

APPENDIX 7

Occupational Health and Safety

This report is presented in accordance with the requirements of s.74 of the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991* (the Act).

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (COMMONWEALTH EMPLOYMENT) ACT

The implementation of the Department's Occupational Health and Safety Agreement continued this year in accordance with the Act. The Agreement was endorsed by management and the relevant unions on 21 October 1992.

DEPARTMENTAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

The Department remains committed to ensuring that all reasonably practicable steps are taken to maintain the health and safety of its staff and provide a healthy and safe work environment.

The Occupational Health and Safety Committee, which is made up of 11 health and safety representatives and two management representatives, met regularly throughout the year. Its major achievements this year include:

- introduction of a health awareness program;
- availability of individual health/stress assessments;
- departmental guidelines for the use of mobile phones.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE ACT**Section 68 Occurrences**

(notification and reporting of accidents and dangerous occurrences)

One notice was issued.

Investigations

There were no investigations conducted.

Section 45 Directions

(Power to direct that workplace etc. not be disturbed)

There were no directions given to the Department under s.45 of the Act.

Section 30 Notices

(Duties of employers in relation to health and safety representatives)

No notices were issued under s.30 of the Act.

Section 46 Notices

(Power to issue prohibition notices)

No notices were issued under s.46 of the Act.

Section 47 Notices

(Power to issue improvement notices)

No notices were issued under s.47 of the Act.

GENERAL/OUTCOMES

The Department has adopted the recommendations from a joint ANAO/Comcare Better Practice Guide for Senior Managers, *The Management of Occupational Stress in Commonwealth Agencies* and provides the Board of Management with quarterly occupational health and safety reports.

In line with better practice the reports contain statistical information including:

- Comcare premium rate;
- the average cost of compensation claims, with an emphasis on occupational overuse injury and occupational stress claims;
- the number of claims lodged during the quarter by injury group;
- average sick leave per employee per quarter.

In tandem with the provision of these reports, the decision was taken to devolve compensation premium management to divisions and offices progressively over the next 12 months to two years. It is expected that this will bring greater transparency and accountability to the management of occupational health and safety issues and reporting and return to work procedures.

In addition to these reports the Department also engaged consultants to undertake a review of departmental occupational health and safety policies, assess compliance with all aspects of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and examine management of return to work procedures and programs.

The results of this assessment and recommendations for improvement will be presented to the Board of Management in September 1998.

PRIORITIES FOR 1998-99

The Department's priorities for 1998-99 are:

- implementation of recommendations resulting from consultant's review;
- provision of information sessions for managers on occupational health and safety and return to work management.