

The apparent breadth of review must, of course, be read in the light of the decision in *Australian Broadcasting Tribunal v Bond* (1990) 170 CLR 321, which reduced the scope of the word 'decision' thereby reducing the scope for both merits and judicial review of decisions. For further discussion on this point, see the Focus Article in this issue. For an example of how the AAT's jurisdiction is diminished, see *Gallivan Investments Pty Ltd v ASC* [1991] *Admin Review* 40. Although the ASC believes that the AAT's power is too extensive, it remains to be seen what use will be made of the available rights of review and what impact the AAT will have on ASC decision-making. [GF]

Official Information

The first of five reports to be compiled as part of the *Integrity in Government* project being conducted by the Australian National University has been published. This report, entitled *Official Information*, deals broadly with issues relating to the handling, use and dissemination of information in the hands of government. It also deals with the controversial topic of whistleblower protection. The report is particularly useful because it covers the relevant law in each of Australia's jurisdictions.

If you are interested in obtaining a copy, you should contact the Law Department of the Research School of Social Sciences in the Australian National University, phone number (06) 249 2331.

TRIBUNAL WATCH

Immigration Review Tribunal: Annual Report 1990-91

This Report was sent to the Minister on 9 October 1991. The Report covers a range of matters including staffing, workload and important decisions. The 1990-1991 year represents the first full year of operation of the IRT. As the IRT is still new, there is not yet a clear picture of the workload that can be expected.

Planners for the IRT anticipated up to 2500 applications being lodged in 1990-1991; 814 applications were actually lodged. The difference between the anticipated number and the actual number may be due to several factors. There were fewer decisions made in cases where the applicant was able to seek review from the IRT than was estimated. Of those cases, which form the pool of potential applications to the IRT, a smaller percentage of cases went on to the IRT than expected.

The Tribunal is concerned about the rate of appeals and has embarked on a program of activities to publicise its work. The activities include:

- producing pamphlets in 15 community languages;
- conducting seminars with ethnic community groups, Migrant Resource Centres, Ethnic Communities' Councils, migration consultants and community workers; and
- advertising its role on ethnic press and radio.

The task the IRT faces in making its work known is complicated by the fact that many of the people who could use it are not in Australia at the time of their application. This is because many decisions capable of being reviewed by the IRT are made at overseas posts. [PG]

Social Security Appeals Tribunal: Annual Report 1990-91

This Report was presented to the Minister on 23 September 1991. One particularly noteworthy feature was an increase in workload. During the year, the SSAT received 7334 applications and finalised 7204 applications. The application rate increased by 20% in the last four months of the year. There was no clear reason for the increase apart from the difficult economic conditions.

During the year under review, the SSAT improved its performance on a number of indicators; reducing the average processing time from lodgement of application to completion and providing written reasons for decisions more quickly. In the previous year the average time to process an application was 14.2 weeks, in the reporting year the average time fell to 10.5 weeks. Likewise, written reasons for decision were provided in an average of 18.7 days previously and in the year under review in 10.4 days.

The SSAT continued to maintain a staff training program to ensure that its members