

APPENDIX 7

Commonwealth Disability Strategy

The department reports its performance against three core performance roles: policy advisor, employer and provider. The department does not have a role as regulator, and it is still to develop its policies and procedures in relation to the purchaser role, so no quantitative data is available for this reporting period.

The three roles are reported below against each of the performance indicators.

Policy advisor role

New or revised policy/programme proposals assess impact on the lives of people with disabilities prior to decision

Performance measure

Percentage of new or revised policy/programme proposals with documentation showing that the impact of the proposal was considered prior to the decision-making stage.

Current level of performance

When developing and reviewing policy and program proposals within the department, an assessment generally is made of the impact on people with disabilities.

The department works in partnership with each of the education sectors: school education, vocational education and training, and the higher education sector. It is involved with the development and review of national policy and programmes in relation to each of the education sectors and provides funding for many national programmes to support students with disabilities. A

particular example is the development of Disability Standards for Education under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. Specific programmes are described in the relevant chapters of this report.

People with disabilities are included in consultation about new or revised policy/programme proposals

Performance measure

Percentage of consultations about new or revised policy/programme proposals that are developed in consultation with people with disabilities.

Current level of performance

Where appropriate, new/revised policy and programme proposals are developed in consultation with people with disabilities and/or peak disability groups. Consultation includes:

- ▶ distribution of consultation papers to peak disability groups for input; and
- ▶ face-to-face meetings with relevant groups, including:
 - the National Industry Association for Disability Services;
 - the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* Standards Project, representing the disability sector in standards development;
 - education authority staff with expertise on the education of students with disabilities; and
 - university staff who provide support to students with disabilities.

Public announcements of new, revised or proposed policy/ programme initiatives are available in accessible formats for people with disabilities in a timely manner

Performance measures

Percentage of new, revised or proposed policy/programme announcements available in a range of accessible formats.

Time taken in providing announcements in accessible formats.

Current level of performance

The department's websites comply with the guidelines for accessibility in accordance with the Government Online Strategy. Some sites contain a text alternative site that provides greater accessibility for visually impaired clients.

Closed captioning was available on television commercials such as those for New Apprenticeships.

Provider role

Providers have established mechanisms for quality improvement and assurance

Performance measure

Evidence of quality improvement and assurance systems in operation.

Current level of performance

Mechanisms for quality improvement and assurance for providers occur through the department's Service Charter.

Providers have an established service charter that specifies the roles of the provider and consumer and service standards which address accessibility for people with disabilities

Performance measure

Established service charter that adequately reflects the needs of people with disabilities in operation.

Current level of performance

The department's Service Charter Bureau handles the full range of enquiries relating to its education, science and training programmes. Details of the Service Charter are provided in Chapter 6.

Service providers, including Centrelink, deliver most of the department's programmes and services. Centrelink provides the full range of services to people with disabilities, including a dedicated phone service.

Complaints and grievance mechanisms, including access to external mechanisms, in place to address concerns raised about performance

Performance measure

Established complaints/grievance mechanisms, including access to external mechanisms, in operation.

Current level of performance

The department's Service Charter Call Centre clients are given the option of using phone, fax or email. The email system accepts documents in a number of accessible electronic formats and some hotlines include an interpreter service for the hearing impaired.

Employer role

Employment policies, procedures and practices comply with the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*

Performance measure

Number of employment policies, procedures and practices that meet the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Current level of performance

The department's employment policies and procedures meet the requirements of the *Public Service Act 1999* and its associated legislation, departmental workplace agreements and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. These policies and procedures are located on the departmental intranet:

- ▶ engagement of ongoing and non-ongoing employees;
- ▶ procedures for determining breaches of the APS Code of Conduct;
- ▶ whistleblowing;
- ▶ review of actions;
- ▶ non-performance of duties;
- ▶ working from home;
- ▶ harassment-free workplace;
- ▶ leave;
- ▶ engaging in employment outside DEST;
- ▶ mobility and reintegration policy; and
- ▶ termination of employment.

The department's Workplace Diversity Plan (currently being reviewed for 2004–05) identifies a commitment to the promotion of equitable and flexible working arrangements to encourage people with disabilities to apply for employment opportunities in the department.

In 2002–03 the department has continued a formal induction process, and required all employees and people engaged by labour hire firms to attend. Sessions address the APS Values, APS Code of Conduct and the need for all staff to ensure the department maintains a harassment-free workplace.

The department's staff survey and multi-source feedback process both include questions relating to diversity and general employment conditions in order to assess staff levels of agreement and/or satisfaction.

Recruitment information for potential job applicants is available in accessible formats on request

Performance measures

Percentage of recruitment information requested and provided in accessible electronic formats and accessible formats other than electronic.

Average time taken to provide accessible information in electronic formats and formats other than electronic.

Current level of performance

All current and prospective departmental employees have access to online and hard copy formats for selection documentation. Intranet design takes into account access issues for people with visual impairment.

Hearing or speech impaired applicants are able to make enquiries or seek information about job vacancies and selection documentation through the teletypewriter facility.

Formatting of all information on the Intranet takes into account 'best practice' approaches, in consultation with experts in this area.

Average time taken to provide information in any requested format is within 48 hours.

Agency recruiters and managers apply the principle of reasonable adjustment

Performance measure

Percentage of recruiters and managers provided with information on reasonable adjustment.

Current level of performance

All case managers ensure staff and supervisors/managers apply the principle of reasonable adjustment where appropriate.

All departmental employees and contractors have access to information on reasonable adjustment. The department's standard services contract includes the requirement for compliance with obligations under the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* and due regard to Commonwealth policies on employment and requirements under occupational health and safety laws.

Training and development programmes consider the needs of staff with disabilities

Performance measure

Percentage of training and development programmes that consider the needs of staff with disabilities.

Current level of performance

All training and development programmes in the department take into account when applicable the needs of staff with disabilities. Staff are not prevented from attending learning and development programmes owing to disability – where a person identifies a disability, appropriate arrangements are made so that they can participate and/or so that learning is not inhibited.

Interpreters are offered and engaged when requested by hearing impaired staff or their managers, and Auslan interpreters

are engaged for corporate events where the Ministers or the Secretary address all staff.

Training and development programmes include information on disability issues as they relate to the content of the programme

Performance measure

Percentage of training and development programmes that include information on disability issues as they relate to the programme.

Current level of performance

Where it is appropriate to the content of a corporate learning programme, the department takes into account disability issues.

Complaint/grievance mechanism, including access to external mechanisms, in place to address issues and concerns by staff

Performance measure

Established complaints/grievance mechanisms, including access to external mechanisms, in operation.

Current level of performance

The department has well-established processes for handling complaints. They include internal processes and access to external processes such as the Merit Protection and Review Agency.

The *DEST Handbook for Dealing with Misconduct* was written as a user-friendly handbook with the aim of simplifying procedures for determining breaches of the APS Code of Conduct.

An analysis of complaints received during 2002–03 indicates that there were no disability issues involved.