

6 ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 Human resource management

6.1.1 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*.

Mr Alan Hughes was appointed to the position in December 2005.

6.1.2 Structure

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

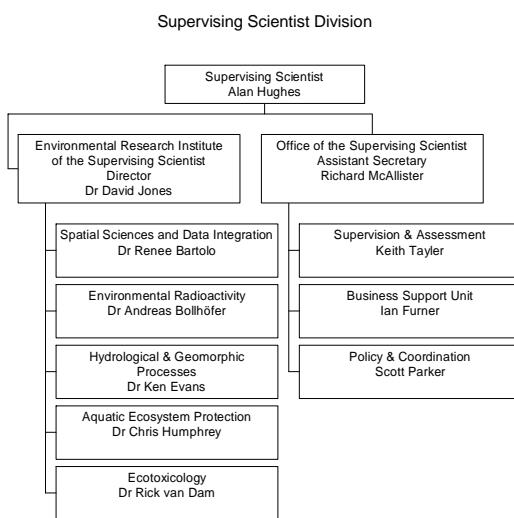


Figure 6.1 Organisational structure of the Supervising Scientist Division (as at 30 June 2009)

The Office of the Supervising Scientist (**oss**) is responsible for supervision, assessment, policy, information management and corporate support activities. Mr Richard McAllister is the **oss** branch head.

The Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist (**eriss**), managed by Dr David Jones, is responsible for scientific research and monitoring activities. During 2008/09 the Ecological Risk Assessment (EcoRisk) program was subsumed into a new Spatial Sciences and Data Integration (SSDI) program to recognise the changing nature of

the research program undertaken by *eriss*. Staff from EcoRisk, spatial and data management specialists from other programs were transferred to the SSDI program.

Staffing numbers as at 30 June 2008 and 30 June 2009 are given in Table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1 STAFFING NUMBERS ⁽¹⁾ AND LOCATIONS

	2007–2008	2008–2009
Darwin	44	44
Jabiru	6	6
Total	50	50

(1) Average full time equivalent from 1 Jul to 30 Jun

6.1.3 Investors in People

The Supervising Scientist Division (SSD) has continued to support and promote Investors in People initiatives through embedding the framework within strategies, policies and procedures implemented over the past eight years since the Department was recognised as an accredited Investor in People.

To encourage a culture of continuous improvement the Department has implemented a staff survey every two years enabling the Department and each Division within the portfolio to gain access insight into staff perceptions on the Department's performance against indicators within the IiP framework resulting in the development of Divisional Improvement plans to address and monitor performance on areas of concern for staff. Overall, this information allows the Department to develop strategies to improve organisational performance, promote work life balance initiatives, encourage retention and develop as an 'Employer of Choice'.

Staff have been encouraged and supported by management in the development of skills through training, attendance at conferences and internal opportunities to act in higher level positions. There has also been a significant investment in leadership training and development for all executive level and SES staff. Through the Performance Development Scheme, staff have identified training requirements to help deliver their work plan outcomes. SSD staff have access to Canberra-based seminars and information sessions. Locally hosted seminars, in addition to the SSD Internal Seminar Series, provide staff with a range of topics relevant to SSD business activities.

Effective communication has also been an integral part of achieving outcomes set by the organisation. SSD continues to produce a fortnightly staff newsletter, *Newsbrief*, that attracts a wide range of internal contributors and readership. Management and staff participate in regular structured meetings that ensure information flow within the organisation is maintained. Healthy lifestyle and social activities coordinated by IiP representatives and social club members also enable staff to network in an informal manner.

During 2008–09, SSD staff have had the opportunity to access an improved health and wellbeing program incorporating health screenings, influenza, hepatitis and tetanus vaccinations, on-site fitball and pilates classes, and planned outdoor activities promoting

team work such as the ‘urban challenge’ which involved low-level physical activity and problem-solving, and the GPS challenge that included map reading and using a Global Positioning System (GPS).

Early in 2009 the Department made a commitment to review the way IiP is communicated and promoted to staff. DEWHA Deputy Secretary, Gerard Early was appointed to champion the initiative. And SSD also appointed a new Champion for the Division, Assistant Secretary Richard McAllister. The IiP Action Group membership has had some changes with the recent inclusion of the Policy and Services Section, Parks Australia North, who have been actively participating in health and wellbeing programs, initiatives and the committee. Meetings are held monthly and outcomes reported back to management in regular reports. Information is disseminated through IiP representatives, events, internal newsletters, email and the intranet.

6.1.4 Occupational Health and Safety

The Supervising Scientist Division has continued to maintain a strong commitment to occupational health and safety during 2008–09. In response to the Echelon report (an outcome from the Department’s Occupational Health and Safety audit conducted in 2008), an OHS Coordinator for the Supervising Scientist Division was appointed and assigned the role of developing and implementing the Division’s Occupational Health and Safety Management Plan (OHSMP) and Chemical Management Plan (CMP) compliant with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991*, AS/NZS 4801 and the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts Health and Safety Management Arrangements (HSMA).

The implementation of the OHSMP has seen a strong focus on risk management within the Supervising Scientist Division with the introduction of an OHS Risk Register, and an Outstanding Actions Register highlighting the current risks that assists in managing the risks identified.

The Occupational Health and Safety Committee is the primary mechanism in place for the discussion of OHS issues, and for the referral of issues to the Division’s senior management team. The OHS committee meets on a monthly basis to discuss incidents, hazards, staff training requirements, policy development and any other relevant issues. During 2008–09 there were changes in membership, with new appointments to the roles of OH&S Chairperson, SSD Senior Management Representative, OH&S Coordinator and Field Safety Officer. The Committee reviewed and updated a number of OH&S policies and procedures (SSD Boat handling, Road Travel Policy, Emergency Response Procedures, medical disclosure and Laboratory PPE) and is currently working on the incident reporting and issue resolution procedures.

SSD has developed risk management procedures, and supporting documentation to assist staff with completion of risk assessments on any new tasks undertaken, and any plant or chemicals purchased for use. This new risk management system will be fully implemented in early 2009–10.

SSD Management has a strong commitment to OHS training. Topics that have been covered in 2008–09 include:

- Defensive driving
- 4-wheel driving
- Manual handling
- Risk management
- First aid
- Laboratory and field skills with chemicals (laboratory managers)
- Fire extinguisher operations
- Fire warden training
- Safety inductions
- Auditing OH&S Management systems
- Dangerous goods handling and packaging for road and air transport

In the 2008–09 financial year, SSD had 22 internal incident reports that comprised near miss, incidents or hazards. Of these only 6 were minor incidents that required first aid assistance and one that resulted in a workers compensation claim. SSD has a workplace culture that recognises that all occupational related illnesses are preventable and that there must be consistent and sustained effort to ensure that there are no repeat occurrences of occupational diseases in the workplace.

The strategic direction of OH&S within SSD for 2009–10 will continue to focus on risk management, with a greater emphasis on auditing, management review and achieving new objectives and targets that have been laid out in the new OHSMP.

The licence by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) that is issued to the Supervising Scientist allows SSD to hold certain radioactive and non-ionising radiation sources. These sources and general control, safety and management plans are included in the Radiation Source Control Plan of SSD.

6.2 Finance

The Supervising Scientist Division is part of the Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) and full financial statements for the Department are contained in the Department's annual report.

A summary of the actual expenses of the Supervising Scientist against the Department's outputs are provided in Table 6.2.

TABLE 6.2 SUMMARY OF COST OF OUTPUTS

PBS Output*	2007–2008	2008–2009
Output 1.5 Response to the impacts of human settlements		
Sub-output 1.5.3 Supervision of uranium mines	\$10 782 000	No longer reported at sub-output level
Output 1.2 Conservation of the land and inland waters		
Sub-output 1.2.4 Tropical wetlands research	\$410 000	No longer reported at sub-output level
Total	\$11 192 000	\$10 978 330**

* From 2009/10 and beyond Supervising Scientist Division will report all activity against Program 1.2 – Environmental Regulation, Information and Research

** Aggregated direct expenses plus departmental corporate overheads

6.3 Facilities

6.3.1 Darwin facility

The majority of the Supervising Scientist Division's staff are situated at the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts Darwin facility adjacent to the Darwin International Airport. This facility consists of office accommodation and laboratories. During the year there were some significant works including rectification work as a result of moisture intrusion into the laboratories, installation of high rise racking into the storage sheds and a complete external and internal repaint.

The office space, library and amenities are shared with Parks Australia, which is also part of the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

6.3.2 Jabiru Field Station

A Field Station at Jabiru is maintained to support the activities of the Supervising Scientist Division. The staff consists of the monitoring team that carry out the Supervising Scientist's environmental monitoring program, an employee who is responsible for delivering the Supervising Scientist's Aboriginal communications program in Jabiru, an employee who undertakes



Figure 6.2 JFS site following demolition and removal of buildings

administrative and financial duties, and the Field Station Manager, who has overall responsibility for managing the Field Station as well as supervisory and inspection responsibilities.

Demolition and relocation of four demountable laboratory buildings that were surplus to requirement was completed in October 2008. Removal of some underground utilities, followed by rehabilitation and landscaping is expected to commence in the new financial year. Works have also been undertaken at the Field Station including a physical security upgrade and repairs/modifications to buildings and infrastructure.

6.4 Information management

Information Management activities provide support to staff based in Darwin and the Jabiru Field Station through library services and the co-ordination of records management activities. A total of 382 new files were created in the past year. Work on disposal of inactive files as appropriate under the Archives Act 1983 and other relevant legislation continues, with 762 files being destroyed during 2008/09. Negotiations to transfer other files to the Australian National Archives are continuing.

Library services provided to staff included: media monitoring, reference services, reader education, inter-library loans, and collection development. 620 new items were added to the collection during 2008–09. Though loans of library materials are only available to DEHWA staff, the library is open to the public by appointment.

6.5 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 during 2008–09.

6.6 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 2008–09.

6.7 Environmental Performance

The Supervising Scientist Division contributes to the department's sustainability objectives through a range of measures aimed at continuously improving the environmental performance of our business operations and minimising any associated environmental impacts. The division reports on its environmental performance in the department's 2008–09 annual report.

6.7.1 Environmental Management System (EMS)

In early 2009, it was decided not to proceed with full implementation of the draft EMS at this stage. A range of options for managing the Division's environmental performance were examined including integrating environmental risks into the Division's Occupational Health and Safety risk management framework, use of external third party audits and reviewing existing policies and procedures for field based work to ensure all environmental risks are minimised. It is anticipated that arrangements for managing the Division's environmental performance will be finalised by late 2009.

6.8 Social and community involvement

This year SSD has participated in a number of community events (see Chapter 5).

SSD has continued to employ local Aboriginal people to assist with research and monitoring activities. Assistance has been sought on projects such as the creekside monitoring and aquaculture activities, Jabiru Field Station maintenance, bushtucker and the bioaccumulation project.

SSD also works closely with Traditional Owners providing support to collaborative research projects. For example, SSD allows the greenhouse, storage shed and cool room at the Jabiru Field Station to be used by Kakadu Native Plant Supplies (KNPS), a local business owned and operated by Traditional Owners, for native seed collection and propagation activities.

6.9 National Centre for Tropical Wetland Research

The National Centre for Tropical Wetland Research (*nctwr*) was a collaborative venture between the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist (*eriss*), James Cook University, Charles Darwin University and the University of Western Australia. The Centre was disbanded in October 2008 with the unanimous agreement of the parties.

6.10 Animal experimentation ethics approvals

eriss seeks the approval of Charles Darwin University's Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) to undertake scientific experiments involving vertebrate animals. Additionally, the Animal Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory Government grants the *eriss* premises a licence to use animals for research purposes. This licence includes the laboratories in Darwin and Jabiru, as well as field work conducted in the Alligator Rivers Region.

A progress report for the project 'Larval fish for toxicity tests at *eriss*' (Ref no. 97016) was submitted to the CDU AEC in March 2009. This project is due for renewal in March 2010. A final report for the project 'Monitoring mining impact using the structure of fish communities in shallow billabongs' (Ref no A00028) was sent to the CDU AEC in December 2008 and this project has been re-approved until February 2011 (New Ref no. A09001). There are no plans to continue sampling fish for the project 'Metal and radionuclide concentrations of fish and mussels associated with the Ranger mine'

(Ref no A02026), thus there is no need to renew animal ethics for this project; a final report will be submitted in August 2009.

The number of fish used in toxicity tests at *eriss* was reported in July 2008 to the Northern Territory Government, as part of our licence requirements granted by them permitting the use of animals for research purposes.

Table 6.7 provides information on new applications, renewals of approvals and approval expiries for projects during 2008–09.

TABLE 6.3 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	13 Mar 2008	13 Mar 2010
Monitoring mining impact using the structure of fish communities in shallow billabongs	A00028/ A09001	25 Sep 2000	8 Mar 2009	27 Feb 2011
Metal and radionuclide concentrations of fish and mussels associated with the Ranger mine	A02026	31 Oct 2002	30 Aug 2007	23 Aug 2009