

# **Our people and partnerships**

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## Our people and partnerships

### Our community

#### New South Wales Government Action Plan for Women

The New South Wales Government Action Plan provides for government agencies and the community generally, a valuable and comprehensive picture of the work being done by government for the women of New South Wales. The plan links initiatives to the Government's policy commitments to women and Australia's international commitments to improve the position of women and girls in our society.

- Fair Trading is conducting a review of the Retirement Villages Act 1999 which will examine a broad range of issues of concern to residents, including ways to improve resident participation in decision-making, and the safety and security of village residents. More than 80 per cent of retirement village residents in New South Wales are older women
- Fair Trading continued to release publications to support women, including Love and Loans, which targets relationship debt; Discrimination and Renting; In good hands, baby products and you; Toy safety checklist; Bathing your baby; Childsafe blinds and curtains
- Industrial Relations released the fifth edition of the immensely popular *Maternity at Work* booklet with updated information on workplace safety issues for pregnant women. In April 2004, 70,000 copies of this new edition were distributed to antenatal clinics in every maternity hospital in New South Wales
- Industrial Relations published a guidebook *Best Practice Rostering in the Residential Aged Care Industry* which promotes work and family balance for workers in the aged care industry, the majority of whom are women
- Access to adoption leave entitlements was improved with the commencement of the Industrial Relations Amendment (Adoption Leave) Act 2003, extending access to an otherwise qualifying employee adopting a child up to the age of 17 years. The Act commenced on 23 October 2003
- The Community Technology Centre Program, managed by Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT), conducts an annual women's event to coincide with International Women's Day. In 2004 an online storytelling competition, Tales my Mother Told Me, was conducted. It involved 33 sites and 420 entries were posted on the CTC website.

OICT conducted a celebratory morning tea and story reading which was held on International Women's Day and attracted 523 women and 148 men across the state. Partnerships were formed with the Country Women's Association of New South Wales, and the former Department for Women.

#### Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement Report

The Department has implemented a number of successful initiatives that take into consideration the cultural and linguistic diversity of Commerce's customers and staff. These include community consultation, development of partnerships and the provision of services, and information and education through appropriate channels. During 2004/05 the newly established Diversity and Equity Unit will review current Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS) plans and strategies.

Community Language Allowance Scheme in Commerce now has over 90 staff who speak 28 languages to assist in basic communication with clients who speak languages other than English. We continue to provide free professional telephone and in-person interpreters for more detailed matters. Language assistance referral points are included in relevant publications and on our websites.

The Office of Fair Trading continued the successful ethnic community education program Think Smart to deliver information and education services through ethnic community and media partnerships. Seminars and presentations are also conducted on a regular basis for a variety of ethnic communities and community workers. Ethnic media channels are used to provide information on key issues.

Ongoing consultation and liaison at a local and regional level provides feedback on areas of need, so that we can develop appropriate communication strategies. A range of translated information is available online and in print format.

## Industrial relations policies and practices

The industrial relations focus of the Department of Commerce in 2003/04 was to consult and communicate with our industrial relations stakeholders, as a result of:

- the review of several of the enterprise specific awards applicable to staff of the Department
- the implementation of a major transition and restructuring program across the newly established Department.

Both the Crown Employees (Department of Public Works and Services) Reviewed Award 1998 and the Crown Employees (Department of Public Works and Services Wages Staff) Award 2002/03 were the subject of detailed negotiation.

These negotiations were in response to matters initiated by both management and also by industrial relations stakeholders. With the creation of the Department of Commerce, the parties to the awards took the opportunity to refine and consider the appropriate industrial relations approaches for the new agency.

A notable achievement for the year involved restructuring of the Office of Industrial Relations. Staff and union discussions were conducted in a constructive environment with positive results for the organisation and its people.

At this time considerable work has been done in the restructuring of our Wages Staff Award, with detailed negotiations occurring with those trade unions representing Commerce's trades-based field staff.

In addition, the General Salaried Award is being reviewed to accommodate the integration of staff into the Strategic Management and Corporate Support Directorate from the three former departments that combined to form Commerce. This also allows staff in our Document Reproduction Centres to receive the benefits of being integrated with the rest of the staff of Commerce on a common award platform.

This has been incorporated into our business processes through the establishment of a peak consultative body, the Commerce Consultative Committee. This committee meets on average every four to six weeks and discusses issues of interest to staff. In addition, formal consultative programs are in place in the Office of Fair Trading, the Office of Industrial Relations and the cmSolutions and Q Stores business units. These consultative programs are supported by a number of advisory committees on specific topics of interest to all staff.

## Diversity and equity

The Department of Commerce has a diverse workforce, with a broad range of skills, knowledge and experience contributing directly to service delivery and business effectiveness.

The diversity of experiences and attitudes to be found in our workplace are a valuable resource to an organisation whose core business is meeting the needs of government and the New South Wales community.

Our commitment to diversity and equity is demonstrated through a range of initiatives designed to support the needs of customers and staff in relation to women; older people; youth; people from diverse cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds; Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people; people with a disability; gay, lesbian or transgender people; people from regional, rural or remote areas and people with low literacy levels.

To ensure an integrated approach to diversity and equity issues for both customers and staff, the Department established a Diversity and Equity Unit. The unit will develop policy and planning processes to enhance outcomes for customers and staff. The Department had a productive year implementing a range of initiatives to realise the business benefits that diversity brings and to enhance its standing as a preferred employer. Many projects have overlapping benefits and increased diversity in the workforce will assist better customer service.

The Department has developed an integrated equal employment opportunity (EEO) management plan for the whole of Commerce. In 2004/05, the Department will prepare a long-term EEO plan that seeks to build on the traditional EEO foundations with a new emphasis on the contribution that a diverse workforce can make to organisational effectiveness and performance.

## Women in Commerce

In 2003/04, the Department continued to develop and implement strategies aimed at promoting career and development opportunities for women including:

Implementation of the *Women in State Projects and Regional Services (SPRS) Getting the Balance Right* Report. This year, work included visits to metropolitan and regional offices to present on the report's findings and future directions with diversity awareness training for SPRS managers, with a view to ensuring they developed a deep understanding of the business benefits of a gender-balanced workforce. Closer relationships were established with National Association for Women in Construction (NAWIC) to share ideas on and knowledge of strategies to increase the representation of women in non-traditional roles.

Commerce is a strong advocate of the Spokeswomen program with a range of initiatives being undertaken to raise its profile within the organisation. In 2003/04, Spokeswomen organised seminars to celebrate International Women's Day, as well as hosting a number of fund-raising and information days.

Spokeswomen attended the Thinking Skills Workshop that was led by Dr Julia Atkin and the Managing and Thriving Change – Women's Information Day organised by the Spokeswomen Program and a number of Commerce spokeswomen attended the New South Wales Spokeswomen's Annual Conference in May 2004 in Sydney.

The Department continues to support women in developing their career through Springboard, Top Steps and the Leadership Development Program. The programs are designed for women in non-management, senior management or executive level roles. This year, a total of 36 women participated in these programs. The programs concentrate on personal development plans, personal career management, and developing leadership capabilities, and involve one-on-one and group sessions with a career specialist, guest speakers and mentors.

### **People with disabilities**

The Department has a strong commitment to improving opportunities for people with a disability to share fully in community life. This commitment is reflected in a range of corporate and client-focused initiatives that continue to make positive contributions to improving work and career development opportunities for staff with a disability and the general community. Achievements in 2003/04 included:

- facilitation of the employment and development of staff with disabilities through Commerce's Reasonable Adjustment Policy. This included provision of equipment, changes in workplace design, provision of safe access to the workplace and training facilities, flexible work practices and changes to job design
- support for staff with a disability through facilitation of Disability Network meetings for staff with a disability and staff with an interest in disability issues
- sign language interpreters were provided for staff with a hearing disability at the Disability Network meetings, International Women's Day conference and Quality Customer Service Training. Currently, one Commerce staff member is an accredited Language Aide in Auslan for communicating with customers who have a hearing disability.

Access to our services continues to be provided by appropriate means. TTYs (Telephone Typewriters for people who have a speech or hearing impairment) are available in seven operational areas. Information and services are provided in a variety of formats, including increased online access.

During the course of the design of the new Gosford Fair Trading Centre emphasis was placed on ensuring improved access for customers and staff with a disability.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**

The representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remains above benchmark levels. Overall, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent 2.2 per cent of the Department's workforce. In 2003/04:

- there has been an increase in Aboriginal staff progressing in their career development and skills by taking higher duties and secondment opportunities within and outside Commerce. A contributing factor to this has been the information and training as a component of the Aboriginal Network meetings.
- Commerce participated in Government sponsored career development programs, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cadetship Program. Currently, the Department has three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander architecture cadets employed under this program.
- Commerce participates in Summer School, an initiative that seeks to provide young Indigenous Australians with opportunities to learn more about engineering, a career that plays a vital part in delivering essential services and infrastructure to all communities.

## Equal employment opportunity statistics

Table A - Trends in the representation of EEO groups

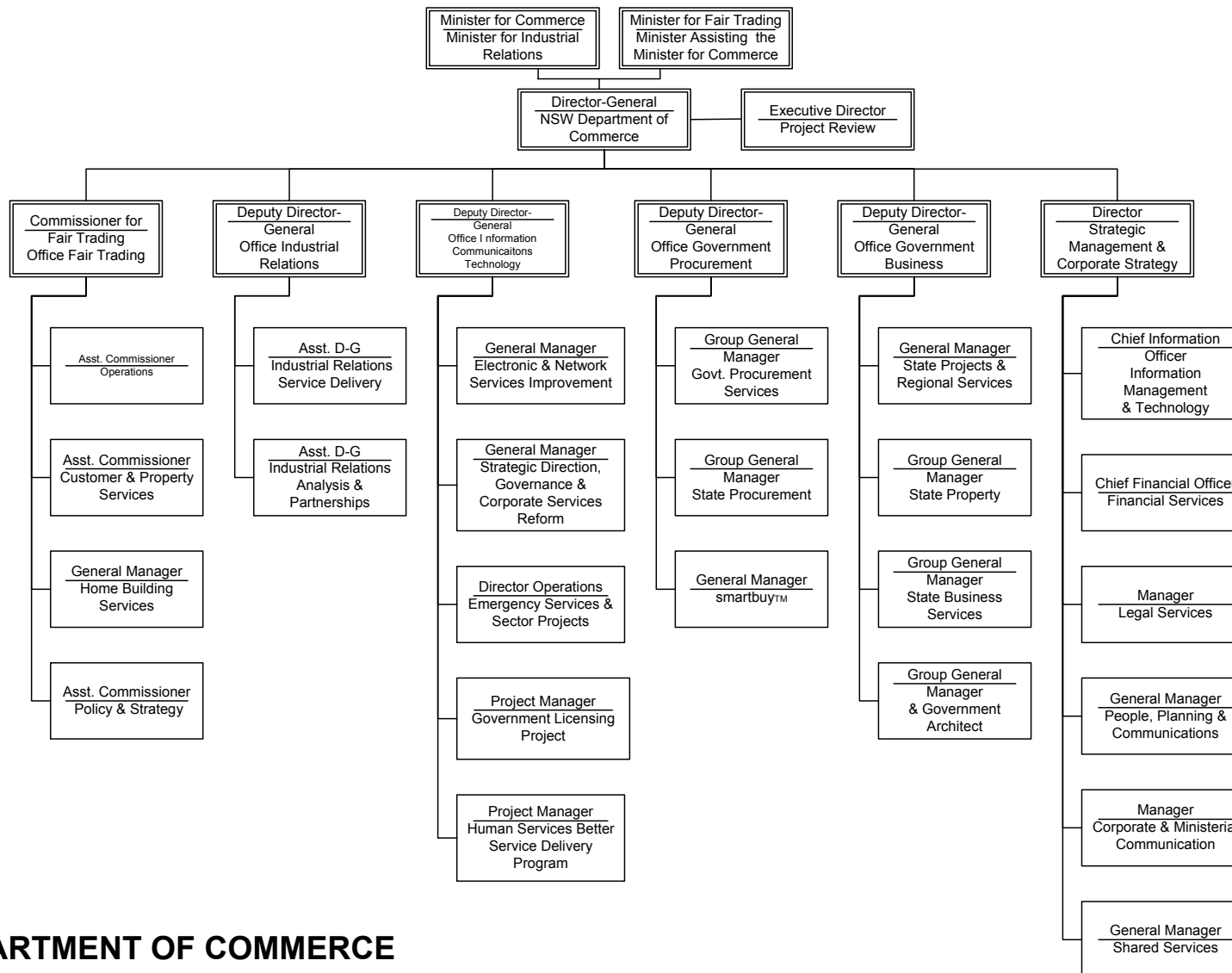
EEO Group	% of Total Staff				
	Benchmark or Target	2001	2002	2003	2004
Women	50%			40%	40%
Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people	2%			2%	1.9%
People whose first language was not English	20%			23%	24%
People with a disability	12%			10%	10%
People with a disability requiring work-related adjustment	7%			4%	3.4%

Table B - Trends in the distribution of EEO groups

EEO Group	Distribution Index				
	Benchmark or Target	2001	2002	2003	2004
Women	100			89	88
Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people	100			67	78
People whose first language was not English	100			95	94
People with a disability	100			98	98
People with a disability requiring work-related adjustment	100			94	91

### Notes

1. Staff numbers are as at 30 June.
2. Excludes casual staff
3. A Distribution Index of 100 indicates that the centre of the distribution of the EEO group across salary levels is equivalent to that of other staff. Values less than 100 mean that the EEO group tends to be more concentrated at lower salary levels than is the case for other staff. The more pronounced this tendency is, the lower the index will be. In some cases the index may be more than 100, indicating that the EEO group is less concentrated at lower salary levels. The Distribution Index is automatically calculated by the software provided by ODEOPE.
4. The Distribution Index is not calculated where EEO group or non-EEO group numbers are less than 20.



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