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 nationwide 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 $416m.

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 2006-07 is provided below.

WORKFORCE PLANNING AND STAFF RETENTION AND TURNOVER

During 2006-07 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 growing external demands for services. While 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 2006-07 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. The Bureau will need to take steps to address this situation in a more strategic manner in the immediate years ahead.

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 extent possible, 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 senior management and other levels.

Several other initiatives are being utilised to varying degrees to the extent that a tightening staffing situation across the organisation allows. 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 2006 and 2007, 33 and 59 inductees respectively undertook initial training (training courses are planned on a calendar year basis in order to align with the availability of graduates from the tertiary education sector). Of these, 47 were studying the 40-week Graduate Diploma in Meteorology course (including seven from the RAN and eight from overseas), 29 were undertaking the 30-week Technical Officer (Observer) course and 18 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, electrolyzers, autosondes and Digicora III for Technical Officers (Observer); Electrical Equipment in Hazardous Areas, National Restricted Electrical Licence 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 1050 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. Just under 500 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 28 staff enrolled during 2006-07. Under the Bureau’s Studybank scheme, now in its 16th year, 32 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 in four states to support the introduction of new services and capabilities. Bureau staff also provided meteorological courses at RAAF training bases in Pearce (Western Australia) and East Sale (Victoria). Some 362 RAAF pilots, air traffic controllers, navigators and flying instructors undertook meteorological training courses during 2006-07.

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. BMTC conducted a one-week Weather Forecasting Workshop for Monash and Melbourne University students during 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. The Principal of the Bureau’s Training Centre was selected to serve on the WMO Executive Council Panel on Education and Training which oversees the WMO Education and Training Programme. The BMTC conducted a two-week workshop (the Asia Pacific Satellite Applications Training Seminar) for 28 international and Bureau staff on utilising satellite data and products, and was one of the main organisers for a major WMO online satellite training activity known as the High Profile Training Event. This event ran during the same period as the two-week workshop and included broadcasts of lectures to more than 120 WMO Member Countries.

In support of the Bureau’s international activities, BMTC staff provided workshops and lectures at a WMO Education and Training Seminar in Libya that focused on improving the training skills and knowledge of NMHS trainers in that region and participated in lectures and workshops on the use of radar data in enhancing meteorological services.

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

The two week 2006 Asia Pacific Satellite Applications Training Seminar (APSATS) was jointly hosted by the Bureau, the World Meteorological Organization and the Japan Meteorological Agency. In addition to 13 Bureau participants there were 11 participants from Pacific Island Countries and Asia and four expert lecturers. This training event was run in conjunction with a global online training event which linked more than 120 WMO Member countries and territories together for at least six hours of online training.
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 more than 800 registered borrowers Australia wide.

Over the year, 1,000 books and reports were added to the Library collection and 233 current journal titles were received, of which 185 are now available in electronic format. Electronic table-of-contents and full text journal article alerting services are also provided 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 Corporate Communications Unit, the Library continues to support access to more than 2000 meteorological images listed in the library catalogue, Meteoric. 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 continues to contribute its holdings to the national bibliographic database via the National Library of Australia’s Libraries Australia service. It also services inter-library loan requests from libraries in Australia and overseas, and is a member of Libraries Australia’s 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 and has more than 32,000 records. The Library collection totals an estimated 40,000 books and reports plus 50,000 bound journal volumes.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ISSUES

During 2006-07 the Bureau operated for the second year under the Australian Equivalents of International Financial Reporting Standards (AEFRS) for the preparation of financial statements.

During the year the contingent asset disclosed in prior year financial statements relating to the Special Account balance held at the Department of the Environment and Water Resources was resolved. After extensive review by the Department of the Special Account transactions, it was established that the amount of $1,641,548 related to the Bureau of Meteorology. This amount was transferred to the Bureau in June.
The Land and Buildings class of assets was revalued during the year, resulting in a valuation increment for land of $4,614,000 and a valuation decrement for buildings of $14,434,000. The impact has been reflected in the assets values and the asset revaluation reserve.

Preparations for the revaluation process and the asset impairment review (required under AEIFRS), revealed that a number of assets previously disposed of remained in the financial accounts and records. These disposals were processed and reflected in the 2005-06 comparative data in the 2006-07 statements.

To determine the liability for employee entitlements disclosed in the balance sheet, an independent actuarial assessment was made. The assessment for 2006-07 saw a reduction in the overall liability to $55,744,000.

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

During the year, the Management Information System (MIS) continued to provide timely information and analytical tools to support operational and strategic decision making. A wide range of reports continued to be delivered via the Bureau’s intranet, and there was a significant increase in the use of the MIS Excel-based reporting and analytical tool, which provides users with greater flexibility and the ability to analyse the data.

Achievements included:

- the completion and release of human resource management reports based on data from the Human Resource Management System;
- development of prototype reports required to support internal accrual budgeting;
- revision of training material and delivery of structured training courses; and
- increased availability of the Excel based reporting and analytical tool to users.

PURCHASING

The purchasing of goods and services by the Bureau is conducted in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and the Chief Executive Instructions. Delegations and procedures are in place to provide 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 in contracting and purchasing matters.

During 2006-07, purchase orders to the value of $49.1 million were raised. The value of goods and services purchased from small/medium business was more than 10 per cent of the total procurement raised.
ASSET MANAGEMENT

During 2006-07, the management of assets was in accordance with the AEIFRS. A significant requirement of AEIFRS is that make-good and site restoration costs are recognised against the value of an asset. An exercise to value the make-good component of new Bureau premises and instrument sites was undertaken during the year. 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 store warehouse assets;
- an Impairment Review for all asset classes; and
- the commissioning of $43.3m in assets under construction.

Property resource and leasehold management in 2006-07 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.

Other property and leasehold activities progressed during the year included:

- the construction of a new meteorological field office at Charleville in Queensland;
- the installation of a new Doppler meteorological radar facility at Laverton in Victoria;
- the installation of a new radar at Mt Kanigan near Gympie in Queensland;
- the construction of two staff residences at Cocos Island in Western Australia; and
- the installation of a new CP2 radar facility for research purposes at Redbank Plains, near Ipswich, in 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 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, or to compensate for short-term skills shortages, but may also be engaged to provide independent advice and expertise to the Bureau.

During 2006-07, 22 new consultancy contracts were entered into, involving total actual expenditure of $763,635. Details of consultancies in excess of $10,000 are provided in Appendix 11.
COMPETITIVE TENDERING AND CONTRACTING

This refers to 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 2006-07.

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 this would disclose exempt matters under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

EXPENDITURE ON LEGAL SERVICES

The following statement is provided in accordance with paragraph 11.1 of the *Legal Services Directions 2005* which requires appropriate recording and monitoring of legal services expenditure for the financial year.

During 2006-07, the total expenditure on legal services was $424,838.27 (GST exclusive). Expenditure on internal legal services was $129,871.87. The total expenditure on external legal services was $294,966.40, comprising:

- $285,768.90 for solicitor services;
- $5,197.50 for counsel services
  (number of counsel briefed: male = 1, female = 0); and
- $4,000.00 for other legal services.