureau's website (<http://www.bom.gov.au>), via the media and in hard copy from Bureau offices. The Bureau's *Service Charter for the Community* provided contact information.

1. Providers have established mechanisms for quality improvement and assurance.

The Bureau's *Service Charter for the Community* specified the quality and service improvements that clients may expect. Performance was monitored against the standards set out in the Charter, with results published in the Bureau's Annual Report and included on the Bureau's website.

The Bureau actively supported private meteorological service providers in enabling them to distribute to the public a range of enhanced products and specialised services. It also collaborated with emergency services organisations in improving the penetration of forecasts and warnings within remote communities.

2. *Providers have an established service charter that specifies the roles of the provider and consumer service standards which address accessibility for people with disabilities.*

This information was included in the Bureau's *Service Charter for the Community*. The Charter was made available in printed form, and electronically at the following address: http://www.bom.gov.au/inside/services_policy/serchart.shtml.

3. *Complaints/grievance mechanisms, including access to external mechanisms, in place to address issues and concerns raised about performance.*

The Charter clearly identified telephone numbers, facsimile numbers and email addresses to use in relation to complaints or technical problems or to provide feedback on services. Clients also had the option of contacting the Parliamentarian responsible for the Bureau, the APS Commission, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, the Commonwealth Ombudsman, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal or the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission to raise issues and/or concerns about the Bureau's performance.

Following severe weather events, post impact assessments were commissioned in affected areas to evaluate community input and gauge the outcome of public weather warnings. Community input was valuable for development of future warning strategies. Pre tropical cyclone season meetings were held in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland. Venues chosen for the meetings were readily accessible in terms of location and physical access.

ROLE: EMPLOYER

The Bureau's employment policies, procedures and practices complied with the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Recruitment information was available in electronic formats and contact details for special assistance were provided (<http://www.bom.gov.au/careers/>). The principle of reasonable adjustment was applied within the Bureau. Training and development opportunities were accessible to employees with disabilities and, where appropriate, included information on disability issues. Complaints and grievance mechanisms were in place and available to employees.

1. *Employment policies, procedures and practices comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.*

The Bureau's employment-related documents such as the Certified Agreement, Workplace Diversity Program, Disability Action Plan and its recruitment policies and procedures, occupational health and safety policies and procedures and staff rehabilitation and redeployment policies and procedures have all been developed in accordance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

2. Recruitment information for potential job applicants is available in accessible formats on request.

Job applicants were able to access recruitment information via the Internet, in hard copy or email format. Other formats were made available on request.

3. Agency recruiters and managers apply the principle of 'reasonable adjustment'

Applicants for positions were requested to identify any particular needs that they may have in relation to being interviewed to ensure that their reasonable needs were met.

Employees in the Bureau have embraced the concept of 'reasonable adjustment' and applied the principles in practice. With the involvement of the affected employee, modifications were made to workplaces and workstations, duties revised and furniture and equipment chosen or designed to accommodate employees with disabilities.

4. Training and development programs consider the needs of staff with disabilities

Where relevant, and appropriate, Bureau training programs included information that encourages managers, supervisors and employees to create an inclusive environment. For example: an online course (accessible by all employees) entitled 'Workplace Discrimination and Harassment – Legal Compliance' included a case study on disability issues and the concept of 'reasonable adjustment', and, as part of induction programs, the APS Values and Code of Conduct were clearly explained to new employees.

When required, Auslan interpreters were engaged for meetings and the duration of training courses and training venues were selected for their accessibility in terms of mobility.

5. Training and development programs include information on disability issues as they related to the content of the program.

See '4' above.

6. Complaints/grievance mechanisms, including access to external mechanisms, are in place to address issues and concerns raised by staff.

The range of mechanisms available to staff for addressing disability-related complaints/grievances included: informally with managers, supervisors or specialists within the organisation such as Diversity/Harassment Contact Officers and Employee Assistance Program consultants; formal Review of Action investigated either internally or externally; the Australian Public Service Commission, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission and approaches to the Assistant Minister for the Environment and Water Resources who has responsibility for the Bureau in this regard.