

Commonwealth Disability Strategy

Achieving a Just & Secure Society



Under the Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS), departments are required to provide an assessment of their performance in implementing the CDS framework.

The performance reporting framework has been built around five key roles of policy adviser, regulator, purchaser, provider and employer. The Attorney-General's Department reports on its role as policy adviser and employer.

Policy adviser role

Performance Indicator 1: New or revised policy/program proposals assess impact on the lives of people with disabilities prior to decision.

Performance measure: Percentage of new or revised policy/program proposals that document consideration of the impact of the proposal before taking any decision.

Current level of performance 2000–01: All relevant policies/programs are assessed for their impact on the lives of people with disabilities prior to decision. Areas of particular focus include work on the development of Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport and Access to Public Premises.

Regular and widespread feedback is received from the disability community and peak bodies to ensure understanding of the impact of relevant policies/programs on people with disabilities.

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

Performance measure: Percentage of consultations about new or revised policy/program proposals that are developed in consultation with people with disabilities.

Current level of performance 2000–01: The Department funds the Disability Discrimination Standards Project (DDSP) to ensure that extensive consultation occurs with the disability community and peak bodies in relation to relevant policies/programs. The Department receives regular reports from representatives of appropriate bodies under DDSP contract and holds Working Group meetings approximately quarterly, to discuss disability issues and provide briefings and other documents as required. Departmental representatives meet with appropriate representatives in a variety of other forums to consult on proposals that affect people with disabilities.

Performance Indicator 3: Public announcements of new, revised or proposed policy/program initiatives are available in accessible formats for people with disabilities in a timely manner.

Performance measure: Percentage of new, revised or proposed policy/program announcements available in a range of accessible formats.

Time taken in providing announcements in accessible formats.

Current level of performance 2000–01: The Department publishes all new, revised and proposed policy/program announcements electronically in a minimum of two formats suitable for screen-readers. The preferred formats for publishing are Hypertext Markup Language and Microsoft Word. All formats are published the same day as public announcements are made.

Employer role

Performance Indicator 1: 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 2000–01: The Department has approximately 30 employment policies and programs. All have been reviewed during 2000–01 to ensure compliance with the *Public Service Act 1999* and to assist in giving effect to the APS Values. As such they promote non-discriminatory workplace practices and comply with the Disability Discrimination Act. Examples include:

- *Workplace Diversity Program 2001–2003*
- *Attorney-General's Department Agreement 2000* (AGD Agreement 2000)
- Employee Relations Advice on a Diverse Workplace Free from Harassment
- Program for Performance Improvement
- Generic Capabilities Framework
- Recruitment and Movement Guidelines
- People Development Strategy
- Employee Relations Advice on Cooperative Workplace Relations
- Employee Relations Advice on Management of Employee Conduct and Whistleblower Reports.

Specific examples of how the Department's employment policies and practices generally comply with or are designed to implement non-discriminatory workplace practices are as follows:

- The recruitment and movement guidelines provide extensive and specific guidance for managers in relation to the merit requirement in the recruitment and selection process. The guidelines contain a set of operating principles on which selection decisions in the Department must be based. In accordance with these principles, employment decisions must be:

- based on merit, using departmental generic and position-specific capabilities;
- free of patronage or favouritism;
- in accordance with the principles of natural justice;
- fair, reasonable and equitable; and
- in compliance with all legislative and industrial award or agreement requirements.
- The guidelines make it clear that departmental selection committees and individual managers, including appointed delegates, are responsible and accountable for ensuring that selection decisions accord with these principles.
- The guidelines make specific reference to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Clause 2.2 of the AGD Agreement 2000 commits the parties to upholding the APS Values and complying with the Code of Conduct.
- At clause 2.4 (1) of the AGD Agreement 2000 the parties recognise that ensuring equity in employment and eliminating workplace discrimination and harassment are essential for developing a diverse workforce, attracting and retaining high-quality employees and maximising productivity.

Clause 2.4 (2) of the AGD Agreement 2000 commits the parties to achieving the principal object in paragraph 3 (j) of the *Workplace Relations Act 1996*. The parties agree to respect and value the diversity of the workforce by helping to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, sexual preference, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, family responsibilities, pregnancy, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin.

Goals for 2001–02: The Department anticipates that it will undertake a staff opinion poll during 2001–02. Questions to assess the extent to which work practices comply with the principles of the Disability Discrimination Act will be considered in the design of the survey.

If and when a need arises to review employment policies, procedures and programs, steps will be taken to ensure continued compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Actions for 2001–02: The Department's Equity and Diversity Adviser will have input to the development of questions for the staff opinion poll to be conducted in October 2001. The Equity and Diversity Adviser will provide information as required on Disability Discrimination Act requirements in any reviews of policies, procedures and programs.

Performance Indicator 2: 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 2000–01: During 2001–01, the Department received no requests for recruitment information to be provided in accessible formats.

Goals for 2001–02: Availability of recruitment information in different formats (upon request) will be notified in press advertisements and on the Department's web site.

100 per cent of requests for electronic information to be fulfilled by close of business on the second working day following a request.

100 per cent of customers requesting information in accessible formats (other than electronic) will be advised of the expected delivery date of their preferred format by close of business on the second working day following a request.

Where necessary, extensions to the closing date for applications will be made in keeping with the time taken to supply information in accessible formats.

Actions for 2001–02: The Department will devise a suitable notification to be included in press advertisements and on the Department's web site by the end of September 2001.

The Department will disseminate the revised recruitment and movement guidelines widely to managers and recruiters to increase awareness and promote a standardised approach to dealing with requests for information in accessible formats.

The Department will monitor, throughout 2001–02, the level of requests for recruitment information to be provided in accessible formats.

Performance Indicator 3: Agency recruiters and managers apply the principle of reasonable adjustment.¹

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

Current level of performance 2000–01: Managers and recruiters provided with information on reasonable adjustment on a needs basis. Not possible to assign percentage.

Goals for 2001–02: All managers and recruiters will be provided with information about the principles of reasonable adjustment through wide dissemination of the revised recruitment and movement guidelines.

Actions for 2001–02: The Department will widely disseminate the revised recruitment and movement guidelines to managers and recruiters.

Performance Indicator 4: Training and development programs consider the needs of staff with disabilities.

Performance measure: Percentage of training and development programs that consider the needs of staff with disabilities.

Current level of performance 2000–01: 100 per cent of training and development programs consider the needs of staff with disabilities.

¹ Reasonable adjustment: Where a person can perform the inherent requirements of a job, an employer is required to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace or work practices to accommodate any additional needs that the person may have.

The Department adopts a case management approach to the delivery of development programs where a nominee is recognised as having special needs. The Department ensures a range of different training strategies is employed in the delivery of development programs. Trainers and facilitators are advised of any participants with special needs.

Consideration is given to the language used in development programs to avoid giving offence to any particular group, including people with disabilities. The examples and case studies used reflect the diversity of the workplace and avoid stereotyping.

The Department's Program for Performance Improvement acknowledges the diversity of staff and identifies departmental performance expectations of employees in combination with an individual's learning and development needs.

Goals for 2001–02: The Department will continue to consider the needs of staff with disabilities in relation to the development and delivery of training and development programs.

The Department will make it easier for staff with disabilities to flag any special needs well in advance of any training and development program.

Actions for 2001–02: The Department will continue, throughout 2001–02, to consider the needs of staff with disabilities when developing and delivering training and development programs.

By December 2001 the Department will make provision on the training nomination form for staff with disabilities to identify special needs.

Performance Indicator 5: Training and development programs include information on disability issues as they relate to the content of the program.

Performance measure: Percentage of training and development programs that include information on disability issues as they relate to the program.

Current level of performance 2000–01: 100 per cent of relevant training and development programs offered under the Department's *People Development Strategy* include information about workplace diversity issues and considerations.

Goals for 2001–02: The Department will review the content of relevant training and development programs offered to staff to ensure workplace diversity issues (including disability issues) are addressed adequately.

The Department will develop and implement a training program on staff selection in 2001–02 that will address, amongst other things, issues such as:

- providing for applicants with special needs
- appropriate interview questions and techniques
- inherent requirements of jobs
- reasonable adjustment principles
- providing information in accessible formats.

Actions for 2001–02: The Department will review content of relevant programs by December 2001. In addition, the Department will develop a training program on staff selection for delivery during the course of the year.

Performance Indicator 6: 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 2000–01: The Department has policy and procedures on the handling of workplace complaints informally and formally. The Department encourages informal resolution where possible.

The majority of complaints are resolved in the line areas with managers or supervisors.

An independent review of actions process is available to employees in accordance with the *Public Service Act 1999* and associated legislation.

During the last year the Department has had no formal requests for a review of actions on the basis of a disability issue.

Goals for 2001–02: The Department will continue to monitor the operation of its complaint/grievance mechanisms, including data provided by its Employee Assistance Program provider and Harassment Contact Officer (HCO) Network.

Actions for 2001–02: The Employee Relations Section will provide a summary report to the departmental Executive twice yearly on the broad types of issues arising through the Employee Assistance Program and HCO Network.