

Commonwealth Disability Strategy

This report has been prepared to align with the reporting guidelines prescribed in the Commonwealth Disability Strategy. It addresses performance against indicators for the five key roles performed by Commonwealth organisations, i.e. policy advisor, regulator, purchaser, provider and employer. The Bureau fulfils all five of these core roles. The employer role activities are reported through the Australian Public Service Commission's State of the Service agency survey and not through agency Annual Reports, and so are not covered here.

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.*

In 2008-09, in alignment with the user-centred design focus, any inclusions on the Bureau's external website took into account the ease of user accessibility for people with a disability.

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

The Bureau in collaboration with Emergency Management Australia continues to co-chair the ongoing National Forum on Emergency Warnings to the Community. The focus of this forum is to improve warnings effectiveness throughout all Australian communities. An important aspect of this forum is to consult with representatives of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities and peak bodies representing people with disability (particularly hearing and sight).

Direct collaboration with representatives of hearing and sight disabled members of the community occurred, seeking advice on measures to improve services, particularly warning services, accessibility of services (both electronic and print) and usability of the Bureau's internet site.

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>.

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

In 2007 the Bureau of Meteorology's water information role was expanded under the *Water Act 2007* to encompass compilation and publication of water information for Australia - information that is essential for sound decision-making by governments, businesses and the community.

As part of this new role, with effect from 30 June 2008, the Bureau began administering the *Water Regulations 2008*. The Regulations individually name more than 200 persons who are required to give the Bureau specified water information that is in their possession, custody or control.

1. *Publicly available information available on regulations and quasi-regulations is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities.*

Easily accessible comprehensive information is available through the Bureau's website, including a tool for use by organisations that may be affected by the Regulations (Water Regulations Online).

2. *Publicly available regulatory compliance reporting is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities.*

The Bureau is not required to produce publicly available reports of regulatory compliance.

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 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 1992* 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, climate and water. 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 Minister 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-season 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.