

Corporate overview

This chapter provides information on the structure and senior management of the Affirmative Action Agency, and on significant developments and achievements in the management of the Agency during the 1998-99 financial year.

The Agency's organisational structure is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Further information can be found in Chapter 2 under the heading Liaison.

The Agency's operations fall within the Workplace Relations and Small Business Portfolio Program of the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business. The Agency is designated Subprogram 1.3 of Program No.1: Workplace Relations Framework.

Workplace diversity program

The Agency has an ongoing commitment to equal employment opportunity and workplace diversity through its workplace diversity program for 1998-2000. All staff will be given the opportunity to contribute towards the development of the Agency's next workplace diversity program.

Social justice and equity

As in the past, the Agency has provided industry with best practice human resource strategies that assist with the elimination of systemic employment discrimination against women.

There were no formal grievances lodged with the Human Rights and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission during 1998-99.

Figure 2: Affirmative Action Agency organisational structure



Internal and external scrutiny

Reports by the Auditor-General

The Agency has examined processes and provided responses through the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business in relation to recommendations from the Audit Report No. 46, Internal Audit.

Fraud control

No significant issues in relation to fraud control were raised during the year.

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee met twice in the reporting period. The Agency established its Audit Committee in accordance with Section 46 of the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*. The role of the committee is directed towards the enhancement of the control framework, improving the objectivity and reliability of externally published financial information and assisting the Director to comply with all legislative and other obligations.

Review of the Act

The Affirmative Action (Equal Employment for Women) Act 1986 was reviewed during 1997-98 by an Independent Review Committee in accordance with the Commonwealth Legislation Review Schedule under guidelines set by the Office of Regulation Review.

The Agency was not subject to any inquiries conducted by parliamentary committees, the Commonwealth Ombudsman or by the Australian National Audit Office.

Service charter

The Agency's Service Charter was established in 1997-98. The Service Charter has been on the Agency's website since February 1999. During the year feedback on customer service



Agency staff engaged in reviewing public progress reports

was encouraged, and information obtained was used for improving the level of customer service and also assisted in the corporate planning process. The Agency encourages feedback either through email, telephone, personal contact, letter or facsimile.

The Agency measures its standard of performance against the Service Charter and seeks to continually improve its client relationship and level of service.

Other reporting requirements

Participative work practices and occupational health and safety

The Agency's policy on participative work practices is to ensure that staff are able to fully contribute to the effective operation of the Agency. The Agency continued to encourage consultation with all staff through consultative forums and all-staff meetings.

The Staff Consultative Committee included occupational health and safety in its terms of reference, and the occupational health and safety representative attended relevant committee meetings. The occupational health and safety representative regularly checked the Agency's premises for hazardous or dangerous materials.

During the year the Agency's first aid officer received additional training, ensuring the Agency met its first aid obligation.

There were no accidents or dangerous occurrences during 1998-99. Issues affecting the specific working environment have been discussed with building management, joint safety measures were agreed upon and proper advice issued to staff.

Freedom of information (FOI)

In 1998-99 there were no requests submitted under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

The following information is provided in compliance with section 8 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

Organisation, function and powers

The Affirmative Action Agency was established to administer nationally the *Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986*. The Agency is based in Sydney.

The main functions and powers of the Agency are to:

- advise and assist relevant employers in the development and implementation of affirmative action programs
- issue guidelines to assist relevant employers to implement programs
- monitor the lodging of reports by relevant employers and review those reports
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of affirmative action programs in achieving equal employment opportunity for women
- undertake research, educational programs and other programs to promote affirmative action
- promote understanding and acceptance, and public discussion of affirmative action
- review the effectiveness of the Act

- report to the Minister on relevant matters

Affirmative action is defined as a systemic means, determined by the employer in consultation with senior management, employees and unions, of achieving equal employment opportunity for women. Affirmative action is compatible with appointment and promotion on the basis of merit.

Arrangement for outside participation

Under section 31 of the Act, the Minister may, in consultation with the Director, establish any advisory committee the Minister considers necessary to provide advice on matters relevant to affirmative action programs and the operation of the Act. An advisory board is to become operational in 1999-2000.

Categories of documents

The Agency maintains the following categories of documents:

- cabinet documents: relating to the decisions regarding the Agency
- policy documents: relating to the provision of advice and recommendations to the Minister, Director and senior management, including files, reports, correspondence and submissions
- affirmative action reports: public and confidential reports submitted by relevant employers as required by the Act
- submissions: submissions to and reports on public inquiries
- internal administration documents: financial, staffing, office procedure and similar documents
- publications: a variety of Agency publications may be purchased through the Agency or the AusInfo including the Annual Report of the Agency or guidelines for the implementation

of affirmative action. Other publications may be obtained free of charge from the Agency, including newsletters, leaflets and brochures.

- documents received from external sources: the Agency receives a variety of documents from external sources. These include documents such as consultants' reports and external research papers and reports.

Access to Agency documents (FOI procedures and initial contact point)

Initial enquiries concerning access to documents should be directed to the Freedom of Information Officer by mail at the address below, or by phone (02) 9334 9800. Requests for access to documents are to be made in writing and posted or delivered, together with the prescribed fees, to:

The Director
Affirmative Action Agency
GPO Box 4373
SYDNEY NSW 1004

Advertising and market research

The following information is provided in accordance with legislative requirements:

- advertising agencies: the services of advertising agencies were not used during 1998-99.
- market research organisations and polling organisations: the services of these organisations were not used during 1998-99.

- media advertising organisations: advertisements were placed with TMP Worldwide and Advertising Investment for two job vacancies. The total cost was \$2,925.
- direct mail organisations: Overland Business Services was used for the distribution of the Agency's newsletter *Action News*, and for the mail-out of training workshop flyers, publication order forms and reporting assessment letters. The total cost was \$5,785.

Performance-based pay

There were no payments for the financial year 1998-99.

Staff training and development

The Agency spent a total of \$28,470 on staff training during 1998-99, which represented 3.3 per cent of the annual salary.

As part of its commitment to training and development, the Agency encourages staff to participate in external studies. During 1998-99 the Agency sponsored four officers under the Agency's Studybank scheme.

Consultancy services

The Agency obtains three quotes for consultancy services in excess of \$2,000. For consultancy services in excess of \$30,000, a tender process is required. The services of consultants were engaged mainly because of their expertise in their profession.

In 1998-99, the Agency paid the following:

Name of consultant	Purpose	Cost	Publicly advertised	Reason for engaging consultant
Dow Digital Pty Ltd	Website design and hosting	\$25,615	No	Lack of in-house skills in website design.
The Publicity Agency	Promotion of Annual Report	\$8,960	No	Need of specialist knowledge and contacts in media industry.

Staffing Overview

Table 2: Staffing profile for the Agency as at 30 June 1999

Band	Full-time	Part-time	Temporary	Men	Women	Employed under Public Service Act
5	1				1	0*
4	6			1	5	6**
3	9			1	8	9
2	4		5	3	6	9
1	–		1		1	1
Total	20		6	5	21	25

Key

Band 5: Senior Executive Service or equivalent

Band 4: Executive Levels 1 and 2

Band 3: APS Level 5-6 or equivalent

Band 2: APS Level 2-4

Band 1: APS Level 1

* The Director of Affirmative Action Agency is a holder of public office and is therefore not employed under the Public Service Act.

** This includes 2 employees currently on unpaid leave of absence.

Table 3: Representation of EEO groups among staff

Band	CLDB	ATSI	PWD	Women	All staff
5	–	–	–	1	1
4	2	–	–	5	6
3	1	–	–	8	9
2	2	–	–	6	9
1	–	–	–	1	1
Total	5	–	–	21	26

Key

Band 5: Senior Executive Service or equivalent

Band 4: Executive Levels 1 and 2

Band 3: APS Level 5-6 or equivalent

Band 2: APS Level 2-4

Band 1: APS Level 1

CLDB: Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

ATSI: Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

PWD: People with a disability

NB: This table includes temporary and permanent staff, and staff on secondment.