

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

A major activity during the year was an audit review of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) function by the Bureau's internal auditor, Deloitte. The objective of the review was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the OHS Management System in the Bureau and measure compliance with relevant OHS legislation. While the review showed that the Bureau has many elements of an OHS Management System in place, and that, overall, there is an appreciation of the importance of maintaining a safe and healthy workplace, there is a need for improvement in many areas.

While the majority of weaknesses identified were of an administrative nature and related to outdated or incomplete procedures, the review also uncovered gaps in implementation. Of the 22 topic areas covered by the SafetyMAP Audit Tool used by the auditors, the audit found that improvement was needed in five areas: incident management, risk management, planning, induction and training and resourcing.

Partly in response to the audit, the Bureau recruited a new Manager OHS to provide policy focus and leadership, thereby enabling the existing Safety and Health Officer to focus his efforts more on a range of problems in the Observation and Engineering areas of the Bureau in particular.

Other major OHS initiatives during 2007-08 included:

- the design, manufacture and installation of access platforms to autosondes which will significantly reduce the risk of working at height, with further installations at other sites to follow in 2008-09;
- a revision to the internal design of radar towers to reduce access risks which will be used for construction of the next generation of towers; and
- a risk study of radar energy controls resulting in plans to modify several components to achieve a safe and compliant level of isolation during access or maintenance.

The Bureau's Health Promotion Policy continued to support Bureau-funded influenza vaccinations, eyesight screening testing and workstation assessment and adjustments for all staff.

Strategic planning commenced to implement changes required by the *Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act 2007* involving the implementation of Health and Safety Management Arrangements through consultation with staff. It is expected that these changes will have a positive impact on the way in which designated work areas, health and safety representatives and Health and Safety Committees conduct their activities.

The Bureau's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) was used regularly throughout the reporting period by employees and their families to address a variety of work-based and outside-work problems. EAP tip sheets were 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. The EAP continued to be promoted via the intranet, as part of induction and training courses, EAP information emails, and through an article in the April *Weather News*. Reports from EAP Providers indicate that managers increasingly promoted the service to their employees and used the 'manager assist' aspect to enhance their own skills and to address management problems. Various EAP

awareness sessions were conducted in a number of Regional Offices. During the reporting period, either new or extended EAP Provider contracts were finalised in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Tasmania, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

The Bureau's Workers' Compensation premium rate for 2007-08 was set at 0.64 per cent, reduced from 0.97 per cent in 2006-07, compared with 1.55 per cent for the Commonwealth overall. There were 11 new compensation claims received during the reporting period compared with 25 in the previous year. This continues the trend of a reduction in premiums over recent years, due, in part, to legislative amendments removing workers' compensation cover for most journey claims. Lost time averaged 0.03 weeks this year compared with the average in the previous year of 2.30 weeks. Compensation claims continued to be predominantly for body stressing injuries. The average cost of the new claims decreased from \$34,942 in 2006-07 to \$3,866.31 in 2007-08. The total cost of claims decreased from \$873,571 in 2006-07 to \$42,529 in 2007-08.