

A credible, effective and efficient organisation



Photo: Evolving Images.

As the lead environment and conservation agency in NSW, DECC ensures staff have the skills to deliver positive outcomes for the environment, and the organisation is managed cost-effectively and efficiently

Context

As the NSW public sector agency responsible for environment protection, conservation and natural resource management, DECC employs nearly 3,600 full-time equivalent staff, with more than 2,600 in regional locations.

DECC is a leader in environmental sustainability and has signed up to Sustainability Advantage, to reduce its environmental footprint and save money. DECC has developed an internal Sustainability Action Plan to enable the organisation to lead sustainability issues in the NSW Government sector. DECC has already reduced its overall energy consumption and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

DECC continues to encourage a diverse and well-trained workforce, with solid training programs and career development opportunities for staff. The high calibre of DECC staff was reflected in the number of awards won in 2007–08 for programs and services, such as NSW RiverBank and Montague Island Tours. DECC continues to attract new staff by running graduate, cadet and trainee work programs.

Since DECC was created in April 2007, some business functions have been realigned so that the organisation is well placed to address key environmental issues, such as climate change and natural resource management. In 2007–08, a new website was developed to communicate the wider focus of the new department. A work and development system and new awards were agreed to, meaning all staff are on equitable pay scales and work under the same conditions.

Outcomes

DECC aims to be a credible, effective and efficient organisation by:

- having sound corporate governance arrangements
- being a leader in environmental sustainability
- having effective internal and external communications systems
- providing a safe and healthy workplace
- establishing a DECC culture where everyone has the same goals
- nurturing and training staff and establishing smart systems
- keeping up-to-date with current national and international environmental knowledge and innovation
- providing excellent customer service.

Key drivers

Our drive to be a credible, effective and efficient organisation is informed by:

- *State Plan – A New Direction for NSW* (www.nsw.gov.au/stateplan/)
- DECC Corporate Plan 2008–2012 (www.environment.nsw.gov.au/whoweare/plan.htm)
- Results and Services Plan (financial documentation)
- DECC Sustainability Action Plan
- NSW Government Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy (www.environment.nsw.gov.au/warr/WRAPP.htm)
- NSW Government's Aboriginal Affairs Plan, *Two Ways Together* (www.daa.nsw.gov.au/policies/policy.html)
- occupational health and safety, equal employment opportunity and ethnic affairs priorities statement frameworks.

Performance indicators

We measure our organisational performance by the following performance indicators:

- Requests handled by DECC's Information Centre
- Visits to DECC websites
- DECC staff accidents and workers' compensation claims
- DECC staff representation in equal employment opportunity groups
- Payment of accounts
- Freedom of information requests



Photo: Richard Gregorio Photography

Corporate governance

Corporate governance reporting

Through corporate governance processes, DECC complies with statutory requirements and manages risk and performance. DECC implements effective corporate governance systems that:

- enhance organisational performance
- strengthen risk management
- enhance DECC's credibility and public reputation through transparency and accountability
- prevent and detect fraudulent, dishonest or unethical behaviour.

DECC monitors a comprehensive set of corporate performance indicators. They provide the basis of performance reports that are provided quarterly to DECC management and key external stakeholders, including NSW Treasury. In June 2007, DECC incorporated performance indicators for the agencies which joined DECC, to enable comprehensive coverage of its expanded roles and responsibilities.

Management

The Director General is the head of the Department of Environment and Climate Change and supports the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment. The Director General works with DECC managers and staff to achieve DECC objectives and ensure its resources are used efficiently.

DECC executive members consider corporate and budget performance at regular monthly and quarterly reporting meetings, to ensure DECC is meeting its responsibilities.

There are also a number of significant boards and committees that support the Director General and the executive to meet corporate objectives, including sound corporate governance. These include the EPA Board, the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council and the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee.

Risk management

DECC manages risk on an ongoing basis by systematically identifying, assessing, controlling and monitoring risk across the department. Risk management programs in place include those on:

- pesticide use in public places
- fire management
- park visitation
- occupational health and safety
- audit and compliance
- insurance arrangements.

In 2007–08, DECC continued to reduce the risk of fraud and corruption. The Fraud and Corruption Control Strategy sets out fraud policies, highlights activities that are susceptible to fraud and corruption, and details DECC's approach to preventing, detecting, reporting on and investigating fraud and corruption. The risk of fraud and corruption is also lessened through a strong Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Business Ethics that guide DECC's relationships with external providers and stakeholders.

As part of internal audits, key controls were tested in 2007–08 to ensure they were effective in minimising fraud and corruption.

Audit and compliance program

DECC's comprehensive internal audit program helps to ensure DECC programs and processes are complying with legislation and best practice management. Conservation compliance is overseen by the Conservation Audit and Compliance Committee (CACC), established under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. Environment protection, finance and administration are overseen by the Internal Audit Committee (IAC). Both committees meet quarterly. The internal auditors submit final reports to the appropriate audit committee and recommendations are monitored to ensure they are fully implemented. Refer to Appendix 5 for more details about these committees.

Audits completed during 2007–08 which were overseen by the CACC were:

- maintaining roads in national parks
- processing applications for Aboriginal cultural heritage consents and permits
- managing storage facilities and practices for cultural materials, historic artefacts and the sites register
- managing resort operators' compliance with environment and conservation standards
- managing threatened species
- audits of 17 plans of management for:
 - Tweed Heads Historic Site and Ukerebagh Nature Reserve
 - Cathedral Rock National Park
 - Lake Innes Nature Reserve
 - Yuragir National Park and State Conservation Area
 - Towarri National Park, Wingen Maid Nature Reserve and Cedar Bush Nature Reserve
 - Demon Nature Reserve
 - Nadgee Nature Reserve
 - Murramarang National Park, Brush Island Nature Reserve, Belowla Island Nature Reserve and Tollgate Island Nature Reserve
 - Miniary National Park
 - Munmorah State Conservation Area and Bird Island Nature Reserve
 - Abercrombie Karst Conservation Area
 - Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, and Lion Island, Long Island and Spectacle Island nature reserves
 - Botany Bay National Park (south)
 - Botany Bay National Park (north)
 - Mt Canobolas State Conservation Area
 - Tarawi Nature Reserve
 - Binnaway and Weetalibah nature reserves.



Photo: M. Van Ewijk

The plan of management for Murramarang National Park was audited in 2007–08.

Audits completed during 2007–08 and overseen by the IAC were:

- licensing the operations of national parks and reserves under the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*
- managing leave
- managing external grants received by DECC
- RTA DRIVES (Roads and Traffic Authority vehicle registration database)
- managing voluntary activities
- managing the commercial kangaroo quota allocation
- DECC's sustainability performance
- accreditation of auditors for contaminated sites
- contract management
- debtors management
- World Heritage funding
- regulatory record keeping.

The audits of both the operational and administrative processes found that the systems were predominantly sound. There were no areas identified with extreme risk ratings. The areas identified with high risk ratings were all controlled by the acceptance of a range of recommendations. The DECC audit committees monitored progress towards implementing the recommendations. In all cases, the committee was satisfied that issues were being adequately addressed and actions were being taken to prevent risks from occurring.

External reviews

During 2007–08, the Audit Office of NSW carried out its annual comprehensive audits of DECC's financial reporting and performance systems.

In May 2008, the Auditor-General NSW released a follow-up audit on *Protecting our Rivers* which was an audit completed in 2003. The 2003 audit had looked at ways in which the government was protecting NSW river water quality, and made a number of recommendations. The 2008 audit examined what progress had been made since 2003. The Audit Office found that a comprehensive monitoring program for river health is now under way based on the Government's Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting Strategy for natural resources. As this data collection progresses, NSW will be able to undertake risk assessments of rivers for river health and water quality.

In June 2008, the Audit Office released the performance audit on *Recycling and Reuse of Waste by the NSW Public Sector: Department of Environment and Climate Change*. The Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy (WRAPP) is a whole-of-government policy that aims to make NSW Government agencies and state owned corporations model waste managers by reducing waste, increasing recycling, and increasing purchases of products with recycled content. DECC is responsible for coordinating this policy within the NSW Government.

The audit assessed whether DECC had successfully supported WRAPP by managing its implementation in other public sector agencies as well as DECC, and whether its implementation had been effective in reducing waste and improving recycling and reuse throughout the public sector.

Overall, the performance audit found that DECC has done a good job in promoting WRAPP's implementation in public sector agencies. Over the last six years the public sector had reduced the proportion of waste going to landfill and had increased its use of materials with recycled content. The audit also identified some opportunities to further improve the program. As WRAPP is now ten-years-old, DECC agreed that it should be reviewed to ensure it remained relevant and reflected community expectations about the environment. In 2008–09, DECC will therefore implement Audit Office recommendations.

Business continuity planning

DECC works to minimise disruption of services to the public in the event of an emergency through business continuity plans. Some operational areas of DECC have special disaster recovery frameworks for their area of business.

Intellectual property

Intellectual property held by DECC includes copyright, plant breeding rights, trademarks, confidential information and trade secrets, and Aboriginal intellectual property. The Intellectual Property Management Framework includes guidelines and an asset management system for significant items.

Asset management systems

DECC manages a wide range of assets, classified as land and buildings, water entitlements, plant and equipment and infrastructure systems. Many aspects of asset management are undertaken regionally, such as building maintenance and replacement of plant and equipment, while large-scale acquisitions, overall asset management systems and asset financing are managed centrally. DECC employs a continuous improvement approach to asset management, using monitoring and review to inform agency-wide improvements.

Ethical behaviour

DECC strives to be an ethical organisation and recognises that this requires both corporate and individual commitment. A range of measures are in place to help resolve ethical dilemmas as they arise and enable DECC to respond to unethical decisions and practices if they are identified.

DECC's ethical framework is detailed in a number of policies and guidelines relating to ethical conduct, managing complaints and allegations, preventing fraud and corruption and making a protected disclosure under the *Protected Disclosures Act 1994*.

DECC updated its Code of Ethical Conduct in June 2007 and published the full text in its 2006–07 annual report. The Code of Ethical Conduct applies to everyone engaged by DECC and describes the ethical framework that should guide the actions, decisions and behaviour of employees.

DECC works to ensure the privacy of staff and clients is protected. During 2007–08, one application was received for access to personal information and all documents were released. No complaints were received under the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* and the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002*.

Corporate governance activities relating to financial management, consumer response and freedom of information are reported elsewhere in this chapter. Other corporate governance activities are reported in the annual report appendices:

- SES performance statements (see Appendix 2)
- significant statutory boards and committees (see Appendix 5)
- legislation (see Appendix 7)
- Statement of Affairs (see Appendix 10)
- freedom of information (see Appendix 11)
- Guarantee of Service (see Appendix 12).



Photo: DECC.

A leader in sustainability and environmental performance

Sustainability

As the lead environment and climate change agency in NSW, DECC is committed to improving sustainability in line with NSW Government policy, and to becoming carbon neutral.

In May 2008, the Premier announced the Sustainability Policy for the NSW Government (see www.environment.nsw.gov.au/government/policy.htm). This policy outlines ways in which the NSW Government will reduce water and energy use, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and waste generation, and improve fleet management and sustainable purchasing. The NSW Government is also committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2020.

DECC has developed an internal Sustainability Action Plan, which will allow DECC to lead sustainability issues in the NSW Government sector. The action plan has been informed by a greenhouse gas inventory undertaken in August 2007, and by signing up to the Sustainability Advantage program run by DECC. The action plan highlights activities that DECC will undertake in the latter half of 2008 and beyond. DECC's focus for 2008–09 will be resource efficiency and staff engagement in sustainability initiatives. The following sections provide further information on areas where DECC is working to achieve sustainability outcomes.

Energy

Through sound building management, changes to the vehicle fleet and changes in usage of the fleet, DECC reduced overall energy consumption in 2006–07 by 7% from the previous year to 169,718 gigajoules. DECC's greenhouse gas emissions decreased by 10% over the same period to 18,619 tonnes CO₂ equivalent (tCO₂ –e) (Energy data sourced from OSCAR October 2008).

Data for 2007–08 has not yet been compiled and will be reported in the 2008–09 annual report.

DECC has been working with the State Contracts Control Board to extend the existing electricity contract for small sites (where consumption is less than 160,000 kilowatts (Kw) per annum). This contract continues to ensure that green power, accredited by the Office of Renewable Energy Regulator, is one available option.

DECC is currently purchasing more green power than the minimum standard of 6% set out in the NSW Sustainability Policy. Over 2007–08, some large sites (those using more than 160,000 Kw per annum), increased their green power procurement to exceed the 6% minimum:

■ CASE STUDY

Solar energy in western NSW

DECC reduced its carbon footprint in far western NSW by increasing its use of solar energy to power most aspects of its national parks offices, including computers, lights and other electronic devices.

In 2007–08, the grid-connected solar power systems generated 40,637 kWh, the equivalent of the energy used by four domestic houses. As a result, these offices obtained credits from Country Energy for channelling excess power back into the local electricity grid.

The use of solar power is decreasing carbon emissions, and it is anticipated that overall operating costs in these offices will also be decreased.



Photo: J. Pedler, DECC.

Solar panels on the roof on DECC's White Cliffs office.

% green power	Site	Locality
100%	Lane Cove Tourist Park	Macquarie Park, Sydney
25%	59 Goulburn St	Sydney
25%	Weerona Rd	Lidcombe (2 accounts), Sydney
10%	43 Bridge St	Hurstville, Sydney
10%	6 Rutledge St	Queanbeyan

In addition, six remote DECC sites in western NSW are generating solar energy (see case study).

Energy efficiency initiatives in the information technology area are also under way to reduce DECC's demand for electricity. For example, the Lidcombe Data Centre, which has been designed to be carbon neutral, is using:

- a geothermal earth loop, where warm water is cooled in underground pipes and used to cool the data centre room
- a power factor correction unit, which increases the efficiency of the energy supplied to equipment, reducing the inefficiency rate from 20% to 3%
- an energy metering system, which enables changes in demand to be monitored in real time.

DECC again participated in Earth Hour in Sydney on 29 March 2008, ensuring that lights, computers, computer monitors and non-essential office equipment were switched off. In addition, DECC staff statewide were encouraged to take part in Earth Hour, both within DECC premises and at home.

Office accommodation

In accordance with the Premier's Memorandum 2004-4, all buildings leased by DECC must have a minimum 3.5 star rating (using the Australian Building Greenhouse Rating (ABGR) scheme). As an organisation, DECC strives to better this minimum standard wherever it is practical, in both metropolitan and regional office accommodation.

In the previous reporting period, a number of initiatives promoted by DECC resulted in achieving five star ratings (ABGR) in both the Goulburn Street, Sydney and Bridge Street, Hurstville tenancies. ABGR has been incorporated into the new National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) and in 2008-09, DECC will upgrade the ABGR ratings, in its larger office buildings of over 1,000m² in size, to NABERS ratings. This will set DECC on target for meeting the requirements of the NSW Sustainability Policy, which sets targets for government-owned or leased buildings to achieve NABERS ratings.

Whenever office accommodation refurbishments are planned, sustainable workplace initiatives, such as energy and water efficiency and recycling systems, are incorporated into the fit out plans. Where possible, DECC arranges for outmoded fluorescent tubes and unserviceable T5 replacement energy efficient tubes to be collected so their mercury, alloy, glass and phosphor powder content are separated, refined and recycled.

In 2007-08, DECC undertook office fit outs on levels 12 and 25 of its Goulburn Street tenancy. DECC negotiated the acquisition of recycled workstations from another CBD building at no cost. This furniture was bound for landfill but was perfectly serviceable and has been installed within the tenancy. Over 80% of the existing electrical and data cabling was also reused in the fit outs, which greatly reduced waste and cost.

By working closely with the building management of the Goulburn Street office, DECC has been able to upgrade the male toilets to a waterless urinal system. The upgrade is expected to be completed in August 2008. DECC is currently investigating opportunities to roll out waterless urinals in other office accommodation.

Green fleet

DECC's Fleet Improvement Plan contains performance strategies to achieve the targets set by the Cleaner NSW Government Fleet Program. Progress towards these targets is measured by calculating an average environmental performance score for the fleet, using the system adopted for the NSW Clean Car Benchmarks. This score measures vehicular greenhouse gas emissions (as CO₂) and air quality impacts (as noxious emissions). The plan also contains a target of a 20% reduction in greenhouse gases generated by a fleet annually, using a baseline of 2004-05.

While DECC has calculated environmental performance scores for its fleet, the reduction in greenhouse gases against the baseline data could not be calculated. With the formation of the Department of Environment and Conservation, amalgamated fuel data was not available until 2005-06, and with the subsequent creation of DECC, this data was no longer comparable. New targets for the government fleet will be announced in 2008-09. DECC is currently preparing a baseline data set of fuel emissions for 2007-08.

By implementing its Fleet Improvement Plan, DECC achieved the mandated average environmental performance score of 12 out of 20 for its passenger vehicle fleet as at 30 June 2008.

DECC uses diesel vehicles for fire fighting and as associated support vehicles for health and safety reasons, as diesel is less likely to ignite. The environmental performance score for the diesel operational fleet with a gross vehicle mass (GVM) of less than 3.5 tonnes is 7.29. As a result, the overall score for the DECC fleet is 9.35 out of 20.

In terms of greenhouse gas emissions, in 2007-08 DECC's fleet generated approximately 5,405 t CO₂ -e. This represents an increase of 8% over 2006-07. DECC is continually striving to reduce the physical size of its fleet. However, due to recent amalgamations with other government agencies, there has been an increase in the number of small passenger vehicles in the fleet from 252 to 289 over 2007-08. DECC has also increased the area of reserves it manages by 41,149 hectares since the previous reporting period, meaning rangers must travel further to patrol and monitor sites.

One of the initiatives implemented to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions is a shift to more hybrid vehicles. The number of hybrid vehicles has been increased from 26 vehicles to 34 and staff are encouraged to use these wherever possible for business purposes.

Biofuels and other alternative fuels

Biofuels, such as ethanol and biodiesel, are considered as renewable fuel sources when produced from agricultural crops, their residues, and animal fats or cooking oils. DECC has adopted the use of E10 (ethanol blended petroleum) in all its passenger vehicle fleet wherever it is available. Regular bulletins are distributed to staff encouraging the use of biofuels. Pool vehicle folders clearly state the advantage in refuelling with E10 and stickers have been affixed to fuel filler caps as a further reminder to use E10 fuel.

In the reporting period, 7.7% of DECC's fuel usage was E10. As E10 becomes increasingly available, DECC will be able to increase its usage and will report on this increase in 2008–09. Such usage is reported quarterly to the DECC executive.

Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy

As well as coordinating the NSW Government's Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy (WRAPP) in other agencies and state owned corporations, DECC is responsible for putting WRAPP principles into practice in its own organisation, and reports every two years (as required) on its own performance.

The most recent WRAPP data collected by DECC covers the period 2006–07. A snapshot of DECC's progress in reducing waste is provided in the table below. This is expressed as a percentage of the total amount of waste recovered for recycling compared with the average recycling rate based on the WRAPP reports for 106 state agencies and state owned corporations:

Material of concern	DECC	State average
office paper	83%	80%
cardboard	93%	76%
toner cartridges	95%	47%
total vegetation, construction and demolition waste	80%	92%
steel	100%	88%
asphalt	100%	96%
bricks	96%	31%
glass	96%	22%
concrete	77%	39%
non-ferrous metals	75%	93%

DECC has reviewed waste management practices and commenced implementing systems, where possible, to recycle co-mingled containers from office kitchen areas (62% recovered). In May 2008, DECC undertook a WRAPP audit of its head office in Goulburn Street, Sydney as part of the Greening Head Office program. The recommendations from this audit are being implemented, with an improved system to be introduced in the latter half of 2008.

Another key requirement of WRAPP is to increase the purchase of products with recycled content where they are cost-effective and competitive. The table below outlines a snapshot of DECC procurement of products with recycled content over the period 2006–07:

Material purchased	Amount with recycled content	State average
copy paper	97%	45%
printing and publications paper	90%	19%
landscaping materials	78%	88%
fill	82%	61%
sand	76%	30%

To further improve agency performance under WRAPP, in 2009 DECC is planning to review its procurement manual, internal staff training modules and internal staff guidance procedures to highlight the importance of sustainability in these areas.



Photo: B. Coates, DECC

Internal and external connections

Environment Line

The Environment Line is DECC's main enquiries and advice line. Staff take calls from business, industry and the public seeking information and advice on environment protection, climate change issues, rebates for water saving initiatives, native plants and animals, visiting national parks and reserves, native vegetation and reporting pollution incidents.

In 2007–08, the Environment Line received 228,584 calls, up from 207,983 in 2006–07. This increase reflects DECC's wider range of responsibilities, particularly for water and energy related rebates. The Environment Line also received 6,835 reports of pollution (almost the same as last year) and another 7,286 reports relating to noise, littering and smoke from vehicles, which is a 12% decline from last year. Smoky vehicle reports have been declining steadily for some years which may indicate an improvement in vehicle maintenance or the age of vehicles on NSW roads.

Improvements to the website and intranet

The website is one of the main ways DECC informs the public of its activities and strategies. The website also provides a range of online services, making it easier for people to access publications, apply for licences or record sightings of native species. In February 2008, DECC finished integrating many separate websites into a new integrated site which includes climate change and natural resource information.

As part of this upgrade, information for visitors to national parks and reserves is being made more user-friendly and relevant. The first stage of this development, including new mapping features, will be completed in July 2008. Further work in 2008–09 will improve the content and style of the site, including more photographs to help give visitors a better appreciation of where they may want to visit.

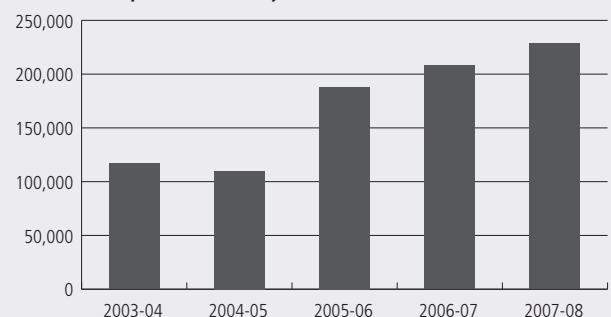
An important feature of the new site will be the content management system that will be available to staff in branches and regions so they can directly change and update content. This will help ensure that the website is current and improve efficiency.

■ PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

Requests handled by DECC's Information Centre

Definition: The Information Centre provides information by telephone via the Environment Line, by email and face-to-face; through reception services and switchboards; and in answer to inquiries received via the website, fax, email and mail. The following statistics do not include pollution incident and motor vehicle reports, or any calls after hours. Refer to the performance indicator *Environment Line – incident reports about air quality, odours or noise from regulated premises* in chapter 3 for incident reports, and Appendix 13.

Number of requests handled by DECC's Information Centre



Interpretation: DECC public information services were integrated in 2005–06. Since then, requests handled by the Information Centre have risen steadily by approximately 10% each year. In 2007–08 over 228,000 requests were handled (not including reports of pollution incidents). A major reason for this increase is the Climate Change Fund rebate program for water conservation and energy efficiency in residential households. Email inquiries increased by 29%, due at least to the additional websites now integrated into the DECC website.

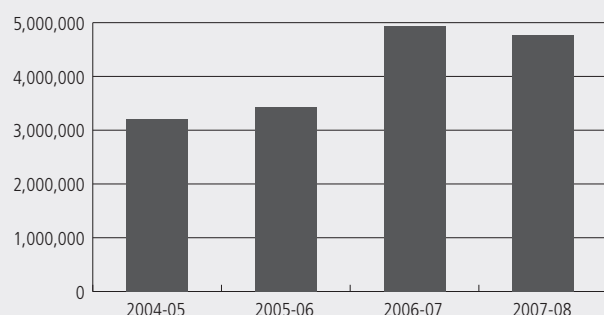
DECC has many staff located outside metropolitan areas. The internal intranet site, known as DECCnet, is an important way to communicate with staff and provide them with tools and resources to do their work. With the formation of DECC, development work was undertaken in 2007–08 to start creating a new integrated site for all staff. This work will be a priority for completion in 2008–09. It will benefit from using the same technology employed on the DECC website.

■ PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

Visits to DECC websites

Definition: This indicator measures the total number of visits to some of DECC's websites. The statistics include visits to the former Environment Protection Authority and National Parks and Wildlife Service websites and the corporate DECC website. They do not include visits to the former Resource NSW or Botanic Gardens websites, or to the websites of agencies which joined DECC in April 2007. A 'visit' consists of one or more page views by a single visitor.

Total visits to DECC websites



Interpretation: Usage of the DECC websites continues to be very strong. It confirms the vital role that the sites play in delivering information and services to stakeholders and the public. In 2007–08, DECC integrated a number of DECC-managed websites into a single site. This accounts for the apparent drop in visitor numbers as many visitors need only now access one site and are only counted as a single visit. Further integration of other DECC managed sites will be completed in 2008–09.

- developing an Aboriginal Community Engagement Framework to ensure that DECC's policies and programs affecting Aboriginal communities are developed in an environment of positive Aboriginal community engagement
- supporting the Aboriginal Staff Network Annual Conference, held at Broken Hill
- conducting approximately 40 research and heritage projects in collaboration with Aboriginal community groups
- holding an Aboriginal Co-management Conference, which included representatives from all Aboriginal co-management committees
- launching *LandAlive*, funded by the Environmental Trust, which seeks to work with Aboriginal landowners, including Local Aboriginal Land Councils, to help them consider options for managing their lands, including the BioBanking Scheme
- funding six programs to prevent and clean-up illegal waste dumping on Aboriginal-owned lands
- releasing a draft illegal dumping handbook and DVD for Aboriginal communities, to equip Aboriginal landowners with knowledge and further sources of information and help, so they can better deal with illegal dumping on their lands
- supporting the development of a booklet for the Aboriginal community entitled *Baakandji and Budjiti people: living and working on the Paroo River* (representatives of the Baakandji and Budjiti communities are members of the steering committee that manages the Paroo River Wetlands Ramsar site).

The DECC Welcome to Country Protocols and Procedures Policy was endorsed by the DECC executive in consultation with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee.

The policy provides practical advice for DECC staff in observing the appropriate protocols for recognising Aboriginal people at official events and events where the NSW Government is a major sponsor.

Aboriginal affairs

DECC's Aboriginal Affairs Strategy and Coordination Branch coordinates and monitors agency implementation of *Two Ways Together* and NSW State Plan actions that are relevant to Aboriginal people.

DECC is responsible for leading the development of the Building (Aboriginal) Community Resilience Strategy under Priority F1 in the NSW State Plan. This strategy aims to improve the health and education of, and social outcomes for, Aboriginal people. This strategy will guide long-term government and community planning strategies, and prioritise actions and services to achieve the maximum benefits for communities.

Some initiatives DECC undertook in 2007–08 to promote and respect Aboriginal culture and heritage include:

- continuing to implement DECC's Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2006–2008, with 8.27% of the workforce being from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background
- including Aboriginal representation in the membership of 64% of DECC's statutory and significant advisory boards and committees

First national park for East Timor

In August 2007, the interim Timor-Leste Government declared its first national park as its last act of Parliament. Over the last six years, DECC staff have worked with organisations such as Birdlife International and Australian Volunteers International to identify, assess and establish this park. The Nino Konos Santana National Park includes 68,000 hectares of land and 55,600 hectares of sea to protect some of East Timor's most significant natural, cultural and marine heritage.



Photo: J. Denby.

DECC staff member Peter Kennedy helped develop a management plan for Songshan National Nature Reserve in China.

From Minnamurra to Beijing

Peter Kennedy, the manager of Minnamurra Rainforest Centre in Budderoo National Park, helped to develop a management plan for the Songshan National Nature Reserve in China in 2007–08. Peter was asked to help formulate the plan due to his recognised expertise, skills and experience in nature-based tourism management and development and delivery of environmental education. The Songshan Reserve is reminiscent of the degraded ecological status of the Minnamurra Reserve before it was transferred to the National Parks and Wildlife Service in 1986.



Photo: A. Weeraratne, DECC

A safe and healthy workplace

Occupational health and safety

The number of injuries suffered by staff reduced this year to 7.5 per 100 employees compared with 8.3 per 100 employees in 2006–07. DECC's Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Strategy, and Injury Management Strategy and Improvement Plan 2005–2008, was effectively implemented throughout the period with the following key milestones achieved:

- completion of the Manual Tasks Injury Prevention Project, which aims to reduce soft tissue injuries and which is now being implemented
- refinement and piloting of the online OH&S hazard and incident management system in preparation for rollout in September 2008
- development of online learning packages for implementation in the second half of 2008
- completion of a comprehensive internal audit program to increase the consistency of OH&S and injury management across DECC
- review and ongoing refinement of a key hazard management policy and guidelines to ensure industry best practice
- comprehensive overhaul of the internal OH&S intranet site to ensure easy and timely access of information for all staff across DECC.

DECC, in consultation with the OH&S Advisory Group, is currently reviewing the strategy and plan in line with the Public Sector OH&S and Injury Management Improvement Strategy.

Occupational health and safety statistics for 2007–08:

Accidents reported: 575

Claims: 270

*Cost of claims: \$2,154,041

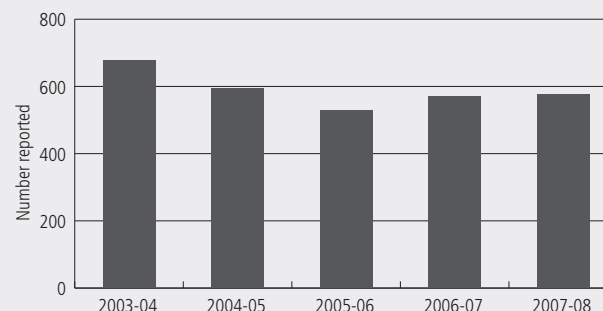
*Allianz data; includes all workplace injuries

■ PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

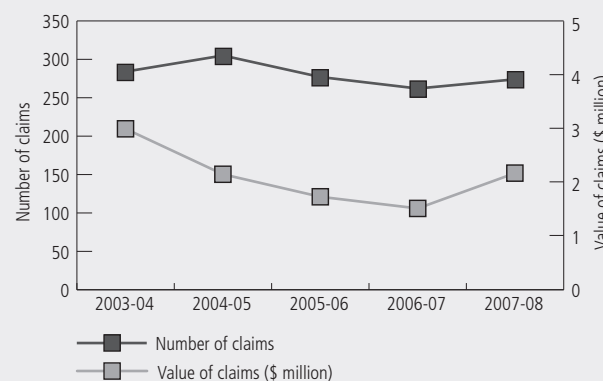
DECC staff accidents and workers compensation claims

Definition: This indicator measures work-related incidents and accidents, and any resulting claim for compensation. The number of reported accidents and incidents indicates staff-reported events that could have led to, or did cause, an injury. The number and dollar value indicators measure the number and cost of injuries for which a claim was made. Claims are usually lodged and recorded immediately after an incident, although claims may be lodged and costs incurred for several years after. These costs and claims are reported in the year in which the incident occurred, so historical trend data may vary from year to year.

Accidents and incidents reported



Workers' compensation claims and their value



Interpretation: Data for years before 2007–08 relates to former Department of Environment and Conservation staff only. This year, the number of incidents reported were similar, at 575, to the previous year at 570. The number of total compensation claims, however, increased from 262 in 2006–07 to 270 in 2007–08, although on an equivalent full-time basis the rate decreased from 8.3 claims per 100 employees in 2006–07 to 7.5 claims per 100 employees in 2007–08. An increase in total claims costs for 2007–08 resulted from increased medical costs and lost time related to surgical intervention.



A 'one DECC' culture

Corporate integration

Since DECC was established in April 2007, significant progress has been made in a relatively short period of time to integrate both staff and programs. As part of the integration, DECC staff have experienced a number of corporate changes, including a change in surroundings, office dynamics, processes and procedures and corporate brand. The following initiatives have helped to achieve successful organisational integration:

- a conference for senior staff
- the realignment of branches and divisions to reflect organisational priorities
- the successful integration of human resources information and pay records to minimise disruption to staff
- an update of personnel files
- the rebranding of building signage
- the introduction of a new accounting system
- the completion of accommodation planning so all staff have been successfully relocated, where necessary
- the integration of library services.

Industrial awards

During the reporting period, DECC finalised and implemented three new awards:

1. *Crown Employees (Department of Environment and Climate Change – Parks and Wildlife Group) Conditions of Employment Award* - this award provides conditions of employment for staff working in the Parks and Wildlife Group, with the exception of:
 - (a) field officers – only field staff in Kosciuszko National Park and staff employed under the *Flight Officers Enterprise Agreement 2006* are subject to this award
 - (b) staff transferred under Administrative Orders which established the Department of Environment and Climate Change
 - (c) Senior Executive Service staff and Senior Officers
 - (d) staff employed in the Botanic Gardens Trust
 - (e) staff employed under the award noted below in point 2.
2. *Crown Employees (Department of Environment and Climate Change – Parks and Wildlife Group) Field Officers and Skilled Trades Salaries and Conditions Award 2007* – this award is specific to field staff and trades staff located in the Parks and Wildlife Group.
3. *Crown Employees (Department of Environment and Climate Change) General Award* – this award provides the conditions of employment for all staff and casual employees of DECC with the exception of those listed in 1 (a) to (e) and 2 above.



Minister Verity Firth (left) and DECC's Director General, Lisa Corbyn (right), attended the senior staff conference in April 2008.

DECC also finalised and implemented new conditions of employment for officers employed in the Botanic Gardens Trust (BGT).

The new conditions for the various groups within DECC as an outcome of these negotiations include:

- (a) a new classification scale for field staff that recognises the need for additional career path opportunities
- (b) standard recording of hours of work under flexible working hours conditions and enhancements to the accrual and taking of credit hours worked – this has removed confusion for staff and enabled managers and staff to better balance their working hours and external commitments
- (c) access to financial assistance for ongoing study – while available to some agencies before the formation of DECC, these conditions are now available across the department
- (d) a common work and development system – before the formation of DECC, there were differing programs in place to manage performance and staff development. By providing a common system for all staff, there is equity and an enhanced ability to recognise and reward the efforts of staff and their contribution to the work of DECC.

Other industrial instruments have been either reviewed to consolidate entitlements and conditions, or rescinded as obsolete awards. These include:

a. Reviewed

Crown Employees (Royal Botanic Gardens Building and Mechanical Trades Staff) Award

Crown Employees (Parks and Gardens – Horticulture and Rangers Staff) Consent Award 2007

b. Rescinded

Senior Managers (National Parks and Wildlife Service) Award 2004

DECC was also invited to participate in the review of the Commentary and Guidelines on Conduct and Performance Provisions – Part 2.7 of the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002*; the review of the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002*; and the State Wage Case Taskforce.



Photo: Bob Peters, DECC.

Skilled people and smart systems

Learning and development framework

The major training programs coordinated through the learning and development framework were in the areas of policy development, contract management, dealing with threatening and aggressive behaviour, project management, financial management and Aboriginal cultural awareness.

The learning and development framework will be linked to the new work and development system which has been developed to ensure the work and goals of staff are aligned with those of the corporate plan.

The new system will incorporate a team and individual staff awards system to recognise exceptional performance. It will be supported by an extensive training program for staff and managers, which began with a session for the DECC executive on 13 June 2008. Training will be provided for all managers and staff across the state over the coming months.

The work and development system will assist in ensuring that DECC remains an employer of choice. It will be instrumental in helping DECC meet State Plan obligations, corporate objectives and operational targets. The system and its implementation will be audited regularly.

Aboriginal cultural awareness training continues to be included as a corporate priority to ensure all staff understand and are familiar with the needs of Aboriginal staff, individuals and communities. Feedback from participants indicates that Aboriginal cultural awareness training continues to be highly valued throughout DECC.

Summary of formal staff training 2007–08

Total number of formal training days	Average number of formal training days per staff member
4985 days	1.88 days*

* Does not include inductions and other external studies subsidised by DECC

Graduate development program

The graduate development program incorporates a considerable investment in learning and development. Graduates are selected on the basis of their potential to contribute significantly to the achievement of DECC's goals and business outcomes. The outcomes of the program have been extremely positive. Of the 15 graduates, including two Aboriginal graduates, who entered the program in February 2007, 10 have found positions in DECC or other public sector agencies. Three others will complete the program in February 2009. A review of the program is currently being undertaken to inform the next intake of graduate candidates in 2010.

Aboriginal cadetship program

Through the Aboriginal cadetship program, cadets undertake full-time study and 12 weeks of practical work experience each year to complete their undergraduate degree, with guaranteed employment on successful completion. In 2008, an additional seven Aboriginal cadetships were established to make a total of 17 Aboriginal cadets. The recruitment process for the next intake will commence in August 2008. DECC supports this program as an indicator of its commitment to *Two Ways Together* and recognises that Aboriginal people have an important role in environmental management.



Photo: DECC.

Aboriginal cadets training in DECC's Hurstville office.

Aboriginal traineeships

DECC has entered a partnership arrangement with the Western Institute of TAFE to provide Aboriginal traineeships which will lead to the nationally recognised qualification of Certificate II in conservation and land management. The traineeships are for a 12-month period and allow trainees to combine full-time practical work with structured training sessions throughout the year. The 2008 intake comprises 11 new trainees undertaking trainee field officer and trainee interpretive assistant positions. DECC's recruitment of trainees complements the Aboriginal cadetship program.

Fire management training

Fire management training continues to support the professionalism and safety of departmental staff involved in fire management roles. DECC has approximately 900 trained fire fighters and hundreds of trained incident management staff. To ensure it is prepared for bushfires in national parks and adjacent lands, DECC conducts a Fire Fighter Health and Fitness Program each year for staff. The program is completed before the start of each fire season. It is based on national and international standards and consists of an annual medical assessment and fitness test. The program aims to improve employee safety and performance and ensure firefighters are only assigned tasks they are medically and physically able to carry out. During the year 1,163 staff attempted the assessment and 93% succeeded.

Sixteen firefighters from all Western Branch regions attended the first Divisional Commander fire training course in Dubbo. Divisional Commanders are senior firefighters who coordinate firefighting operations and manage on-the-ground operations that may involve firefighters from across the state, and other agencies. This training will help Western Branch firefighters manage tactical fire operations more safely and effectively.

Increased scientific expertise

DECC now has around 300 staff with expertise in most areas of environmental and natural resource science. This year, significant Commonwealth funding has enabled DECC to establish baseline data for, and monitoring programs to assess the condition of, vegetation, fauna, estuaries and soils. The funding has also helped develop a program to gather information about the capacity of land managers in natural resource management. This work complements existing Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting Strategy programs, which are reported on in chapter 4.

DECC's scientific activities are designed to provide environmental, cultural heritage and natural resource decision makers in NSW with quality information to work towards the goals and priorities outlined in the NSW State Plan and DECC's corporate plan. In April 2008, DECC released a Science Statement which describes the drivers, values and approaches that will deliver positive outcomes for the environment, natural resource management and cultural heritage. The Science Statement is available on www.environment.nsw.gov.au/whoweare/science.htm.

Library services

DECC's internal library services help staff to maintain and develop their knowledge. Access to national and international best practice and research broaden staff knowledge and understanding of policy and science. In the last couple of years, DECC library services have taken advantage of the development of resources available electronically and have delivered a range of online bibliographic databases and journals to staff on their desktops. This has significantly improved access to information for all staff, especially those based outside metropolitan areas. This year, the library also completed the integration of catalogues from DECC's predecessor agencies which has made it easier for staff to search the library collection.

Public recognition for our staff and programs

This year, a number of DECC staff and programs received awards for their outstanding contributions to public service and environment protection in NSW. These awards are a testament to the high calibre of staff in DECC.

Public Service Medals:

Two DECC employees, Barbara Richardson, Manager Water Policy, and Mark Johnston, Regional Manager Northern Rivers, were awarded Public Service Medals for their outstanding contributions to public service in natural resource management and environment protection in NSW.

2007 Ecological Society of Australia Member Service Prize:

Dr Ross Peacock, Native Vegetation Science Section, Scientific Services Division, was awarded the 2007 Ecological Society of Australia Member Service Prize for his outstanding contribution to ecology.

Academy of Natural Sciences Philadelphia Jessup Award:

Hugh Jones, Senior Natural Resources Officer, Scientific Services Division, won a Jessup Award and spent six weeks working at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia.

NSW Government Heritage Award:

Gai Taylor, Cape Byron Trust volunteer, won one of 20 statewide awards for her outstanding work in the Cape Byron Lighthouse Maritime Museum.

Premier's Public Sector Awards:

RiverBank environmental water recovery program – Silver
Wollemi Pine conservation and sustainable horticulture project – nomination

2008 National Trust Heritage Awards:

Conservation Built Heritage for Project over \$1 million
Award for the 2.5 km National Pass Walking Track –
Wentworth Falls

Conservation Landscape Heritage Award for the Lake
Wollumboola Little Tern Conservation Program

Education Award for the 'Trap that Toad' school program

Highly commended award to Sugarloaf Point Lighthouse
restoration

Institute of Landscape Architects Awards:

Parks Facilities Manual

Master Plan for Bobbin Head and Apple Tree Bay

NSW Tourism Awards – Ecotourism category:

Montague Island Tours

Lane Cove River Tourist Park

National Tourism Award for Ecotourism:

Montague Island Tours

Master Builders Association of NSW Excellence in Construction Awards:

Surf Safety Centre, Garie Beach Royal National Park, took
out three awards in the categories of Sporting Facilities up
to \$5 million, Environmental Management and Best Use of
Timber.



Photo: DECC.

DECC won a NSW Tourism Award for its Montague Island Tours in 2007–08. Preston Cope (right) accepted the award for DECC.

Equal employment opportunity

DECC, like all NSW Government agencies, is committed to equal employment opportunity (EEO). As an employer, DECC recruits and employs staff on the basis of merit and values its skilled and diverse workforce.

Each year, DECC submits an Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan to the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet in accordance with Part 9A of the *Anti Discrimination Act 1977* to outline its strategies to eliminate and ensure the absence of discrimination in employment and promote EEO. DECC reported on a range of initiatives to promote EEO within the organisation, including Aboriginal cultural awareness training, employment programs and the Spokeswomen's program.

During the year DECC continued to offer cadetships (Aboriginal cadet rangers), traineeships (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal field officers and an interpretive assistant) and apprenticeships (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal apprentice horticulturalists). DECC continues to facilitate increased representation of Aboriginal people linked to broader workforce planning strategies.

DECC is currently developing an agency-wide Disability Action Plan. DECC will continue to focus on improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities, and access and services for DECC staff with disabilities and the public. DECC is committed to enhancing access for people with disabilities to its many national parks and reserves, lookouts, picnic areas, tracks and camping grounds. Information on these facilities is available on www.environment.nsw.gov.au/whoweare/disability.htm.

Spokeswomen program

The Spokeswomen strategic plan 2007–08 aimed to ensure that all DECC female staff have opportunities to reach their full potential in a workplace where there is strong acceptance of equal employment opportunity principles. The plan promoted gender equity and career development opportunities and provided for a number of new initiatives, including:

- career development – 24 participants from all divisions and regions participated in the Springboard women's career development program. Spokeswomen also sponsored six women in management positions on a Career Resiliency program.
- stronger links were made with the Aboriginal Network to support Aboriginal women and sponsorship for NAIDOC week celebrations.
- an increased capacity to support women in regional NSW.
- diversity principles which were promoted by a targeted election process.
- a communication strategy – regular newsletters were issued to inform all DECC employees of Spokeswomen activities.

The second annual DECC Spokeswomen's Recognition Awards were presented by the then Minister Verity Firth. These awards recognised women who had excelled in customer service. Ten women from across the department received awards. The overall 'DECC Woman of the Year' award went to Aine Gliddon.

Over 130 women and men attended the annual Spokeswomen workshops around NSW in March 2008 to celebrate International Women's Day. Workshop highlights were:

- 'Skills for work and life' – six DECC women located in remote areas such as Broken Hill and Cobar were sponsored to attend this Sydney workshop
- 'Work and Family' – this workshop addressed special demands placed on those with carers' responsibilities
- 'Getting ahead' and 'Making work for you' – these workshops addressed flexible work models.

Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement

DECC has developed an Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS) which outlines DECC's key strategies and actions for 2006–10 to help achieve the Government's policies in ethnic affairs and the principles of cultural diversity as described in the *Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000*. The strategies and actions outlined in the EAPS 2006–10 implement the principles of cultural diversity in the context of DECC's corporate goals.

- DECC continues to work with the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW and employs 18 bilingual educators to promote awareness, knowledge and understanding of sustainable living in a culturally appropriate context. This year, workshops were delivered in eight community languages to 3,937 participants from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Chapter 2 contains more information on this program.
- DECC researched cultural perceptions, attachments and needs relating to the Georges River parklands. A book on the research and findings is being prepared for publication in 2009.
- DECC developed a discussion paper relating to the values, needs and interests of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities regarding parks, which will inform park policies, management and the development of strategies to increase volunteering and visitation to parks and botanic gardens by people from CALD communities.

DECC remains committed to fostering a climate of mutual respect in a cohesive multicultural society and will ensure that its ongoing natural resource management, environmental and organisational policies, programs and partnerships involve and reflect the needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. In 2008–09, DECC will:

- continue to foster environmental citizenship for recently arrived migrants and offer opportunities to participate in field days and provide training workshops for bilingual and other community workers
- continue to work in partnership with the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW to promote awareness, knowledge and understanding of sustainable living to CALD communities

■ PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

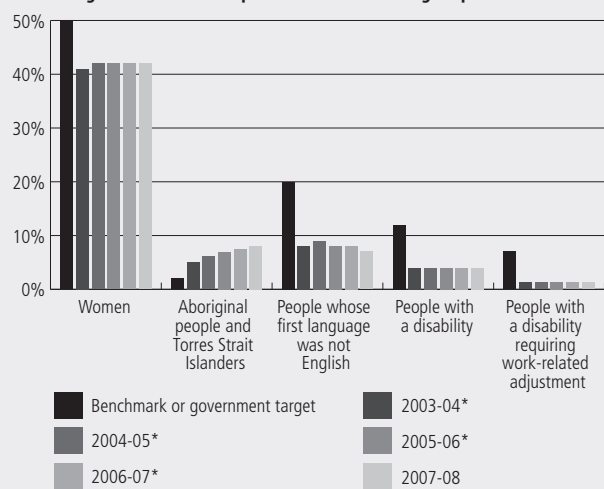
DECC staff representation in equal employment opportunity groups

Definition: DECC tracks its performance in employing people from the equal employment opportunity (EEO) target groups against the NSW Government benchmarks.

This indicator measures staff statistics according to five EEO groups: women, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, people whose first language spoken as a child was not English, people with a disability, and people with a disability requiring work-related adjustment.

The data includes DECC staff but excludes Minister's Office staff, contractors, and board and committee members. The data is based on a headcount of staff, not full-time equivalent figures.

Percentage of DECC staff representation for EEO groups



Interpretation: DECC employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) staff remains significantly higher than the NSW Government benchmark with an increase of 0.5% from last year to 8% in 2007–08. DECC continued to administer formal employment initiatives to provide opportunities for ATSI staff to study, increase their skills, gain work experience and secure temporary and permanent employment.

DECC did not reach the NSW Government benchmarks for employment for women, people whose first language was not English, and people with disabilities. DECC will continue to improve the levels of under-represented EEO groups.

- investigate ways to increase visitation to parks and botanic gardens by people from CALD communities
- review the current park volunteer program to strategically expand volunteer conservation projects in parks and pilot new models to promote greater CALD community involvement in park management.



Photo: Evolving Images

Good knowledge and information to make decisions

Financial management

During 2007–08 DECC met the financial challenges of a significantly larger capital budget and a more complex program environment. Strong financial management was required in the areas of administrative restructuring and new initiatives, such as BioBanking and water and energy efficiency rebates. Financial strategies and systems have been enhanced and financial management training has been delivered across DECC and the catchment management authorities (CMAs). Significant financial projects and activities during the year included:

- a comprehensive reconciliation of CMA programs and funding, in close liaison with NSW Treasury
- aligning Results and Services Plan groups, budgets and reporting with the new organisational structure (DECC prepares an annual Results and Services Plan (RSP) for the NSW Treasurer to support departmental accountability for funding provided by the NSW Government. The RSP outlines intended actions, and reports on performance.)
- successfully completing unqualified statutory financial statements for 19 entities, including DECC, Environmental Trust, Environment Protection Authority, Marine Parks Authority, Lake Illawarra Authority, Chipping Norton Lakes Authority and 13 CMAs
- significant efficiency enhancements to financial systems, including implementing the SAP Asset Maintenance System, SAP Travel, SAP Online Tutorials and a comprehensive review of financial reporting and analysis (SAP is the software DECC uses in its financial management)
- strengthening working relationships with the NSW Treasury, Audit Office, CMAs, new financial and program managers joining DECC, professional bodies and other state agencies
- enhancing financial policies, procedures and protocols, including delegations, the treatment of goods and services tax and fringe benefits tax, the upgrading of business planning, quality planning and professional development, and the establishment of a new finance network for sharing information

- financial training was provided across DECC and the CMAs, with courses in financial management and the use of the financial system (SAP)
- significant efficiency enhancements were made in leave and human resource management with the implementation of Self Service Leave and higher duties applications online.

Financial improvement initiatives planned for 2008–09 include the commencement of an upgrade of SAP, launching an executive dashboard, enhancing forecasting through SAP and developing program reporting through SAP.

Insurance cover

As part of its management of risk, in 2007–08 DECC obtained insurance cover through the Treasury Managed Fund which uses Allianz for workers' compensation and GIO for other risk areas.

Areas of risk and relevant insurance premiums:

	2006-07 \$'000	2007-08 \$'000
Workers compensation	5,539	6,033
Property	1,835	2,136
Motor vehicles	1,178	1,160
Public liability	3,085	3,393
Fire	10,414	10,417
Miscellaneous	36	42
	22,087	23,181

Premiums are based on claims history over a three-year rolling period and reflect DECC's risk management approach to management of claims. The workers' compensation premium was reduced for 2007–08, but ended up being higher due to a hindsight adjustment of \$2.376 million for 2005–06.

Employee liabilities

Liability as at 30 June 2008	\$'000
Long service leave*	69,708
On cost long service leave	8,128
Recreation leave	37,315
On-cost recreation leave	1,922

*DECC liabilities for long service leave are assumed by the Crown Entity. Long service leave is measured using the present value basis.

■ PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

Payment of accounts

Definition: DECC's performance on paying trade creditor accounts on time was as follows:

Trade creditor 'accounts payable' balances at the end of each quarter for the financial year 2007–08

Quarter	Current (ie within due date) \$	Fewer than 30 days \$	Between 30 and 60 days \$	Between 60 and 90 days \$	More than 90 days \$
September	4,318,150	42,422	60,857	110,551	50,127
December	4,844,965	3,731,242	18,948	0	418
March	4,884,212	1,491,760	670,606	0	32,673
June	2,577,424	0	355	5,967	1,839

The main reasons for accounts being paid outside the due date period were:

- (a) invoices raised for large capital works are only paid on satisfactory review of the work
- (b) invoices raised for large capital purchases may include items not yet received but expected to be received in the near future.
- (c) some short payment terms are not necessarily appropriate in more remote settings where the documentation may take time to be collected and matched for payment.

Value of accounts paid on time for each quarter

Quarter	Target %	Actual %	\$	Total amount paid \$
September	85	91.14	105,695,683	115,974,759
December	85	84.45	183,756,529	217,582,333
March	85	72.37	43,794,424	60,517,354
June	85	89.48	428,037,420	478,340,314

Interpretation:

Late payment of accounts

DECC was not required to pay interest to creditors due to the late payment of accounts during the year.

Credit card certification

In accordance with Treasurer's Direction 205.01, it is certified that credit card usage by officers of the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change has been in accordance with the appropriate government policy, Premier's Memoranda and Treasurer's Directions.

Information management and communications technology

During the year, DECC continued to implement the 2007–2010 Information Management and Communications Technology Strategic Plan. Overall, good progress was made and the implementation of the plan proceeded according to schedule. Significant achievements during the year included:

- the successful transition of over 300 staff from the former Department of Natural Resources to DECC. This complex project was completed in June 2008.
- implementing the DECC Information Technology (IT) Infrastructure Replacement Program. During the year, approximately 750 desktop computers and 60 laptops were replaced, giving staff the necessary technology to undertake their roles and responsibilities. Work also began on implementing new technology to support the upgrade of DECC's financial and human resource applications in 2008–2009.
- upgrading the DECC IT telecommunications network. Over 200 locations are connected to the DECC IT telecommunications network. During the year, several network upgrades were completed and new network technology was implemented.
- providing IT support for various business initiatives including rollout of employee self service and online travel management; development of an asset tracking system; development of a BioBanking Information Management System to support the administration of biobanking agreements, statements and credit information; and the rollout of an online Air Quality Management System which is available to the general public on the DECC website.

DECC has developed an online Motor Vehicle Compliance Training Course to enable staff to report a vehicle that is blowing excessive smoke for more than 10 seconds; people who are littering from a motor vehicle; and a vehicle that is excessively noisy.



Customer satisfaction with DECC services

Consumer response

DECC takes consumer response seriously, including complaints and other performance feedback from the public, to improve service delivery and prevent problems recurring.

DECC's policy for managing complaints and allegations is based on NSW Government standards.

In 2007–08, DECC received 14 significant complaints. Ten of these complaints, together with 6 complaints received but not resolved in 2006–07, were finalised during the year. Evidence of improper conduct was found in three cases and appropriate action was taken in response. Changes to some systems or procedures were also recommended and these have been implemented. Training programs have been completed.

DECC engages with consumers and gathers performance feedback through:

- the DECC Information Centre
- Environment Line
- national parks information and visitors centres
- public forums and consultations
- stakeholder surveys
- consultation and advisory committees
- other communication channels, including submissions and email correspondence.

Guarantee of Service

DECC published its Guarantee of Service which covers four main standards all staff commit to when they work for DECC: respect, helpfulness, responsiveness and continuous improvement. The Guarantee of Service is published in Appendix 12.

DECC reviewed stakeholder engagement in 2007 as part of the integration of agencies under the DECC banner. DECC values its relationships with external stakeholders and recognises their valuable role in supporting environmental initiatives. The outcomes of this review will inform the way DECC staff and management work with external stakeholders in the future.

Freedom of information

DECC is committed to transparent and accountable decision making. Members of the public can access many documents held by DECC through its website (www.environment.nsw.gov.au), on request or by purchasing them. Other documents can be obtained by applying under the *Freedom of Information Act 1989*.

DECC received 86 new FOI requests this year, one more than 2006–07, and 93 applications were processed (see Appendix 11). Many applications were from members of parliament, solicitors, journalists, companies, and community organisations. DECC received only two FOI applications from people seeking information about their personal affairs.

Although 42% of the FOI applications were subject to exemptions from release, including part exemptions, 84% of the documents captured by the FOI application were released. Many DECC applications are complex and involve documents provided by third parties such as individuals, organisations and businesses. Most FOI exemptions were made to protect those parties' personal and business affairs. Except in cases of ongoing investigations, few documents created by DECC were exempted.

There were six internal review decisions made during 2007–08. Five decisions were affirmed. In one case, the original FOI decision was varied. Three review requests were received from third parties attempting to prevent DECC from releasing documents.

There were no decisions proceeding to the Administrative Decisions Tribunal (ADT) and no complaint was made to the Ombudsman's Office about any DECC decision.

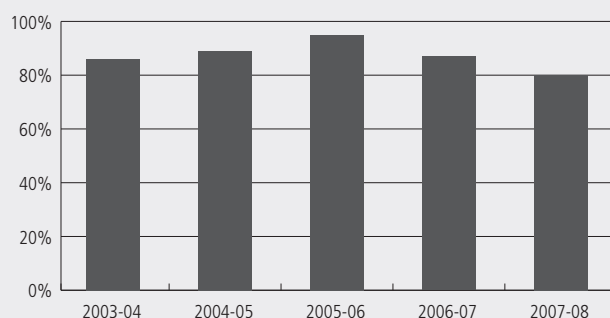
Due to the large scope and complexity of many FOI applications, four were not completed within the statutory timeframe. Some applications involved hundreds of documents, required accessing documents from a number of regional locations, and involved extensive consultation with many affected third parties.

■ PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

Freedom of information requests

Definition: This indicator measures the percentage of freedom of information (FOI) applications DECC and the former DEC processed where 80% or more of the requested documents were released.

Percentage of FOI requests granted by DECC and the former DEC that provide 80% or more of requested information



Interpretation: In 2007–08, for 80% of FOI requests DECC provided 80% of the requested information. FOI requests are now generally fewer in number, but larger in scope, more complex than in previous years and involve more documents. DECC exempts very few of its documents requested under FOI from release. However, a small percentage of documents received from third parties are exempted. Third parties provide information to DECC in confidence or in response to regulatory requirements. The release of information concerning third parties' personal or business affairs may have an adverse effect on them and the *Freedom of Information Act 1989* provides protection in these circumstances.