

Reporting against other statutory requirements

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The Australian Public Service Framework

Source: *Embedding the APS Values*, August 2003



Management of human resources

Four year staffing perspective

Staff employed under the Public Service Act

	1999–2000	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03
Staff at 30 June	51	54	53	48
Staff (FTE* at 30 June)	49.6	51.8	49.6	45.7
Base salaries	\$3 149 843	\$3 211 204	\$3 387 216	\$3 319 528
Cessations	23	14	12	12
Staff turnover	45.5%	26.9%	22.5%	23.3%
Women	60%	63%	58.5%	56.3%
Part-time	10%	16.7%	17%	14.6%
Non-ongoing	18%	13%	17%	16.7%
Learning and development	\$53 768	\$66 808	\$58 513	\$103 898

*Full time equivalent

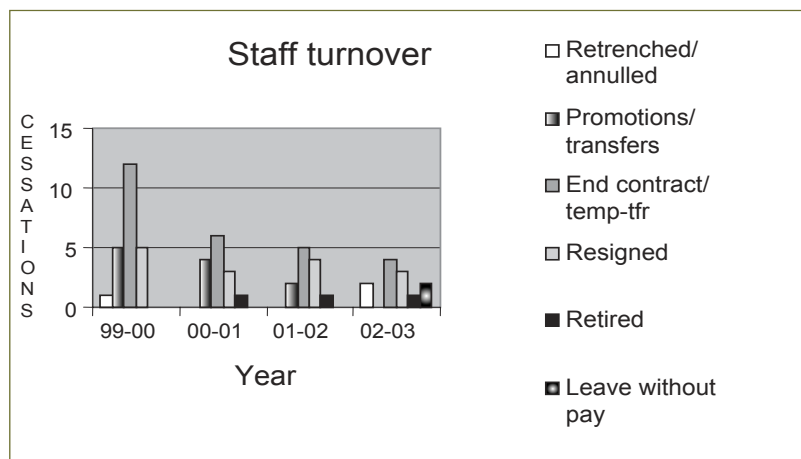
Overseas staff

	1999–2000	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03
Staff (FTE* at 30 June)	19	17	19	18.8
Base salaries	\$466 947	\$523 897	\$551 619	\$569 828
Learning and development activities	–	\$241	\$6900	\$8561

*Full time equivalent

Staff turnover 1999–2003

	1999–2000	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03
Retrenched/annulled	1			2
Promotions/ transfers	5	4	2	
End contract/ temporary transfer	12	6	5	4
Resigned	5	3	4	3
Retired		1	1	1
Leave without pay				2
Total	23	14	12	12



At 30 June 2003 the Centre employed 68 employees, of whom 48 are employed under the Public Service Act 1999 and are located in Canberra and 20 are at overseas missions. There are also four people who provide services under contract for the Fisheries Program, based in New South Wales. Staffing statistics and EEO data as at 30 June 2003 are provided at Appendix 4.

ACIAR's 3rd Certified Agreement

ACIAR's 3rd Certified Agreement (CA) was approved by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission on 1 August 2002, with a 12.5 per cent (compounded) salary increase to be paid over the three years of the agreement. These salary increases are paid from offsetting savings which were met in 2002-03. See Appendix 4 for further details. The new CA introduced a new performance management scheme and a revised Recognition and Reward scheme. The CA also brought into effect a new bonus scheme based on the performance of the organisation. Details are below. Two SES employees and three non-SES employees are covered by Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs).

Performance Development and Appraisal Scheme (PDAS)

The new simplified scheme, introduced as part of the new Certified Agreement, dispensed with individual bonuses and double increments. The scheme changed from a four-point to a five-point rating scale of performance during the financial year. Employees rated as Competent, Superior or Outstanding receive an increment (where they are not on top of a salary range). In the cycle concluded in June 2003 there were 48 completed assessments, including 2 SES employees. Five non-SES employees were rated as outstanding, 26 employees as superior and 17 as competent. Of the 48 employees rated as competent or higher, 22 were advanced one salary point. There were no employees rated as unsatisfactory or requiring development.

Bonus for performance of organisation

Eligible employees (those rated as competent or above and who had worked for ACIAR for at least six months) received a bonus of \$650, or

a pro rata payment for part-time employees, in recognition of ACIAR's achievements against the 2002-2003 Operational Plan. The decision on bonuses was agreed to by the Director following consultation with the ACIAR Consultative Committee. Total payments, separate from those made under the individual and team Recognition and Reward scheme, totaled \$29 735.

Recognition and Reward Scheme

The Recognition and Reward Scheme was amended during the CA negotiations. As well as peer nomination of teams and individual employees for the annual excellence awards, the scheme now includes recognition and reward for those employees who are rated as outstanding in their annual performance appraisal.

The total value of the non-cash rewards under the Recognition and Reward scheme is up to \$40 000 per year. This figure was agreed to as part of the negotiations for the CA.

In December 2002 the Director presented plaques to two country office teams and six Canberra staff who were nominated by their peers under the categories of Outstanding Performance, Leadership and Innovation and/or Beyond the Call. Non-cash rewards valued at \$12 000 were awarded to these staff for professional and/or personal development. Five staff were also eligible for such rewards, valued at \$1500 per person, after each received an outstanding rating in their Performance Appraisals for the 2002–03 financial year.

Performance pay (for performance in 2002–03)

	Number receiving bonus	Average bonus payment	Aggregate bonus payment
Bonus payments for organisation's performance	50*	\$595	\$29 735
Total			\$29 735

**To eligible employees – those rated competent or higher in their annual performance assessment and having worked for ACIAR for six months. In addition, six employees in Australia and two overseas office teams received non-cash awards valued at a total of \$12 000 for exceptional performance (see paragraph above titled Recognition and Reward Scheme). Five employees in Australia were also eligible to receive non-cash awards valued at \$1500 each for receiving outstanding individual performance ratings for the 2002–03 year.*

Training and development

ACIAR spent \$103 898 on learning and development opportunities for its Canberra-based employees, an average of \$2164 per employee. This figure does not include in-house training/workshops conducted by consultants or other ACIAR staff, or the attendance of research staff at conferences and seminars in Australia and overseas. ACIAR provides studies assistance for formal education. Staff are also encouraged to take up broader development opportunities, such as temporary secondment to affiliated organisations.

In addition to meeting the individual learning needs of its employees, ACIAR identified a number of organisational learning and development priorities which were addressed during the year. They included performance management, team building, leadership and IT development.

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)

There were no accidents or dangerous occurrences giving rise to issue of any notices or directions under the OHS (*Commonwealth Employment Act 1997*). There was one injury whilst on duty overseas for which liability was accepted, and there are two longer-term ongoing cases.

Two new members were elected to the OHS Committee to replace members who left ACIAR. The committee reported a number of matters to the ACC which were endorsed for attention. Two new First Aid Officers were also appointed, following training and certification by St Johns Ambulance.

The Certified Agreement provides for annual health assessments and flu injections for employees. Over half the staff took the opportunity to receive free flu injections prior to the onset of winter, and a large number of staff participated in the annual health assessment program. ACIAR moved to ensure that staff travel to areas affected by SARS did not occur until the areas were declared SARS free. Precautionary measures were also available for staff transiting through countries in which SARS alerts were current. Workstation assessments are provided to all new employees by a qualified ergonomist/physiotherapist.

ACIAR employees have access to a free Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that provides professional counselling services to management and staff.

Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS)

The following information is provided to meet reporting requirements under the CDS in ACIAR's Employer and Provider Roles.

As an employer, ACIAR remains committed to ensuring that all people seeking employment with us are treated fairly and have access to employment opportunities.

People with disabilities are encouraged to identify their disability in their application for employment to ensure that the selection process accommodates any special needs they might have. Recruitment processes require selection panels to make provision for the needs of applicants with disabilities. The recruitment page on ACIAR's internet site provides guidance and assistance to people seeking employment with ACIAR.

Workplace Diversity Plan

ACIAR's Workplace Diversity Plan 2003-2006 was launched in June 2003 and reflects ACIAR's continuing commitment to workplace diversity in its Certified Agreements, corporate plans and strategic planning and review processes.

ACIAR's Certified Agreement and HR policies emphasise and encourage a balance between work and private life, and the results of the Staff Survey indicate a high level of satisfaction with these initiatives.

External scrutiny and auditing

Judicial decisions and decisions of administrative tribunals

No decisions that impacted on ACIAR were made at either the judicial or administrative tribunal level during the 2002-03 financial year. There are no impending decisions relating directly to ACIAR that are outstanding or pending.

There were no significant developments relating to the increasing of, limiting of, or other changes to external scrutiny arrangements.

Reports by the Auditor General and the ANAO

There were no relevant reports by either the Auditor General or the ANAO that specifically focused on ACIAR individually, apart from the unqualified audit of the 2001-02 financial statement and the 2002-03 interim audit.

ACIAR was audited as one of a group of agencies selected to be part of an ANAO audit on *The Administration of Grants (Post-Approval) in Small to Medium Organisations*. The overall report was presented to Parliament on 4 November 2002. The ACIAR-specific report contained ten recommendations. All were agreed. Seven were fully implemented and the other three have been incorporated into broader information system enhancements that are underway.

Through its Audit Committee the Centre looks at the findings and recommendations of relevant ANAO reports for their applicability to ACIAR. In 2002-03, broadly applicable recommendations from the audit *Payment of Accounts and Goods and Services Tax Administration by Small Commonwealth Organisations* were implemented by ACIAR. Better Practice Guides that are issued by the ANAO are also assessed in regard to their applicability to improving systems and processes. Further details can be found under the Audit Committee report beginning on page 81.



Purchasing and tendering information

Purchasing

The Centre complies with the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and the objectives of Commonwealth Procurement as follows:

- value for money;
- ethics and fair dealings;
- accountability and reporting;
- national competitiveness and industry development; and
- support for other Australian Government policies.

Due to the nature of the Centre's operations, with the majority of expenditure being project grants, and the small number of transactions, it is not cost-effective to implement purchasing performance measures.

Most suppliers are now paid electronically, with electronic remittance advice of payments.

Competitive tendering

During 2002–03 ACIAR undertook the following tender processes:

- Internal Audit Services – Acumen Alliance was reappointed for a further three year period from November 2002. The total cost over the period is \$90 000; and
- Travel Management Services – a Request for Tender was issued as part of a total Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio arrangement in June 2003. It is anticipated the tender will not be finalised until late in 2003.

ACIAR did not let any contracts for \$100 000 or more that did not provide the Auditor General access to a contractor's premises. Nor were any contracts let in excess of \$2000 that were exempted from publication in the Purchasing and Disposal Gazette due to Freedom of Information exemptions.

Discretionary grants

The Centre did not issue any Discretionary Grants in 2002–03 or have any ongoing grants from previous years.

Consultants

The Centre entered into 129 contracts with external consultants to provide services that were related mainly to the research program. The total value of these contracts, exclusive of GST, is \$912 268. Details of the Centre's contracts valued at more than \$100 000 can be found at the ACIAR website www.gov.au under the Senate Spring/Autumn reporting of contracts. Details of contracts valued at more than \$10 000 are available on request.

Advertising and market research

The Centre did not enter into contracts with any advertising agencies, market researchers or polling organisations or media advertising organisations. ACIAR did not enter into any direct marketing of information to the public, only sending out selected material to those on its mailing list.

Freedom of information

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) provides a means for individuals to obtain access to Government-held documents, excluding where exemptions are in place. No requests were made to ACIAR in 2002–03 to supply documents or information as prescribed under the provisions of the FOI Act. No requests are outstanding.

The FOI Act outlines reporting responsibilities of Government departments and agencies in relation to FOI requests. The statement at Appendix 5 is made in accordance with Section 8 of the Act.

Ecologically sustainable development

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999* outlines obligations for organisational compliance under Section 160. Reporting requirements are in Section 516A – Annual Reports and describe reporting on environmental matters.

ACIAR does not administer legislation or conduct activities that directly relate to environmental management in Australia. Its mandate relates to the commissioning and funding of agricultural research projects to benefit developing countries and Australia.

ACIAR's functions under the ACIAR Act allow the Centre to formulate programs and policies with respect to identifying and finding solutions to agricultural problems of developing countries. The Centre may then commission persons or institutions to conduct such research, in accordance with established policies and programs.

The formulation of ACIAR's policies explicitly links agricultural research with sustainability, in recognition of the need for agricultural productivity to deliver in the long term. The Corporate Plan links agricultural productivity to sustainability through systems, policies, practices and better technologies. This plan describes critical success factors for ACIAR and strategies to deliver against these, including the alignment of research outputs with improvements to productivity and sustainability for agricultural systems.

The arrangements described below, introduced during the year, detail how this is achieved in project evaluation and delivery.

Ongoing project monitoring, through both formalised Annual Project reports and informal liaison with and visits to project personnel in the field, occurs for all projects. Changes to project objectives must be approved by ACIAR, including those that may have environmental consequences. Objectives are developed and established during the project proposal phase, and include reference to the EPBC Act and mechanisms to trigger involvement from Environment Australia (EA), should this be deemed necessary (see below).

Organisations that seek to be involved in projects must ensure that their proposals meet their own EPBC/EA obligations. Thus the funding of research projects, ACIAR's main activity as an agency, is conducted under strict ESD criteria. Projects are formally reviewed, both by external experts and internally at their completion. Environmental impacts are included in these reviews, where they formed part of the project's objectives, or where they may have occurred as part of the project implementation. Such impacts are usually positive, such as reduction of chemicals or pesticides. Outcomes are added to the Centre's project information database.

ACIAR's outcome, 'Agriculture in developing countries and Australia is more productive and sustainable through the application of better technologies, practices, policies and systems', depends on the achievement of the Centre's two Outputs, which are described on page 136.

Output 1, relating to research addressing agricultural and natural resource management problems, is conducted by the funding of organisations to carry out research projects on the Centre's behalf. Proposals for research projects, as outlined below, are now formally assessed against ESD criteria.

The training of researchers (Output 2) focuses on enhancing their scientific skills and capacities within the context of research to achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems. Building this capacity enhances the ability of project personnel to contribute to the objectives of the project and transfers skills, such as through a workshop on Interpreting soil chemical analyses for the management of upland soils in Thailand, that can also be applied post-project.

The Centre operates its research projects under agreed research priorities established with partner countries that have included provision for environmental impact assessment.

ESD and Environment Australia liaison in project development

Following extensive consultation with Environment Australia ACIAR strengthened these arrangements to ensure compliance under s160 of the EPBC Act. The new arrangements came into effect in time for the start of the 2002–03 financial year.

The new arrangements are:

- assessment of environmental impacts, focusing on negative impacts, by the institution or organisation submitting a project development proposal, to allow ACIAR to fulfil its s160 obligations. Assessments are to be made within the context of the *EPBC Administrative Guidelines on Significance*, with the website address from which these can be downloaded included;
- requiring Research Program Managers (RPMs) to assess environmental impacts outlined in the proposal, having reference to, amongst other documents, the *EPBC Administrative Guidelines on Significance*. Research Program Managers are empowered to seek and document any consultation with the EPBC Referrals Unit on whether the impacts are sufficient to warrant a formal referral;
- examination by the formal In-House Review (IHR), responsible for assessing and recommending projects for approval, of potential environmental impacts under s160 of the EPBC Act. The IHR may recommend that Environment Australia be contacted to consult on potential impacts;
- formal approval by the Director being required as to whether ACIAR should proceed with a referral to the EPBC Referrals Unit; and
- formal signoff by the Board of Management for projects approved by IHR, including with reference to project documentation, such as relevant environmental assessments by the RPM and IHR. The Board may seek further information on environmental impacts by referring the project back to the RPM or IHR.

In addition Australian project proponents, as Australian research providers, are separately required to meet obligations under the EPBC Act relating to any relevant environmental impacts of their project activities in Australia.

Since being fully implemented in April 2003, one project has been recommended for initial discussions with EA regarding ESD implications. The results of these discussions are not yet available for reporting.

Many of ACIAR's projects lead to environmental benefits to Australia. However, the principal aim of ACIAR's project activities is delivering benefits to developing countries. Benefits to Australia, though frequently built into project work, are secondary to the objectives relating to developing countries.

An example is a project examining ecologically sustainable rat controls. The project is based around planting an early season rice crop and erecting barriers around the crop. Traps are erected at intervals along the barriers, allowing rats to be captured. By planting a series of crops, each at the centre of a circle, with the circles overlapping, it is possible to trap sufficient numbers of rats to break the breeding cycle.

Ecologically based rodent management has consistently demonstrated that increases in rice yield (range 0.1 to 0.9 t/ha) and reduced chemical

usage (non-specific and generally highly toxic) can be achieved. Chemical usage amongst farmers involved in the Indonesian node of the project dropped from 98% in 1999 to 46% in 2002. This also saw a reduction of the practice of mixing vehicle oil plus endosulfan and then spreading this on irrigated paddies. In non-project villages this environmentally destructive practice continued.

The Australian partners, CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, have, through their involvement in the project, gained increased knowledge of rat population cycles, breeding dynamics and taxonomy. This extra knowledge builds expertise and capacity that may be valuable in related research into mice plagues in Australia.

Through its projects the Centre contributes to a number of the objectives of the *EPBC Act*, both within Australia and in a number of developing countries. ACIAR's projects involve Australian researchers, with research relating to environmental science and management often being applied in both partner countries and Australia. Examples of such projects include:

- technical support for regional plant genetic resources development in the Pacific;
- the impact of changing agroforestry mosaics on catchment water yield and quality in Southeast Asia;
- water resources and salinity management in agricultural areas of inland northern China and northern Australia;
- the treatment of wool scouring effluents in Australia, China and India;
- sustainable mechanised dryland grain production;
- artisanal shark and ray fisheries in eastern Indonesia: their socioeconomic and fisheries characteristics and relationship to Australian resources;
- salinity management in southeast Australia, northeast Thailand and Laos; and
- development of forest health surveillance systems for South Pacific countries and Australia.

Internally ACIAR adheres to the principles of ESD. ACIAR is the sole occupant of the building it occupies. The Centre's infrastructure management is therefore responsible for all utility usage and costs. Energy-saving appliances, including time switches on low-consumption lighting, are utilised, as are energy ratings (with an aim of a four star minimum) for appliance purchases. ACIAR also recycles paper, using both secure and non-secure recycling. Energy-saving options are also utilised on the building's air-conditioning system. Further details on energy consumption are available in the annual Energy Use in Commonwealth Operations publication.