Agency Overview

Role and Functions

The Bureau of Meteorology is Australia’s national weather, climate and water agency. Its expertise and services assist Australians in dealing with the harsh realities of their natural environment, including drought, floods, fires, storms, tsunami and tropical cyclones. Through regular forecasts, warnings, monitoring and advice spanning the Australian region and Antarctic territory, the Bureau provides one of the most fundamental and widely used services of government.

The Bureau contributes to national social, economic, cultural and environmental goals by providing observational, meteorological, hydrological and oceanographic services and by undertaking research into science and environment-related issues in support of its operations and services.

Around 1500 people are employed by the Bureau of Meteorology, providing surveillance, forecasts and warning services 24 hours a day, every day of the year. The workforce is geographically dispersed with some 60 offices across Australia, its offshore islands and Antarctica.

Regular meteorological observations are recorded by a network of surface and space-based observing systems ranging from thousands of volunteer rainfall observers scattered across Australia to highly sophisticated meteorological satellites operated as part of a cooperative integrated global system. These observations provide the basis for all meteorological services and long-term climate monitoring.

Hydrological observations used to support the Bureau’s water information functions, including flood forecasting and warning services, are obtained not only from Bureau networks but are collected by the Bureau from more than 250 agencies across Australia, including Commonwealth, State and Territory organisations.

Data on the space environment, including the upper terrestrial and solar atmospheres and the solar wind, are collected from a variety of specialised equipment installations located across the Australasian region, and are used as the foundation for the Bureau’s space weather services.

A range of meteorological and related observations, information, forecasts, warnings and educative material is available online to enable the community to monitor current weather conditions, plan future activities and learn about the weather, making the Bureau website one of the most visited government websites in Australia.

On 1 July 2002, the Bureau of Meteorology became an Executive Agency under the Public Service Act 1999, and on 12 September 2002 it became a prescribed agency under the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997. Under the Public Service Act, the Director of Meteorology has the powers and responsibilities of an agency head, and under current administrative arrangements reports to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts on most matters, and to the Minister for Climate Change and Water on matters relating to water information. The Bureau of Meteorology Advisory Board advises the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts and the Director of Meteorology on issues of relevance to the proper discharge of the functions of the Bureau.
The Bureau of Meteorology operates under the authority of the *Meteorology Act 1955* and the *Water Act 2007* which provide the legal basis for its activities, while its operation is continually assessed in accordance with the national need for climatic records, water information, scientific understanding of Australian weather and climate and effective service provision to the Australian community. The Bureau of Meteorology must also fulfil Australia’s international obligations under the Convention of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and related international meteorological treaties and agreements.

Figure 1. The Bureau of Meteorology is an Executive Agency (and statutory body) in the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts Portfolio and, as at 30 June 2009, reports to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts on most matters and to the Minister for Climate Change and Water on matters relating to water information.
Organisational Structure

The Bureau of Meteorology operates as a single integrated national meteorological and hydrological science and service organisation serving equally and concurrently the meteorological and related needs and responsibilities of the Commonwealth and the States and Territories.

A number of changes were made to the Bureau’s organisation structure during 2008-09 including:

- restructuring of the analysis and prediction function, whereby the Analysis and Prediction individual output (formerly within Climate Services) was discontinued as a separate output and its activities redistributed across the Weather Services, Climate Services and Meteorological and Related Research outputs;
- reconfiguration of the National Meteorological and Oceanographic Centre (NMOC) as a unit similar to a Regional Office and reporting directly to the Deputy Director (Services); and
- restructuring of the commercial services function with the Commercial Services Major Output discontinued as a separate output and responsibility for its products and services redistributed across other Major Outputs and the associated discontinuation of the Special Services Unit.

The Bureau’s Head Office is a centre for both administrative and operational coordination. Most of the Head Office is located in Melbourne, but parts of the Water Division are located in Canberra and the Ionospheric Prediction Service is based in Sydney. The Bureau’s Head Office provides overall national strategic planning, management and coordination of the Bureau’s integrated observations, telecommunications and computing infrastructure and its weather, climate, hydrological and oceanographic services.

As at 30 June 2009, the Head Office structure comprised:

- an Executive (Director of Meteorology, three Deputy Directors and three Assistant Directors);
- four divisions (Systems, Services, Water and Corporate);
- twelve branches (Observations and Engineering, Information Technologies, the Ionospheric Prediction Service, Weather Services, Climate and Oceans, Water Information Technology Planning and Development, Water Data Services, Water Reporting Services, Water Forecasting Services, Executive and International Affairs, Management Services and Finance and Budgets); and
- the Centre for Australian Weather and Climate Research (CAWCR).

The administrative structure of the Bureau of Meteorology is shown in Figure 2.

The Bureau also has seven regions with Regional Offices located in each State capital and Darwin, which are responsible for most of the operational and service activities in the State or Territory concerned. Each Regional Office includes a Regional Forecasting Centre and a Flood Warning Centre, and the Perth, Darwin and Brisbane offices also operate Tropical Cyclone Warning Centres when required. The Darwin office also serves as the Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre for aviation and a WMO Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre. The National Meteorological and Oceanographic Centre carries out operational and services functions similar to those of a Bureau Region but with a national area of responsibility and is also a WMO Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre for environmental emergency response.
The Bureau maintains a network of field offices and other installations across the Australian continent, on neighbouring islands and in Antarctica (Figure 3), as well as national networks of some 300 paid cooperative observers and approximately 6000 voluntary rainfall observers. More information on Executive responsibility and current senior staffing of the Bureau is provided in the Corporate Governance chapter.

Figure 2. The basic administrative structure of the Bureau of Meteorology as at 30 June 2009, showing the Bureau Divisions, Branches, Regions and the National Meteorological and Oceanographic Centre.
Output Structure

During 2008-09 the Bureau of Meteorology was responsible for the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts Portfolio Outcome: ‘Australia benefits from meteorological and related science and services’.

The five basic elements of this Outcome were:

- Satisfaction of present and future needs for continuous reliable data on Australian weather and climate;
- Advancement of meteorological science and understanding of the mechanisms of Australian weather and climate;
- Enhanced community safety and well-being through preparation of meteorological products and information and the effective use of meteorological and related services by the general public and by shipping, civil aviation, defence, agriculture, industry and other major social and economic sectors;
- International cooperation and goodwill including the benefits of global meteorological cooperation under the Convention of the World Meteorological Organization and related international meteorological treaties and agreements; and
- Enhanced water planning and management through the effective use of water information.
The following five Output Groups were directed at achieving these outcomes:

- Meteorological and Related Data (Output 1.1)
- Meteorological and Related Research (Output 1.2)
- Meteorological and Related Services and Products (Output 1.3)
- International Meteorological Activities (Output 1.4)
- Water Information (Output 1.5)

The Meteorological and Related Services and Products Output Group comprised two Major Outputs: Climate Services and Weather Services. The other four Output Groups each related to a single Major Output, delivered through one or more individual outputs.

This Annual Report contains chapters corresponding to each of the Major Outputs which provide an assessment of the performance of the Bureau and more detailed information about contributions to the overall Outcome at the individual output level. The outcome output structure of the Bureau of Meteorology during 2008-09 is shown schematically in Figure 4.