

7 ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

7.1 Human resource management

7.1.1 Supervising Scientist

The Supervising Scientist is a statutory position established under the *Environment Protection (Alligator Rivers Region) Act 1978*. Section 8 of the Act requires that the Supervising Scientist be engaged under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

The position has been held by Dr Arthur Johnston PSM since June 1999.

7.1.2 Structure

The Supervising Scientist Division consists of two branches, the Office of the Supervising Scientist and the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist.

The Office of the Supervising is responsible for supervision, audit, policy, information management and corporate support activities. **OSS** was headed by Mr Alex Zapantis who vacated the position towards the end of 2003–04.

The Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist, headed by Dr Max Finlayson, undertakes scientific research activities.

Staffing numbers as at 30 June 2003 and 30 June 2004 are given in Table 7.1.

TABLE 7.1 STAFFING NUMBERS AND LOCATIONS (AT 30 JUNE 2004)

| | 2002/03 | 2003/04 |
|--------|---------|---------|
| Darwin | 37 | 36 |
| Jabiru | 6 | 6 |
| Total | 43 | 42 |

7.1.3 Investor in People

IiP is a framework leading to best practices for the effective development of employees within an organisation. In the past year, SSD has been actively promoting a number of ongoing IiP activities as well as developing new initiatives.

Mechanisms for information exchange include regular staff, program and branch meetings and distribution of minutes. A new meeting structure comprising middle and senior managers will be trialled over the next 12 months to enhance cross-divisional communication.

The IiP Action Group meets monthly to develop and progress the annual IiP action plan. Meetings are well attended by staff and management representatives from each section within SSD.

An Internal Seminar Series is used to communicate new and ongoing projects, preview conference presentations and provide an opportunity for staff to hone their presentation skills. Including external presenters this year has furthered informal stakeholder interaction.

Cross-cultural training is provided to new staff and refresher training every three years to assist the ongoing development of cultural awareness and understanding.

In addition to the DEH allocation (average) of \$1000 and five days per person to staff development activities in 2003–04, SSD continued to allocate an additional \$500 per person in support of staff development activities.

Installation of video-conferencing equipment at the Jabiru Field Station has strengthened communication links between Jabiru and Darwin staff. The Darwin and Jabiru equipment is well used for extended, long-distance meetings where travel is impracticable.

Other new IiP initiatives include the bi-annual Minesite Technical Tour conducted by SSD and Ranger mine staff; publication of a weekly SSD News Brief of activities and information updates; in-house workshops for staff, establishment of a Darwin-based network to provide a shared, cost effective approach to provide quality training and development opportunities in Darwin; and twice-yearly staff and stakeholder functions in recognition of staff effort and to promote stronger alliances with stakeholders.

An audit assessment of SSD was conducted in November 2003 for the continued compliance with the Investor in People Standard. SSD was one of five Divisions audited within the Department. The assessment process involved the auditors reviewing the Division's documentation related to planning, learning and development, communication and staff recognition. The auditors also interviewed a sample of staff selected to represent the full diversity of employee profiles. The outcome of the audit confirmed that the Department's certification be maintained, with a full departmental audit being undertaken in late 2004. This was a major accomplishment as *eriss* relocated from Jabiru and joined the rest of the Division in the new purpose-built facility in Darwin in August 2002.

7.1.4 Occupational Health and Safety

The Supervising Scientist Division continued to maintaining a strong commitment to occupational health and safety issues during 2003–04. The Occupational Health and Safety Committee is the primary mechanism in place for the discussion of issues. This staff-based Committee meets on a monthly basis to consider health and safety issues that arise from time to time. The Committee makes recommendations to the Division's senior management team in relation to specific occupational health and safety issues.

Important initiatives during the year included completion of the emergency procedures for the DEH Darwin building, First Aid Training for all fieldwork staff, and commencement of the major overhaul of the OH&S guidelines for SSD.

7.2 Finance

The Supervising Scientist Division is part of the Department of the Environment and Heritage and full financial statements for the department are contained in the department's Annual Report. A summary of the costs of the Supervising Scientist's contributions to the Industry and Inland Waters outputs of the Department are provided in Table 7.2. The decrease in the cost of Outputs from the previous year is due mainly to a review of corporate overheads carried out during the year. This resulted in a significant reduction in overheads attributable to the Supervising Scientist Division's Outputs from the Department of the Environment and Heritage in Canberra.

TABLE 7.2 SUMMARY OF COST OF OUTPUTS

| PBS Output | 2002–2003 (\$000) | 2003–2004 (\$000) |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1.6 Industry | \$9.031 | \$7.725 |
| 1.7 Inland waters | \$1.884 | \$0.672 |

7.3 Facilities

7.3.1 Darwin facility

The majority of the Supervising Scientist Division's staff are situated at the Department of the Environment and Heritage's Darwin facility. This facility consists of office accommodation and laboratories. The office space is shared with Parks Australia North – also part of the Department of the Environment and Heritage.

7.3.2 Jabiru Field Station

A Field Station at Jabiru with six staff is maintained to support the activities of the Supervising Scientist Division. The staff consist of the monitoring team (three staff) that carry out the Supervising Scientist's environmental monitoring programme; one employee who is responsible for delivering the Supervising Scientist's Aboriginal Communications programme in Jabiru; one employee who undertakes administrative and financial duties; the Field Station Manager, who has overall responsibility for managing the Field Station as well as supervisory and inspection responsibilities; and a National Oceans Office Oceans Liaison Officer also works out of the Jabiru Field Station.

7.3.3 Library

The Supervising Scientist's Library is located at the Department of the Environment and Heritage's facility in Darwin. The library provides services to staff based in Jabiru and Darwin and is open to the public by appointment. Service provision this year included

provision of material via Inter-Library Loan, on-line searches, and updating library user guides. Library staff also contributed to ongoing data and knowledge management activities within the Division.

The subject matter of the collection reflects the research interests of the Supervising Scientist. The collection includes 11 800 books, reports and audio-visual items, including 220 added during 2003–04, and scientific journals (63 current subscriptions). The library also maintains special collections (with supporting databases) of materials published on the Alligator Rivers Region, media reports, and scientific papers relevant to the work of the Supervising Scientist.

7.4 Strategic Review of the Supervising Scientist Division

A Strategic Review of the Supervising Scientist Division commenced during 2003–04 to address the following questions:

- Why does the Supervising Scientist Division exist; do its programs properly reflect the reasons for its establishment given the current status of mining?
- What are the future requirements of key stakeholders likely to be and are the current programs capable of providing the knowledge outputs required for the future?
- What changes need to be implemented to ensure that the Division is carrying out these programs in the most effective and efficient way possible to meet the changing requirements of key stakeholders?

The review is being undertaken in three stages:

- Stage 1 – Defining the legislative and policy basis for the operations of SSD and reviewing stakeholder satisfaction.
- Stage 2 – Identifying future requirements for SSD operations and the changes to be made in relation to people, processes, technology and structures.
- Stage 3 – Implementation of agreed changes to meet future operating requirements.

7.5 Audit of the Supervising Scientist Division

A departmental audit⁴ of the Supervising Scientist Division was conducted during 2003–04 to assess the adequacy of the business planning and management processes in place to enable the Supervising Scientist to meet his statutory responsibilities in relation to the uranium mining program.

The key risk areas that relate to the ability of the Supervising Scientist to discharge his responsibilities effectively include:

- the politically sensitive nature of uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers Region;

⁴ Undertaken by consultants on behalf of the DEH Audit Committee.

- the high public profile and media focus surrounding uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers Region;
- the potential for significant impacts on the environment and human health in the Alligator Rivers Region;
- the complexity of administrative, legislative and related stakeholder arrangements within which the Supervising Scientist must plan and implement his research, monitoring and supervising programs.

The review focused on the business planning and management framework through which the Supervising Scientist discharges his responsibilities.

Key elements included:

- The adequacy of strategic and annual business planning processes to support achievement of strategic and legislative requirements, define a work program that meets strategic priorities, facilitate measurement, monitoring and review, provide for continuous process improvement, link with other stakeholders, achieve an efficient use of resources, provide for timely reporting, support resource bids, and engage staff.
- The adequacy of the key management processes by which the Supervising Scientist Division controls and reports its research, monitoring and supervising activities;
- The adequacy of processes in place to identify and incorporate continuous improvements to the supervisory, research, and monitoring programs including processes to identify research advances, recognise and consider changing circumstances, and recognise and take into account changing community expectations.

The audit also considered what stakeholder liaison, management and reporting processes the Division should have in place and apply in relation to stakeholders such as the Minister, ARRAC, ARRTC, the Northern Land Council, Energy Resources of Australia Ltd, the NT Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development, and the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation (GAC). The final report of the Audit is expected early in 2004–2005.

7.6 Interpretation of Ranger Environmental Requirements

Section 19.2 of the Environmental Requirements of the Commonwealth of Australia for the Operation of the Ranger Uranium Mine provides for the publication of explanatory material agreed to by the major stakeholders to assist in the interpretation of provisions of the Environmental Requirements.

No explanatory material was published by the Supervising Scientist during 2003–04.

7.7 Ministerial Directions

There were no Ministerial Directions issued to the Supervising Scientist under Section 7 of the *Environment Protection (Alligator Rivers Region) Act 1978* during 2003–04.

7.8 Ecologically Sustainable Development: Reporting under Section 516A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

7.8.1 How the activities of the Supervising Scientist Division, and the administration of legislation, accord with the principles of ESD

The principles of ecologically sustainable development are described in Section 3A (Subsections 3A(a) to 3A(e)) of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Subsection 3A(a)

decision-making processes should effectively integrate both long-term and short-term economic, environmental, social and equitable considerations

The Supervising Scientist's supervisory, research and monitoring activities provide scientific and technical knowledge to allow short-term and long-term environmental considerations to be incorporated into decision-making processes by decision makers such as the Minister for the Environment and Heritage and the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources.

These activities are described in this Annual Report.

Subsection 3A(b)

if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation

The supervisory, research and monitoring activities undertaken by the Supervising Scientist Division provide knowledge of the extent to which the environment of Kakadu National Park is protected from the effects of uranium mining. These activities, which are described in this Annual Report, are undertaken within a precautionary-based risk management framework.

Subsection 3A(c)

the principle of inter-generational equity – that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations

Oversight of uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers Region and research into the impacts of uranium mining are carried out under the *Environment Protection (Alligator Rivers Region) Act 1978*. These activities play important roles in ensuring the long-term protection of the environment and health of the community, and are described in this Annual Report.

Subsection 3A(d)

the conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration in decision-making

The research, monitoring, supervisory, and policy tasks undertaken by the Supervising Scientist Division play an important role in assisting the decision-making process in relation to uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers Region. These tasks are described in earlier sections of this Annual Report.

Subsection 3A(e)

improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms should be promoted

This principle does not affect the Supervising Scientist.

7.8.2 Outcomes specified in a relevant Appropriations Act that contribute to ESD

The activities of the Supervising Scientist Division fall within Outcome 1 in the Department of the Environment and Heritage's 2003–04 Portfolio Budget Statements. Outcome 1 states that:

The environment, especially those aspects that are matters of national environmental significance, is protected and conserved.

Performance against Outputs 1.6 and 1.7 by the Supervising Scientist Division is detailed in Section 1.1 of this Annual Report.

7.8.3 The effects of Supervising Scientist Division activities on the environment

- The activities of the Supervising Scientist Division have positive effects and negative effects on the environment.

Positive effects

The following activities have positive impacts on the environment:

- Environmental assessments of uranium mines, described in Section 2 of this Annual Report;
- Environmental research and monitoring, described in Section 3 of this Annual Report;
- Provision of support to statutory committees, described in Section 4 of this Annual Report;
- Involvement in the National Centre for Tropical Wetland Research, described in Section 5 of this Annual Report;
- Communication and liaison, described in Section 6 of this Annual Report.

Negative or neutral effects

Some research requires the collection of vertebrate and invertebrate samples for toxicity testing. The effect on the environment is negligible.

7.8.4 Measures taken by the Supervising Scientist Division to minimise the effect of its activities on the environment

The Supervising Scientist continually seeks and develops measures to minimise the effects of its activities on the environment.

Staff require professional qualifications to undertake specialised work. Consultants are engaged when required.

Workplans are prepared each year and focus on the roles of the Supervising Scientist under the legislation. The roles have strong environmental and ESD components.

An Environmental Policy was developed in conjunction with Parks Australia North for the Darwin facility during 2002–03. An Environmental Management System, consistent with the internationally recognised ISO 14000 series of standards, is under development.

7.8.5 Mechanisms for reviewing the effectiveness of these measures

The effectiveness of these measures is reviewed by mechanisms such as:

- preparation of internal reports reviewing performance against workplans and outputs;
- preparation of comprehensive research summaries and reports on progress to the Alligator Rivers Region Technical Committee;
- compilation of quarterly reports on performance, against performance indicators;
- this Annual Report, which outlines performance for the year.

7.8.6 Sources

The Supervising Scientist's Annual Report is published on the Internet on the Department of the Environment and Heritage's website (www.deh.gov.au/about/annual-report/ss03-04).

The report sets out the performance against each objective established under the *Environment Protection (Alligator Rivers Region) Act 1978*.

7.9 Animal experimentation ethics approvals

eriss seeks the approval of the Charles Darwin University's *Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee* for approval to undertake scientific experiments involving animals.

Table 7.3 provides information on new applications, renewals of approvals and approval expiries for projects during 2003–04.

TABLE 7.3 ANIMAL EXPERIMENTATION ETHICS APPROVALS

| Project Title | Ref No | Initial Submission | Approval/Latest Renewal | Expiry |
|---|--------|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Larval fish toxicity testing at <i>eriss</i> | 97016 | 26 May 1997 | 29 Oct 2003 | 29 Oct 2005 |
| Natural fish kills in the Alligator Rivers Region | A00027 | 25 Sep 2000 | 27 Feb 2003 | 27 Feb 2005 |
| Monitoring mining impact using the structure of fish communities in shallow billabongs | A00028 | 25 Sep 2000 | 15 Apr 2004 | 27 Feb 2005 |
| Radionuclides in freshwater fish of Swift Creek | A00031 | 12 Oct 2000 | 18 Apr 2002 | 18 Apr 2004 |
| Survival of larval fishes in creekside monitoring tests, Magela Creek | A00034 | 1 Nov 2000 | 13 Nov 2003 | 14 Nov 2004 |
| Identification of traditional Aboriginal foods for radiological assessment | A02002 | 1 Feb 2002 | 13 Nov 2003 | 28 Feb 2004 |
| Metal and radionuclide concentrations of fish and mussels associated with the Ranger mine | A02026 | 31 Oct 2002 | 15 Apr 2004 | 27 Feb 2005 |