

Information management and business services

The Information Management and Business Services Division at AIHW supports the Institute by providing a range of technical and administrative services fundamental to the Institute's program activities. Business services provided by the Division include financial administration and human resource management, and a particular focus on corporate communication and public affairs. The Division also provides a range of professional services for management of the Institute's information technology, data and metadata resources.

Change of desktop platform

Consistent with the directions announced in the Institute's 1996-97 IT strategic plan, the general desktop computing environment was reviewed and replaced during the year with a contemporary PC-Windows platform supplied on a rolling lease basis. Tenders for the project were invited during July 1997 and evaluated during August and September. The eventual contract for the project was signed in September.

The project was undertaken through a contracted 'prime systems integrator', with the Institute's own technical staff maintaining a close involvement with all aspects of procurement, installation and conversion. Supply, configuration, file transfer and eventual cutover to the new system were scheduled to enable transition to the new environment over a single weekend in October 1997. Comprehensive staff training at both introductory and 'follow-on' levels provided a sound working knowledge of the new environment and ensured that the changeover achieved the desired productivity improvements.

The move to lease rather than purchase desktop hardware achieved an improved capacity for dealing with technological change as well as providing necessary capacity for incremental upgrade and expansion. The changeover was achieved on schedule, within budget, and with negligible disruption to normal operations.

Metadata systems

The Institute's 1996-97 report announced the development of a major new product for the management of metadata (the identifying, definitional, relational, representational and administrative attributes of data elements). Released on 1 July 1997, and based on an innovative implementation of international standards, specifically ISO/IEC Standard 11179 *Specification and Standardisation of Data Elements*, the National Health Information Knowledgebase provides integrated access to health and (shortly) community service data dictionaries and data models, as well as a significant register of Australian data collections.

The Knowledgebase provides a useful capacity to support data and metadata development activities in other agencies. Operating as 'registration authorities' within the framework of ISO 11179, agencies are able to use the Knowledgebase to develop their own data definitions in a standardised, high quality environment that encourages and benefits from mutual support and inter-agency cooperation. Several State and Territory health authorities have expressed interest in collaborating in this initiative.

In July 1997 the Knowledgebase was presented by invitation to a joint working group of the International Standards Organisation in Berkeley, California. The presentation received widespread critical acclaim and prompted invitations for collaboration with the International Standards Organisation on the wider development of metadata standards. The Institute was also invited to become a special adviser to a coalition of US federal departments seeking to establish a suitable collaborative framework for the development of a federal metadata registry for health insurance portability and accountability, and other purposes.

The Knowledgebase is accessible on the Internet via the Institute's web site.

Information technology and telecommunications

The Information Technology Unit provides a core of professional and technical expertise for information technology and telecommunications purposes. In addition to overseeing the substantial changes to the desktop computing environment during 1997-98, and consistent with the Institute's IT Strategic Plan, the Unit paid considerable attention to enhancing on-line communication capabilities via electronic mail and the Internet.

During the reporting period on-line security issues were addressed in accordance with best practice guidelines, a process involving both contracted consultancy support, and ongoing consultation and cooperation with the Defence Signals Directorate (DSD). External 'dial-up' access to the Institute's data and administrative systems servers continues to be specifically precluded as a matter of corporate policy.

Corporate data management

The Data Management Unit provides a centralised resource of technical expertise for the management of large databases, and represents an important support service for the data collection and analysis areas of the Institute. It provides specialist support for the acquisition of data as well as its receipt, loading and validation, and ensures optimal availability of data for use in a structured analytical environment.

The Unit contributed significantly to the preparation of an AIHW information privacy and data security review (see

'Highlights', page 9) and will be a key resource in its implementation. The review identified an urgent need to establish a comprehensive central corporate register of AIHW data holdings and to make that register accessible to potential researchers as well as Institute staff. A working prototype registry has been developed and is under evaluation by a number of designated data custodians. Subject to that evaluation, the prototype will move to formal construction during the coming year.

Staff of the Data Management Unit were responsible for developing the AIHW Intranet, installing and managing the Web server and developing a range of applications enabling staff to gain more effective access to the Institute's information and technology resources. This includes access to the Knowledgebase—technical and developmental support for which is provided from the Unit's staff and resources.

National information development

The National Information Development Unit provides coordination and technical support for the National Health Data Committee and the National Community Services Data Committee.

During 1997–98 the Unit produced version 7 of the *National Health Data Dictionary*, a data management reference source which provides a set of data items and definitions to enable the collection of uniform data to describe and compare health-related services throughout Australia. Version 7 of the dictionary continues the Institute's commitment to ISO/IEC Standard 11179, *Specification and Standardisation of Data Elements*. The current dictionary continues to be widely used in the Australian health care system. The dictionary and its development process has attracted widespread interest within Australia and overseas. The Unit also provides guidance on the application of the National Health Information Model for sector-specific information developments.

The first *National Community Services Data Dictionary* was released in June 1998. It was developed in similar style to the *National Health Data Dictionary*. In an effort to maintain consistency between the two dictionaries where possible, the *National Health Data Dictionary* serves as the source document for several data items.

In early 1998, the National Information Development Unit's Head, Mr Joe Christensen, was appointed as foundation convenor for the International Standards Organisation's new technical committee convened to address the restructure of ISO/IEC Standard 11179 and the establishment of a range of wider standards for data and metadata registries. This significant honour recognises the Institute's general achievements in metadata systems.

Corporate communication

The Institute's corporate communication activities comprise public affairs, marketing, and electronic and print publishing, and are conducted by its Communication and Public Affairs Unit. While most public affairs, marketing, Internet and related activities are conducted in-house, editorial, desktop publishing and graphic design functions are largely outsourced.

Thirty public releases and special events were conducted during 1997-98, a similar number to the previous year.

A major innovation was the holding of one-day conferences to coincide with the launching of the Institute's two major publications: *Australia's Welfare 1997* (launched November 1997) and *Australia's Health 1998* (launched June 1998). Participants judged the conferences highly successful. Both conferences were self-funding through the charging of a modest registration fee.

Publications sales outlets were broadened through an agreement with ABS to make major AIHW publications available in ABS Bookshops and through its mail order service. These arrangements supplemented the AIHW's major distribution channels, AusInfo's Government Info Shops and mail order service. (AusInfo was formerly the Australian Government Publishing Service.)

The Institute's publications selling arrangements with AusInfo were changed during the year to a consignment arrangement for all publications. Previously some publications were sold on consignment, and the majority for a small fixed fee per order on terms that were very favourable to AIHW. During the year AusInfo elected to abandon the latter part of the arrangements. The new arrangements have altered publications revenue for the Institute in that the revenue received from AusInfo is now net of costs, whereas previously AIHW received the majority of revenues as gross amounts, with selling costs paid separately to AusInfo. This is the major reason for publications revenue being 41% down on the previous year's. It does not reflect a drop in sales.

The Institute's web site on the Internet was further developed during the year, with the Institute making full-text PDF (portable document format) versions of its major publications available on-line free of charge. This innovation does not appear to have harmed print publication sales. A redesign of the Internet site is currently under way and will be introduced early in 1998-99.

A new corporate communication strategy was presented to and endorsed by the Board at its June 1998 meeting. The strategy is focused on increased commitment to electronic outputs via the Internet and related media, increasing provision of interactive electronic databases to clients, and a new emphasis on business development activities.

Library and document management

The Library holds a small but specialised collection of journals and monographs which support the work of the Institute. During 1997–98 increasing reliance has been placed on the Internet as a tool for the location and acquisition of relevant material. The AIHW library adopted the new DHFS portfolio library management system (Horizon) during the year.

The Library maintains active relationships with other libraries and belongs to a national free inter-library-loan network, Gratis. Access to all major bibliographic databases in the health and welfare fields is available either on-line or in-house. Reciprocal arrangements are in place with several other Canberra libraries, and exchanges of publications occur with a number of similar organisations overseas.

A new records management system (TRIM) has been selected for the Institute, and implementation will commence early in 1998–99.

Human resources management

The Institute experienced an increase in staffing levels, particularly of ongoing positions, over the year. At 30 June 1998, 148 people were employed at the Institute. During the course of the year, 180 people were employed on a temporary basis for varying periods of time. Employment arrangements at 30 June 1998 were:

- the Director was employed under the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*;
- 140 staff were employed under the Public Service Act; and
- 7 staff were engaged through an employment agency.

A breakdown of staff characteristics at 30 June 1998 is provided in Tables 1–3. 'Permanent staff' refers to staff employed permanently by the Institute, including inoperative staff. 'Temporary staff' refers to staff employed by the Institute either on transfer from another Australian Public Service employer, engaged on either short- or fixed-term contracts under the *Public Service Act 1922*, or engaged under a contract of service, or on secondment from another organisation.

Table 1: Staff at 30 June 1998

Status	Female	Male	Total
Full-time permanent	40 (38)	43 (40)	83 (78)
Full-time temporary	27 (20)	11 (14)	38 (34)
Part-time permanent	10 (7)	1 (0)	11 (7)
Part-time temporary	12 (3)	4 (2)	16 (5)
Total	89 (68)	59 (56)	148 (124)

Note: Figures in brackets are for 30 June 1997.

Table 2: Institute staffing profile at 30 June 1998

Status	Female	Male	Total
Director	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Senior Executive Service Band 1	0 (0)	3 (3)	3 (3)
Academic Level 5	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Senior Officer Grade B	6 (2)	12 (9)	18 (11)
Academic Level 3	1 (1)	1 (5)	2 (6)
Senior Information Technology Officer Grade B	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Senior Officer Grade C	23 (17)	16 (15)	39 (32)
Senior Professional Officer Grade C	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Senior Information Technology Officer Grade C	0 (0)	2 (2)	2 (2)
Academic Level 2	0 (3)	3 (3)	3 (6)
Information Technology Officer Class 2	0 (0)	3 (2)	3 (2)
Public Affairs Officer Grade 2	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Administrative Service Officer Class 6	21 (13)	4 (5)	25 (18)
Public Affairs Officer Grade 1	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Administrative Service Officer Class 5	14 (11)	6 (2)	20 (13)
Academic Level 1	2 (3)	1 (1)	3 (4)
Administrative Service Officer Class 4	6 (4)	3 (2)	9 (6)
Administrative Service Officer Class 3	7 (6)	1 (2)	8 (8)
Administrative Service Officer Class 2	7 (6)	0 (1)	7 (7)
Total	89 (68)	59 (56)	148 (124)

Note: Figures in brackets are for 30 June 1997.

Table 3: Staff movements during 1997-98

Status	In	Out	Total
1 July 1997	124		124
Appointments	16		16
Promotions/transfers	7	(5)	2
Contracts (incl. temporary transfer)	42	(27)	15
Retirements		(2)	(2)
Resignations		(7)	(7)
30 June 1998	189	(41)	148

Note: Figures in brackets are negative numbers.

Diversity

The Institute currently participates in the Health and Family Services portfolio's Workplace Diversity Program. In line with government requirements, however, the Institute is now developing its own Workplace Diversity Program which will contain initiatives to ensure no discrimination against women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people of non-English-speaking

backgrounds and people with disabilities. The Program will also support staff with family and cultural responsibilities. Appropriate performance indicators are being developed so that the Program's outcomes and its effectiveness can be monitored and evaluated.

During 1997-98 the number of female employees, and employees from non-English-speaking backgrounds, increased. A substantial review of EEO staffing profiles and statistics was undertaken through the year to improve the Institute's ability to report on EEO matters. A breakdown of the various equal employment opportunity groups within the Institute, which include adjusted figures following the review, is shown in Appendix 7.

The National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics in the ABS employs five Indigenous staff, all of whom contribute to the ATSIHWIU work program (ATSIHWIU is described elsewhere in this report).

Workplace relations

The Institute has a consultative and collaborative management style. Staff are represented on the AIHW Board and participate in, and receive feedback on, higher management matters through that forum. Regular and ad hoc staff consultative meetings are held with senior management on matters of importance. Such meetings are held at Institute, Division and Unit levels.

Formal staff consultation and information meetings were held throughout 1997-98 during development of the Institute's Certified Agreement. A forum with elected staff, management and union representatives ran focus groups among Institute staff to develop a Staff Position Paper for management to assess against its proposal for a Certified Agreement. At the end of that process, management decided to negotiate a Certified Agreement with unions, after the unions had undertaken to consult with all staff throughout the negotiations. A handshake agreement was reached in June 1998, and certification is under way.

The Institute's Joint Consultative Council met in September 1997. The composition of the Council (union representatives and management) was found to be not in line with government policy on consultation and freedom of association. The Council has not met since that time.

Occupational health and safety

The Institute maintained its good health and safety record with no reports of major injuries or safety incidents throughout the year.

The Institute's Occupational Health and Safety Plan was finalised and agreed to by all parties. The Occupational Health and Safety Committee met on three occasions during the reporting period.

Comcare undertook a planned workplace investigation of the Institute under the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991*. The Institute received a favourable report, with the inspector commenting on the very strong work ethic evident among staff and the general view that staff receive strong support from management in both work and family matters.

The Institute was found to be generally compliant with its obligations under the Act, although minor adjustments were recommended with respect to training and supervision, and workplace environment. As a result, Senior Officer training programs have been adjusted to include information on the OH&S responsibilities of managers and supervisors, and an assessment of tasks that expose employees to risk of work-related injury is planned. A program to control any hazards identified by that assessment will be developed and implemented.

The Institute signed a 12-month contract with a new Employee Assistance Program Provider, EASACT Davidson and Trahaire (EASACT). EASACT commenced delivery from 1 January 1998 and are contracted until 31 December 1998. The program continues to offer staff and their families confidential professional assistance in resolving workplace problems, or personal problems affecting their work.

Audit Committee and internal audit services

The Audit Committee met three times during the year. The key elements of the Committee's activities were review of financial reports to the Board, endorsement of the Internal Audit Strategic Plan and review of the external audit report.

Internal audit services for AIHW are provided by Bird Cameron Partners, who were engaged for 3 years commencing 1 July 1996. An Internal Audit Strategic Plan was developed during the year which identified and prioritised all activities of AIHW in accordance with overall risk. Areas internally audited in 1997-98 were liability systems, contract revenue, and information technology-related processing, operating and access control systems.

Fraud control policy

A draft Institute Fraud Control Plan was developed during the year. The draft Plan had its origins in a detailed fraud risk analysis begun in 1996-97. The Plan will be implemented in the coming year.

Financial resource management

The Institute's audited 1997-98 Financial Statements are at Appendix 1 (page 59). The Institute is funded from a number of sources to undertake its activities. A funding summary for 1997-98 is at Table 4.

Core funding is appropriated through the Federal Budget. A small amount of revenue is generated through interest and other AIHW activities. Other income is external funding via contracts and research grants for projects carried out either jointly with or on behalf of the Commonwealth Government, State and Territory governments, or other organisations. Contract income and research grants totalled \$6.5 million in 1997-98.

Funding from government appropriation increased by \$138,000 in 1997-98. The 1997-98 Budget supplementation for core activities is shown at Table 5.

The Institute maintains a 'business case' model which supports the competitiveness of its pricing in relation to quotations for projects and publications. The business case is set out in business rules that guide the financial activities of the Institute in the management of its resources.

Table 4: Funding summary, 1997-98

	1997-98	1996-97
	\$'000	
Receipts		
Core funding		
Appropriation	7,748	7,610
Interest and other	400	547
<i>Subtotal</i>	8,148	7,546
External funding		
Contract income and research grants	6,556	5,104
Total funds	14,704	13,261

Table 5: Budget supplementation for core activities, 1997-98

	Amounts	
	\$'000	
Core funding		
Appropriation 1996-97		7,610
Less		
Whole of government telecommunications	12	
Efficiency dividend	76	
<i>Subtotal</i>	88	
Plus		
One-off 1997-98 Adjustments	52	
Salaries and allowances	24	
Employer superannuation	2	
Inflation factor	148	
<i>Subtotal</i>	226	
Appropriation 1997-98		7,748

Evaluation

The Institute continues to respond to ongoing public sector structural and procedural reform. The development and negotiation of an agency-specific Certified Agreement presented many challenges to management and staff, but was achieved within a commendable framework of cooperation, strategic vision and corporate awareness.

Although many reform initiatives translate well into the operating environment of a small agency, some are less easily accommodated. This is particularly the case where net benefit may be measured at whole-of-government rather than single agency ('business case') level. The Institute's early experience with whole-of-government software acquisition initiatives, for example, has not produced the same agency-level benefits that larger departments anticipate.

The present whole-of-government information technology outsourcing agenda presents a technology-dependent small agency with significant challenges, particularly with respect to assured confidentiality and security of sensitive datasets. Over the past few years, the Institute strategically and progressively reviewed its IT infrastructure needs and, having identified appropriate business imperatives and security measures, selectively transferred a range of services to contracted service delivery arrangements. In-house IT staffing was reduced to two people only, each of whom plays an essential strategic/technical role in the Institute's complex interactions with service delivery contractors and a range of government and non-government stakeholders.

The Institute is a significant provider of contracted data development, data acquisition and analytical services to government and non-government service delivery agencies across Australia. Access to a technically astute in-house technical support service is fundamental to business capabilities in these areas as well as the Institute's core functions. The Institute must respect both its responsibilities as a public sector agency and its obligations to its broader base of stakeholders, a matter that continues to present significant corporate challenges.