

## APPENDIX J COMMONWEALTH DISABILITY STRATEGY

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS) recognises that the Commonwealth has an impact on the lives of people with disabilities. Finance plays an important role in assisting the Commonwealth to meet its obligations in two key areas: as a policy adviser and as an employer. Finance's clients are typically Commonwealth agencies, and as such Finance does not deliver programmes to the wider Australian community.

### Finance as Policy Adviser

In its role as a policy adviser, Finance recognises its responsibility to ensure new policy proposals are developed in consultation with people with a disability where appropriate.

Given that the Department plays a limited role in the delivery of programmes to the wider Australian community, no new policies or programmes were developed and/or implemented by Finance in 2000-01. However, Finance does operate public websites and public web entry points that have been created in accordance with the accessibility requirements of the Government Online strategy, and useability testing is undertaken for all Finance-managed web entry points.

Finance issued *Guidelines for Commonwealth Information Printed in Electronic Format* in 1999. These were approved by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and were awarded a 1999 PSMPC Workplace Diversity Commendation for improving the accessibility of Commonwealth Online information. These guidelines form part of the Government Online strategy.

### Finance as an Employer

In our role as an employer, we work across a number of areas to ensure that the Department provides fair and equitable employment opportunities for all members of the community.

In 2000-01, four per cent of those employees who completed a voluntary diversity questionnaire identified themselves as having some form of disability. The actual level of employees with disabilities is expected to be higher than this figure due to non-disclosure. Finance's rate of employment of people with disabilities is in line with that of the broader APS (quoted as 4.2 per cent in the 1999-2000 *Workplace Diversity Report* published by the PSMPC).

Finance works toward providing employment policies, procedures and practices that comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. The Department actively meets these requirements by issuing guidelines on eliminating workplace harassment, by issuing a diversity plan, by its 'supported wage systems' within the CA and other flexible employment conditions. In addition, Finance works toward ensuring that its physical premises provide access for people with disabilities. Finance ensures that all recruitment information for potential job applications is available in alternative formats upon request. Our recruitment teams and managers are aware of and apply the principle of 'reasonable adjustment' in regard to our flexible employment framework and recruitment.

Training and development programmes are an important component of Finance's Disability Strategy. These programmes include information on disability issues as they relate to the content of the programme. Recent training programmes were organised for Workplace Harassment Contact Officers to give these officers further skills in working with employees with disabilities. Finance orientation programmes, which have been occurring since May 2000, also address the various related issues.

The creation of a complaints and grievance mechanism has given staff an avenue to raise issues and concerns that occur within the workplace. Finance has developed dispute resolution procedures that give staff access to both internal and external mechanisms to address workplace issues. Finance staff have access to an employee assistance programme offered by an external provider, which assists staff experiencing both personal and professional difficulties.

Finance will continue to recognise issues related to workplace diversity and the CDS. The Department will also incorporate the new requirements in its Diversity Planning, with the new plan due for implementation during 2001.