

CHAPTER 4

MANAGEMENT OF THE COURT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Since 1990 the Court has been self-administering, with a separate budget appropriation and reporting arrangement to the Parliament. Under the Federal Court of Australia Act, the Chief Justice of the Court is responsible for managing the administrative affairs of the Court. The Chief Justice is assisted in this responsibility by the Registrar. The Act also provides that the Chief Justice may delegate any of his or her administrative powers to judges, and that the Registrar may exercise powers on behalf of the Chief Justice in relation to the Court's administrative affairs.

The management of the Court is supported by the collegiate involvement of the judges of the Court through formal meetings of all judges and the Judges' Committees' structure (discussed below).

As outlined in Chapter 1 of this report, the Court's administration is supported by a national registry structure, with a Principal Registry responsible for managing national issues and supporting the corporate services functions of the Court, and a District Registry in each State and Territory which supports the work of the Court at a local level. The registries of the Court also provide registry support to the Federal Magistrates Court and, in some States and Territories, to the High Court and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

A diagram of the management structure of the Court is set out in Appendix 2 on page 105.

Judges' Committees

There are a number of standing committees of judges of the Court which assist with the administration of the Court and play an integral role in managing issues across the breadth of the Court's administration, as well as its rules and practice. The Committees provide advice to the Chief Justice and to all judges at the regular Judges' Meetings. The current standing committees are:

Admiralty	Library
Assisted Dispute Resolution	Management of Appeals
Audit	Native Title Coordination
Bankruptcy	Policy and Planning
Corporations	Practice
Equality and the Law	Rules
Finance	Security
Information Technology	Self Represented Litigants
Judicial Education	Transcript

In addition, a number of other committees and working parties have been established from time to time to deal with particular issues. For example, this year an ad hoc Costs Committee was convened to review the rules concerning the amount that may be recovered from a party who has been ordered to pay the costs of another party. Each committee is supported by staff of the Court.

Judges' Meetings

There were two meetings of all judges of the Court during the year. The matters dealt with included reforms to the Court's practice and procedure and amendments to the Rules of Court.

4.2 CORPORATE SERVICES

The Corporate Services Branch in the Principal Registry is responsible for supporting the national corporate functions of the Court and managing national human resources, financial management, technology, library and information, property and contract management issues. The following outlines the major corporate services activities and issues during the reporting year.

Financial Management

The Finance Committee oversees the financial management of the Court. The committee is supported by the Corporate Services Branch.

During the reporting period the Court initiated several major activities to enhance the Court's financial management reporting structure and to implement the Government's recommendations in relation to the Budget and Estimates Framework Review. These activities included:

- a review of the Court's financial management system and implementation of a new reporting structure for the Court's receivables and payables ledgers;
- implementation of an enhanced reporting framework to facilitate compliance with the new requirements for small agencies under the Budget and Estimates Framework Review; and
- design and implementation of interface technology to support direct recording between the Court's finance and human resource systems.

The Court continued to implement the recommendations of the Organisational Review, particularly refining forecast models to assess resources allocations and workload levels across the Court.

Financial Accounts

The net operating result from ordinary activities for 2003-04 was an operating surplus of \$1.717m compared to a budgeted surplus of \$1.100m and a surplus of \$5.587m in 2002-03. The positive variance results primarily from deferred expenditure, including Casetrack related expenses. Equity increased from \$27.610m in 2002-03 to \$29.644m in 2003-04.

During 2003-04 revenues from ordinary activities totalled \$81.151m. Total revenue comprised:

- an appropriation from Government of \$67.278m;
- resources received free of charge of \$5.660m for accommodation occupied by the Court in Sydney;
- \$6.116m of liabilities assumed by other government agencies, representing the notional value of employer superannuation payments for the Court's judges;
- \$0.470m from interest; and

- \$1.627m from the sale of goods and services.

Total Court expenses of \$79.434m in 2003-04 comprised \$42.295m in Judges' and employees' salaries and related expenses, \$16.592m in property related expenses, \$18.187m in other administrative expenses and \$1.894m in depreciation expenses.

The total price of the Court's outputs for 2003-04 is \$81.151m as detailed below.

**Table 4.1
Outcome and Output Statement**

		Budget 2003-04 \$'000	Actual Expenses 2003-04 \$'000
Output 1.1 Federal Court Business	Revenue from Government (Appropriations)	68,735	67,278
	Total revenue from other sources	13,370	13,873
	Total price of departmental outputs	82,105	81,151
	TOTAL FOR OUTCOME	82,105	81,151

Risk management and internal audit

The Court's Audit Committee is responsible for the internal audit program, fraud control plan and risk management plan. The Committee comprises two Judges, the Registrar and the NSW District Registrar.

In 2003-04 the Court's internal audit program focussed upon the implementation of the Court's new human resources management system, Aurion. Other activities included:

- a review of compliance with Chief Executive Instructions in relation to the management of corporate credit cards and cabcharge within the Court's small Registries;
- a review of the management of Litigants' Funds; and
- a review of Judges' overseas travel.

The Court also commenced a review of its risk management plan in consultation with Comcover, and participated in Comcover's Benchmarking Risk Management Program.

Staff of the Australian National Audit Office inspected the Court's 2003-04 financial statements and provided an unqualified audit certificate.

External scrutiny

The Court was one of six organisations selected by the Australian National Audit Office for its review on agency performance in relation to compiling the Internet listings required by Senate Order 192 and the appropriateness of the use of

confidentiality provisions in Commonwealth contracts. The Audit Report, *The Senate Order for Departmental and Agency Contracts (Financial Year 2002-2003 Compliance)* Audit Report No 31 2003-04, was tabled in February 2004. In light of this report, arrangements have been made to amend the Court's Chief Executive Instructions to:

- include general guidelines for the Internet listing of contracts in accordance with the Senate Order requirements; and
- provide further guidance on confidential provisions in contracts, to fully accord with the tendering and contracting requirements of the new accountability environment as expressed in the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines, Finance Guidance and the Senate Order.

During the reporting year the Court was also invited by the Australian National Audit Office to respond to a draft report on the management of special accounts. The Court's responses were included in the final report, *Agency Management of Special Accounts* Audit Report No 24 2003-04, which was tabled in January 2004. The Court agreed with the recommendations in that report.

The Court was not the subject of any reports by a Parliamentary committee or the Commonwealth Ombudsman. Nor was the Court the subject of any judicial decisions or decisions of administrative tribunals.

Consultancy services

The Registrar of the Court may engage consultants under section 18R of the Federal Court of Australia Act. Table 4.2 below provides summary information of consultants engaged by the Court for the provision of Consultancy Services during 2003-04.

The Court has adopted Financial Management Guidance No 12 – *Guidance on Identifying Consultancies for Annual Reporting Purposes* (July 2004) published by the Department of Finance and Administration for the purpose of determining whether a particular contractor is categorised as a consultant for this report.

Typically, a consultant is an individual, partnership or corporation engaged to provide professional independent and expert advice or services. The provision of consultancy services during the reporting period includes the delivery of internal audit services, analysis of technology requirements and business processes, and provision of associated advice. Contracts for the provision of training, documentation, project management and technology support services are not considered consultancy contracts.

The scope of annual reporting requirements for consultancies includes only those contracts with a total value of \$10,000 or more (inclusive of GST).

Table 4.2
Consultants Engaged during 2003-04

NAME OF CONSULTANT	EXPENDITURE (Ex GST)	DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES
Evidence Technology	\$ 27,510	Analysis of technology needs and preparation of design specification for videoconferencing systems
eLaw	\$ 56,892	Advice on system integration strategies for eCourt implementation
Step Two Designs	\$ 26,250	Analysis of Intranet Website management infrastructure and provision of associated advice
John Thurtell	\$ 92,529	Analysis of Native Title On-Country hearings and provision of associated advice
Ernst and Young	\$ 41,605	Internal Audit services
Dr Geoffrey Bagshaw	\$ 128,114	Native Title anthropological services
Integrated Media	\$ 12,050	Scoping study and advice on upgrade of Perth courtrooms audio systems
Connell Mott McDonald	\$ 10,000	Electrical engineering analysis and advice on power/data systems for Northern Territory court building
Clynes Hale Walker	\$ 12,000	Scoping study and advice on upgrade of Melbourne and Sydney courtrooms audio systems

Advertising and marketing services

A total of \$44,882 was paid for recruitment advertising services throughout the reporting period.

The Court does not use market research organisations, polling organisations, direct mail organisations or media advertising agencies.

Technology Services

The Information Technology Committee oversees the provision of technology services across the Court and is supported by the Technology Services Branch. Key achievements and activities in the Court's use of technology in 2003-04 are set out below.

Case management system

During 2003-04 the Court finalised a Memorandum of Understanding with the Family Court of Australia to allow the use, and modification, of the Casetrack case management system. Work was completed by the Court's Casetrack Project Team and the Family Court IT Group to ensure Casetrack met the case management needs of the Federal Court and the Federal Magistrates Court in relation to its general federal law jurisdiction.

Customisation, configuration and manual data migration from FEDCAMs to Casetrack was completed and initial pilot testing commenced in the Canberra, Hobart and Darwin registries in December 2003. Experience gained from these registries has

been used to ensure that the implementation of Casetrack in the larger registries will have minimum impact on the Court's daily business. Implementation of Casetrack in all the Court's registries is expected to be completed by November 2004.

Over the past six months the Court has worked in partnership with the Family Court to design and implement changes to Casetrack in the areas of field and screen modifications, listings, precedent orders and public access to case information.

Of particular significance has been the development of a public access facility known as eSearch. eSearch, which is accessed via the Court's web site, is a searchable database of selected information on cases initiated in the Federal Court and in the general federal law jurisdiction of the Federal Magistrates Court. Until eSearch, this information could only be obtained by visiting a Court registry in person. The information available through eSearch will increase as Casetrack is implemented in each registry.

Information technology infrastructure

In support of the Casetrack implementation project, Technology Services undertook a number of initiatives to ensure that the Court's IT network was fully optimised. These included:

- The redesign of the Novell Network Directory Services, which has improved network performance by reducing computer login times, network background communication traffic and the amount of disk storage capacity required of registry file servers (which has also reduced tape backup time).
- A review of the Local Area Network ('LAN'), which resulted in the replacement of all routers managed by Telstra and the optimising of switches within each registry. This has led to a further improvement in communication speed within and between registries, and reduced the need for the Court to increase communication bandwidth between registries notwithstanding the adoption of Casetrack.

Infrastructure strategy

During the year the Court implemented its own in-house monitoring and paging system for the Court's file servers. The Court's network now operates under commercial management software, which manages and monitors all file servers and switches and monitors routers and WAN links nationally (24 hours by 7 days). The system interfaces with a paging service that communicates with the Court's network management team. The team has the ability to remotely administer the network utilising secure remote access services. The system has proven to be very cost effective and has increased productivity within the Court.

File server replacement strategy

A file server upgrade program funded through a leasing program has been implemented. Under this program, 50 per cent of the current fleet has been upgraded to HP Proliant slimline file servers, with the balance being upgraded during the next two years. The new file servers bring to the Court faster processing speed, greater

remote manageability, increased storage capacity and reduced physical area requirements within the computer room environments.

Video conferencing

The Court undertook a major project to replace its existing PictureTel video conferencing systems, which have been in operation since 1993-94. A decision has been made to introduce Tandberg systems across the Court along with touch screen technology for the control of all the audio-visual components of the courtroom, including the courtroom sound reinforcement system, videoconferencing and teleconferencing.

Work has commenced on the design and installation of dedicated videoconferencing courtrooms in five of the Court's registries, including the new Commonwealth Law Courts Building in Adelaide. The dedicated videoconferencing courtrooms will provide an improved environment for videoconferencing, with display screens and cameras being permanently fixed.

Concurrently, the Court will upgrade its roll-about systems to provide the Court with sufficient flexibility to maximise its videoconferencing capability.

Printer replacement program

The Court undertook an extensive review and strategic analysis of its national printing needs and associated business administration processes including photocopying, faxing and scanning. The review identified the benefits of adopting multi-functional devices (combined printer, photocopier, scanner and fax) to be placed in strategic locations together with networked colour photocopier/printers. Printers were also identified for placement in courtrooms to support the use of Casetrack. The program provides the Court with a more sophisticated, advanced, optimised and cost effective fleet of printers/photocopiers/faxes and scanners than it would have been able to achieve if the various components had been dealt with individually.

Replacement of existing devices will commence from July 2004.

Upgrading the standard Windows 2000 operating system

The Court has implemented a Windows "patch" protocol, which enables the issue of security fixes and program corrections within the Windows 2000 operating system on a weekly basis across the Court's networked desktop and notebook computers. This enables the Court to rapidly implement "patches" issued by Microsoft.

Viruses or security breaches have not impacted on the Court and this initiative ensures the risk of such occurrences is minimised.

Surf Control Internet browsing management

The Court has introduced web browsing policies and has implemented a Surf Control Internet browsing content management application to automatically block site categories that are deemed unsuitable for viewing at work. Implementation of this application has reduced the risk of inappropriate access to the Internet.

Human Resources

Workplace relations

The main focus of the reporting period involved consolidating initiatives in the Court's 2002-2005 Certified Agreement and maintaining the Court's arrangements for consultation between management, staff and the CPSU.

The Court's National Consultative Committee ('NCC') continued to operate effectively through the year and was involved in a range of projects and policies including the Court's Organisational Review, the implementation of a new human resources management information system and the introduction of Casetrack. The Committee also oversaw the review of the Court's policies on eyesight testing and court officer uniforms.

Minutes from the NCC and Regional Consultative Committees are placed on the Court's intranet so they can be readily accessed by staff.

Workplace bargaining

Negotiations on the Court's next Certified Agreement will commence towards the end of 2004.

Australian Workplace Agreements ('AWAs') were entered and re-negotiated with a number of new and existing staff. The Court currently has 21 staff on AWAs, ten of whom are officers in the Senior Executive Service ('SES'). All remaining staff are covered by the Court's 2002-2005 Certified Agreement. While number of AWAs provide for an executive vehicle, their provisions generally mirror those in the Certified Agreement with the exception of base salary and, in a small number of cases, leave entitlements.

The Court expects to re-negotiate all AWAs early in 2004-05. One of the aims of this exercise is to have common commencement and termination dates for all AWAs with the aim of simplifying their administration.

Staffing overview

At 30 June 2004 the Court employed 394 employees under the Public Service Act. This figure comprised 208 ongoing full-time employees, 28 ongoing part-time employees and 158 non-ongoing employees. The high number of non-ongoing employees is due to the nature of employment of Judges' associates (who are generally employed for 12 months) and casual court officers. The Court had an average staffing level of 324.53 during the reporting period.

Table 4.3 on page 68 contains an overview of the Court's staffing by location at 30 June 2004. Table 4.4 on page 69 contains details of the number of staff in each Registry and the Principal Registry. Table 4.5 on page 70 contains details of the Court's SES staff.

Performance management

The Court's performance management program continued to operate effectively through the reporting period. A new process was implemented in March 2003 and strengthens the links between business planning and the training and development of employees. It also seeks to involve teams in identifying objectives and standards by which team tasks can be assessed.

Most registries undertook training in giving and receiving feedback through 2003-04.

Performance pay

Performance pay within the Court is used on a case-by-case basis, typically for staff engaged on specific tasks with clear personal accountabilities. There were no performance pay arrangements in 2003-04.

Training and development

Training and development was a major focus in negotiations for the Certified Agreement 2002-2005, which included a commitment to the development of a national training and development strategy in consultation with the NCC. Among other things, this strategy draws together registry training plans and monitors how national and local training budgets are spent. The strategy also links to the Court's objectives and provides a framework against which the effectiveness of training can be gauged.

National training focussed primarily on four initiatives, consistent with the Court's objectives. These were:

- Casetrack training in preparation for implementation of the new system;
- training for District Registry staff in dealing with Self-Represented Litigants (which will continue into 2004-05) – this training was designed and presented by an external consultant specialising in this area;
- training for managers and staff in giving and receiving feedback; and
- consolidation of the Court's Client Services Network, which meets quarterly by teleconference and has an annual conference (the second of which was in February 2004).

The Court has committed resources to developing a training program based broadly on an existing competency framework. This program will be developed through 2004-05, with initial phases of the program being presented to staff in late 2004. The program will see Court staff in each registry undertake trainer training so that, as far as possible, they will be able to present the training packages within the registries.

More generally, training was carefully targeted towards the development of essential core skills and the Court spent \$253,409 on external training during the period.

The Court's Studybank policy also continued to operate and provided staff with time off and financial assistance to pursue approved tertiary studies. During the reporting period \$23,702 was paid to staff undertaking studies under the policy.

Table 4.3
Staffing Overview by Location
(actual occupancy as at 30 June 2004 – includes full and part time staff)

Level	PR	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT	NAT	Total
SES1	3	2	2	1	1	1					10
FCL2		3	3	3	2	2	1		1	2	17
FCL1		3		1		1		1			6
FCM2	11	1	2	1	1	1				3	20
FCM1	7	1	4	2	1	1		1	1	3	21
FCS6	7	2	3	1		2	1			1	17
FCS5	15	53	35	13	10	10	1	2		9	148
FCS4	1	2	1			2			3	1	10
FCS3	5	17	17	12	7	8	5	2		1	74
FCS2		31	12	10	4	7		2	4		70
FCS1			1								1
Total	49	115	80	44	26	35	8	8	9	20	394

Note: The Registrar, who is a holder of public office, is not included in this table.

Key: PR - Principal Registry
SES - Senior Executive Service officer
FCS - Federal Court Staff
FCM - Federal Court Manager
FCL - Federal Court Legal
NAT - National – includes the following staff:
- National Native Title
- Chambers of Chief Justice
- Full-Court
- Research Assistants/Indigenous Research Assistants

Table 4.4
Judges and Court staff
(as at 30 June 2004)

	Judges	Staff
Principal Registry		1 Registrar 2 Deputy Registrars 47 Staff
New South Wales	18 Judges	1 District Registrar 114 Staff
Victoria	Chief Justice 12 Judges	1 District Registrar 79 Staff
Queensland	4 Judges	1 District Registrar 43 Staff
South Australia	4 Judges	1 District Registrar 25 Staff
Western Australia	4 Judges	1 District Registrar 34 Staff
Northern Territory	No Resident Judge	9 Staff
National		20 Staff
Australian Capital Territory	No Resident Judge	1 District Registrar * 8 Staff
Tasmania	No Resident Judge	1 District Registrar 7 Staff

Notes:

* Mr John Mathieson is District Registrar of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. Only judges whose primary work is as a judge of the Federal Court are included in this table.

Table 4.5
Senior Executive Service
(as at 30 June 2004)

Principal Registry		Senior Executive Service Grading Occupied
Senior Deputy Registrar	Alan Dawson	Senior Executive Band 1
Executive Director, Corporate Services Branch	Gordon Foster	Senior Executive Band 1
Deputy Registrar	Philip Kellow	Senior Executive Band 1
New South Wales District Registry		
District Registrar	John Mathieson	Senior Executive Band 1
Deputy District Registrar	Jennifer Hedge Part-Time	Senior Executive Band 1 (Specialist)
Victoria District Registry		
District Registrar	Jamie Wood	Senior Executive Band 1
Deputy District Registrar	John Efthim	Senior Executive Band 1
Queensland District Registry		
District Registrar	Graham Ramsey	Senior Executive Band 1
South Australia District Registry		
District Registrar	Patricia Christie	Senior Executive Band 1
Western Australia District Registry		
District Registrar	Martin Jan PSM	Senior Executive Band 1

Table 4.6
Salary ranges by classification level under Certified Agreement or AWA
(as at 30 June 2004)

Court Designation	APS Classification	Salary
Clerical Administrative Positions		
Federal Court Staff Level 1	APS Level 1	29 982
		33 134
Federal Court Staff Level 2	APS Level 2	33 931
		37 625
Federal Court Staff Level 3	APS Level 3	38 646
		41 711
Federal Court Staff Level 4	APS Level 4	43 075
		46 768
Federal Court Staff Level 5	APS Level 5	48 043
		50 944
Federal Court Staff Level 6	APS Level 6	51 889
		59 606
Federal Court Manager Level 1	Executive Level 1	66 414
		86 823
Federal Court Manager Level 2	Executive Level 2	76 565
		86 823
		94 197
Legal Positions		
Federal Court Legal 1	From APS Level 3	39 821
	to Executive Level 1	80 781
Federal Court Legal 2	Executive Level 2	88 200
		105 997
Senior Executive Positions		
Senior Executive Service Band 1	SES Band 1	118 025
		139 614

Occupational health and safety

The Court's national Occupational Health and Safety Committee continued to meet through the reporting period and oversight occupational health and safety ('OHS') within the Court. Among other things, the Committee has overseen the development of workplace safety audit checklists, under which each registry now conducts regular workplace inspections aimed at identifying risks and hazards in the workplace.

The Court also engaged a consultant to review the health and safety issues associated with Native Title hearings in remote areas. As a result of this review, the Court recently issued detailed OHS guidelines and checklists to staff and managers responsible for remote hearings.

No provisional improvement notices were issued under section 29 of the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991* ('OHS

Act'). No directions or notices under section 46 of the OHS Act were served on the Court prohibiting the use of any workplace, plant or substance.

There was one notification under section 68 of the OHS Act of a dangerous occurrence or accident as defined by the Act.

A total of 17 working weeks were lost due to work related injuries compared to 53 weeks for the previous reporting period. The Court's Comcare premium increased from 1.18 per cent of the wages and salary bill to 1.57 per cent.

The Court continues to provide staff with free, confidential counselling through the Employee Assistance Program provided by WorkCare Australia.

Workplace diversity

The Court maintained an active commitment to the principles of workplace diversity during this period. Some of the Court's initiatives commenced during the reporting period are set out below.

- The continuation of the Indigenous Research Assistant Program. This program was trialled in 2001 and has attracted a significant response when applications were invited for subsequent programs. Participants and those in the Court associated with the program report that considerable benefit is derived from the program.
- The NCC has been consulted on proposed changes to the Court's Workplace Diversity Plan, which are expected to be finalised in late 2004.
- The Court's Workplace Diversity Coordinator continued to play a key role within the Public Service and Merit Protection Commission's Workplace Diversity and Indigenous Employment Network.
- The Court's 2002-2005 Certified Agreement saw a range of additional initiatives which assist staff to balance their work with family/personal commitments. These include provision for an additional two weeks of paid 'Post Maternity Leave', the option of taking maternity leave at half pay and a 15 per cent loading for part-time staff who agree at short notice to vary their hours on one-off occasions to meet additional costs such as fares or child care.

Library and Information Services

The Court continued to maintain a national library network, which provides a comprehensive library service to judges and staff of the Court. In Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, library access was also available to the legal profession and self represented litigants. The Courts' Library Committee oversees the provision of library and information services. Key achievements in 2003-04 are set out below.

Sydney Library

The Joint Law Courts Library in Sydney continues to be an essential resource for Court judges and staff. A renegotiated Commonwealth/State agreement relating to

the operation of the Joint Law Courts Library was completed and signed in September 2003. The agreement includes revised funding arrangements with responsibility for the administration of the federal funding contribution being transferred to the Federal Court and a new management structure for the Joint Law Courts Library. During the year the Joint Law Courts Library was extensively refurbished with special funding provided by the Australian and NSW Governments.

Intranet

The intranet has become the major internal access point to the Court's administrative information and legal research materials. Much of the information on the intranet is full text searchable. As a result of a recommendation of the Court's Organisational Review, information relating to Judges' Committees, such as terms of reference, meeting agenda papers and minutes, is now available on the intranet.

During the year the Court, with the assistance of a consultant, carried out a review of the intranet and web site, including a review of the judgment publishing process. The overall goal of the review was to identify opportunities to enhance the delivery of information services and to assess the extent to which the mechanism for delivery of both the intranet and web site could be integrated. Recommendations of the review will be implemented in the coming year. Training on the use of the intranet has continued for Judges and their staff and for registry staff.

Website library catalogue and Native Title InfoBase

A project to provide wider access to information contained in the Court's library catalogue and Native Title information Infobase was completed towards the end of the year. The databases will become accessible to litigants, the legal profession and the public through the new version of the Court's web site due for release in July 2004.

Library services to the South Pacific and Thailand

As outlined in Chapter 3, the Court provides assistance to law libraries in South East Asia and the South Pacific. During the year, donations of textbooks and volumes of law reports were sent to Fiji, Kiribati, Thailand, Tonga and Vanuatu. As part of a project funded by AusAID, staff of the Library and Information Services section also visited the Supreme Court of Vanuatu and the High Court of Kiribati to provide assistance with the organisation and maintenance of their libraries.

Records management

The National Archives formally endorsed Step B of the Designing and Implementing Record Keeping Systems methodology during the year. Work on Step C, involving the development of a Court records disposal authority, is continuing.

An upgrade to the Court's records management software was also carried out during the year. Eight databases were migrated to a new platform located on a central file server, improving system administration and allowing users to log in from any location on the Court network. This database will integrate with the new Casetrack system to assist with the tracking and auditing of court files.

Archives

Work continued on describing and preserving historical photographs and documents in the Court's archives collection. Photographs and transcripts of ceremonial sittings of the Court have been preserved in archival enclosures and in some cases converted to digital format for long term preservation. Work on transferring the Court's judgment collection in paper format to archival storage enclosures was also completed during the year.

Commonwealth Disability Strategy

In accordance with the Commonwealth Disability Strategy, the Court undertook the following activities during the reporting period.

- Human resource policies continued to be monitored for compliance with the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.
- Recruitment information was provided on the Court's web site as well as via email and hard copy.
- The Court continued to provide a TTY service in all of its registries for the hearing impaired. During the reporting period the Court received no requests for information in alternative formats.
- Building works on existing and proposed buildings continued to take into account the needs of people with disabilities. Examples include:
 - ensuring inquiry counters are appropriately designed for use by people in a wheelchair;
 - ensuring signage is appropriate;
 - continuing improvements to building access and facilities within buildings.

Access to Court facilities

The Court is conscious of the need for its facilities to be accessible to all members of the community and is committed to ensuring that people with a disability do not face any access problems in their contact with the Court.

During the year a number of projects to improve access for people with disabilities were completed, including:

- upgrading hearing loops and interview rooms at the main registry counter area in Sydney;
- a national review of hearing loops with many being renewed, including most in Sydney;
- adoption of a national policy for disabled facilities in Court premises.

Property management

Federal Court registries are located in Commonwealth Law Court buildings in Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Hobart, and Perth. Commercial premises are leased in Adelaide pending the completion of a new Commonwealth Law Courts building in mid 2005. The registry in Sydney is located in the Sydney Law Courts Building managed by Law Courts Ltd. The registry in Darwin is located in the Northern Territory Supreme Court building under a license arrangement.

Commonwealth Law Courts buildings are owned by the Commonwealth and shared with other jurisdictions. A National Building Management Committee comprising of representatives from each jurisdiction meets regularly and coordinates building management issues. Day to day matters are managed by Local Building Management Committees.

Major achievements during the year included:

- continuing input into the resolution of design and construction issues for the new Commonwealth Law Courts building in Adelaide, which is due for completion in mid 2005;
- relocating the Court's registry in Darwin to temporary accommodation within the Northern Territory Supreme Court Building – while conditions are much improved, the Court will continue to press for construction of permanent facilities;
- completing the upgrade of the courtroom audio and video conferencing systems in Court 4 in Perth, with similar facilities to be installed in all States and Territories; and
- the Australian and NSW Governments agreeing to fund a major upgrade of Sydney Law Courts Building at Queens Square, with detailed planning to commence in 2004-05.

Security

The Court has participated with other jurisdictions and the Attorney-General's Department to complete a major review of security. The review, by external consultants, highlighted a number of vulnerabilities. While some recommendations can and have been addressed by the Court, a major issue is the provision of x-ray scanning facilities at the entry to Court buildings. These are expensive and the Court, along with other jurisdictions, has sought additional funding from Government.

In other developments, the Court reviewed its emergency procedures for each registry and the security roles and responsibilities of Court staff. A security incidents reporting regime has also been implemented.

Environmental management

The Court provides the following information as required by section 516A of the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The nature of the Court's core business, outcomes and activities is such that it does not impact or affect the principles of ecologically sustainable development. However, the Court is seeking to minimise the impact of its activities on the environment through the following measures:

- testing of cooling towers and water features in Court buildings in accordance with Commonwealth, State and local statutory requirements;
- energy consumption is closely managed and data is provided to the Australian Greenhouse Office as part of the Court's obligations to Government as part of the Kyoto Protocol;
- Environmental Management Systems have been implemented in Brisbane and Melbourne and are being extended to other buildings.