

Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT)

Common Quality Framework for International Search and Preliminary Examination

ANNUAL REPORT ON QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

prepared by The Australian Patent Office, IP Australia.

The Authority should provide general background information relevant to the quality management system (QMS) as set forth in this template.

The descriptions below each main heading of this template should be considered examples of the type and arrangement of information that should be included under each heading. Each Authority may provide additional information beyond that set forth in this template as desired.

INTRODUCTION (PARAGRAPHS 21.01 - 21.03)

If applicable, the Authority may at this point indicate any recognized normative reference or basis for their quality management system besides Chapter 21, such as ISO 9001, under the heading "Normative Reference for QMS"

For example: "Normative reference for QMS: ISO 9001, EQS (European Quality System)"

Each Authority should then provide at least the information indicated in the descriptive boxes, under the following headings

Paragraphs 21.01-21.03

The Australian Patent Office is part of the government agency known as IP Australia. IP Australia has a well established and maintained Quality Management System (QMS) that has been certified under ISO 9001:2008. **IP Australia was first certified under ISO 9001 in 2006, with the latest external surveillance audit being undertaken in April 2016. Our current certification runs until June 2018. In relation to Patents,** the scope of IP Australia's services certified under ISO9001:2008 includes international search and examination, national search and examination; and patents oppositions. IP Australia's supporting administrative processes – which include pre and post examination services, international services, receipt of correspondence and provision of information including call centre functions, have also been certified under ISO 9001:2008. IP Australia successfully gained re-certification **under ISO 9001:2008** in April 2015.

IP Australia's scope of certification also covers other parts of the business including the end to end processes for; Trade Marks, Designs, Plant Breeder's Rights and corporate services.

IP Australia's QMS includes resourcing, product quality standards, search and examination work procedures, feedback and communication, all of which are specified in Chapter 21 of the PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines (the guidelines). The IP Australia QMS also specifically encompasses IP Australia's role as an international searching and preliminary examining authority.

IP Australia is committed to improving its quality management system. IP Australia has an established Quality Improvement Section (QIS) which is responsible for:

- ~~developing, implementing and~~ managing and expanding the QMS, including key quality management infrastructure such as the IP Australia Quality Policy, Quality Objectives and relevant quality guidance, procedures and protocols
- promoting quality management and understanding of ISO 9001:2008 requirements internally through staff training and awareness and integration of quality management principles into IP Australia's people management framework and cultural behaviours
- promoting quality management externally through communication and marketing of the IP Australia quality agenda with customers, foreign IP Offices and the general public
- assisting with the establishment of internationally agreed quality standards
- providing high level advice to the Director General and senior management on quality management and ISO 9001:2008 issues within IP Australia.

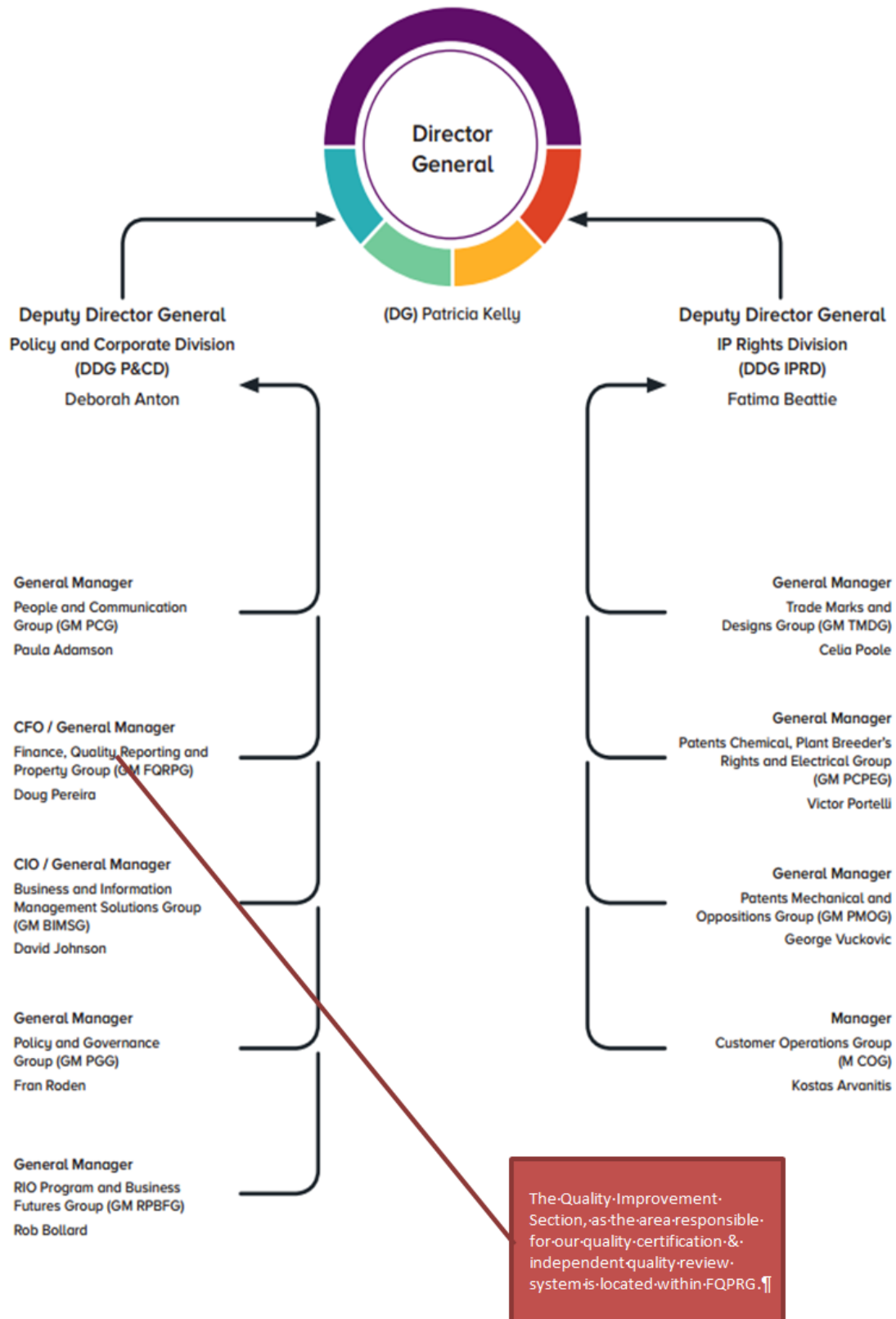
The QIS is accountable, and reports to the General Manager, Finance, Quality, Reporting and Property within IP Australia (see Org Chart below). Consultation and progress of the QMS is accomplished through IP Australia's Quality Improvement Committee (IPAQIC) that consists of senior management level Improvement Managers as representatives of their certified business groups.

The QIS is divided into three key areas – Quality System Management, Product Quality Management and Service Quality and Software Management.

- The Quality System Management team is responsible for ensuring that the IP Australia QMS complies with the ISO 9001 standard and achieves the next level of maturity.
- The Product Quality Management team is responsible for the ongoing operation of our Quality Review System (QRS) as an effective product quality review process which enables IP Australia to demonstrate real improvements in the quality of its IP Rights products.

The Service Quality and Software Management team is responsible for the ongoing IT support of an effective QRS. They are also responsible for the guidance and process support of the QRS within the Customer Operations Group (COG) and Finance, Quality, Reporting and Property Group (FQRPG) which enables IP Australia to demonstrate real improvements in the quality of its corporate and customer services.

IP Australia - Organisation Chart



1. LEADERSHIP AND POLICY

21.04 Confirm that the following are clearly documented, and that this documentation is available internally:

- (a) The quality policy established by top management.
- (b) The roles and names of those bodies and individuals responsible for the QMS, as delegated by top management.
- (c) An organizational chart showing all those bodies and individuals responsible for the QMS.

Paragraph 21.04

The IP Australia Quality Policy Statement has been endorsed by the Director General and Business Group Executives. It is reviewed annually for suitability, adequacy and effectiveness. Staff are made aware of the statement and updates to the statement.

The [quality policy](#) statement can be accessed on IP Australia's Internet website.

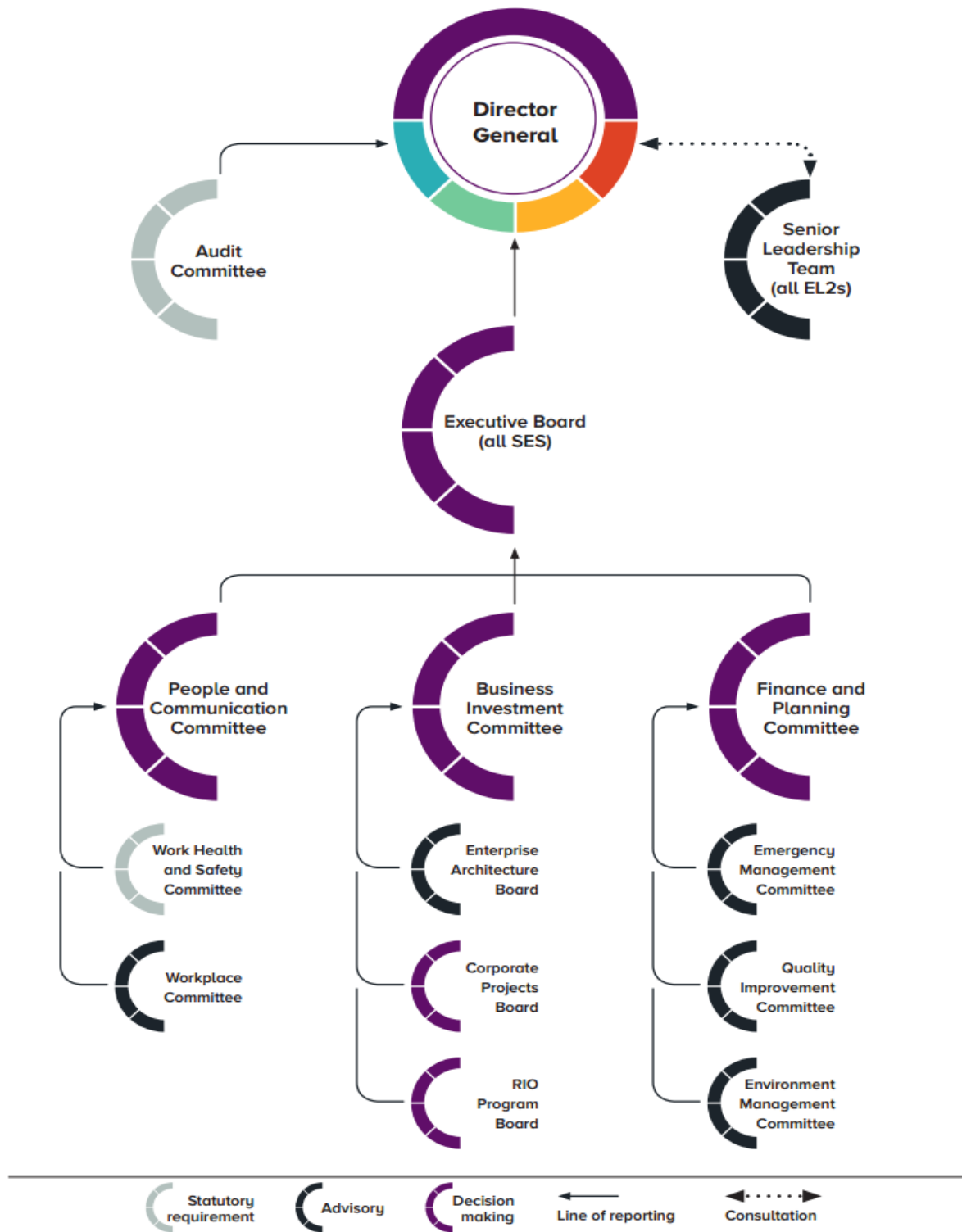
The QIS is responsible for ~~developing, implementing and managing and expanding~~ the QMS at IP Australia. The QIS includes a Director, an IP Rights Quality Review Manager, a Quality System Manager, a Services Quality and Software Manager, several Product Quality Reviewers and a number of administrative staff. IP Australia has demonstrated its commitment to quality through:

- establishment of the IP Australia Quality Improvement Committee including the Director of the QIS as well as the Improvement Managers for each of IP Australia's ISO 9001:2008 certified Business Groups.
- structured and detailed reporting to two of IP Australia's highest level committees, the Finance & Planning Committee and the Executive Board.

IP Australia's [organisational chart](#) is available on IP Australia's Internet website, **with a high level version reflected above.**

The Governance structure for IP Australia is set out below and shows IP Australia's various boards and committees.

IP Australia - Governance Structure



21.05 Indicate (e.g. by means of a table) the extent of compatibility between the Authority's QMS and the requirements of Chapter 21 of these International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines. Alternatively, indicate where the Authority is not yet compliant with these requirements.).

Paragraph 21.05

Chapter 21 requirement			Extent of compliance			
			full	part	no	
21.04		(a)	Quality policy available	✓		
		(b)	Identified roles and names for QMS responsibility	✓		
		(c)	Organizational chart available	✓		
21.05			Established compatibility of QMS with Chapter 21	✓		
21.06		(a)	Mechanisms to ensure effectiveness of the QMS	✓		
		(b)	Control of the continual improvement process	✓		
21.07		(a)	Communication of management about this standard to staff	✓		
		(b)	The PCT Guidelines are in line with the Authority's QMS	✓		
21.08		(a)	Management reviews take place	✓		
		(b)	Quality objectives are reviewed	✓		
		(c)	Communication of quality objectives throughout the Authority	✓		
21.09		(a)	Performance of a yearly internal review of the QMS in/to	✓		
		(b)	determine the extent to which the QMS in based on Chapter 21	✓		
			determine the extent to which S&E complies with PCT Guidelines	✓		
		(c)	an objective and transparent way	✓		
		(d)	using input incl. information according paragraph 21.24	✓		
		(e)	recording the results	✓		
21.10			Assurance to monitor and adapt to actual workload	✓		
	(i)		Infrastructure in place to ensure that a quantity of staff	✓		
		(a)	sufficient to deal with the inflow of work	✓		
		(b)	which maintains tech. qualifications to S&E in all technical fields	✓		
		(c)	which maintains the language facilities to understand languages according to Rule 34	✓		
	(ii)		Infrastructure to provide a quantity of skilled administrative staff	✓		
		(a)	at a level to support the technically qualified staff	✓		
		(b)	for the documentation records	✓		

Chapter 21 requirement				Extent of compliance		
				full	part	no
	(iii)		Ensuring appropriate equipment to carry out S&E	✓		
	(iv)		Ensuring documentation accord. to Rule 34	✓		
	(v)	(a)	Instructions to help staff understand and act accord. the quality criteria and standards	✓		
		(b)	Instructions to follow work procedures accurately and they are kept up-to-date.	✓		
	(vi)	(a)	Training and development program to ensure and maintain necessary skills in search and examination	✓		
		(b)	Training and development program to ensure awareness of staff to comply with the quality criteria and standards.	✓		
	(vii)	(a)	System in place for monitoring resources required to deal with demand	✓		
		(b)	System in place for monitoring resources required to comply with the quality standards in S&E	✓		
21.11	(i)		Control mechanisms to ensure timely issue of S&E reports	✓		
	(ii)		Control mech. regarding fluctuations in demand and backlog	✓		
21.12	(i)		Internal quality assurance system for self assessment	✓		
		(a)	for compliance with S&E Guidelines	✓		
		(b)	for channeling feedback to staff	✓		
	(ii)		System for measurement of data and reporting for continuous improvement	✓		
	(iii)		System for verifying the effectiveness of actions taken to correct deficient S&E work	✓		
21.14		(a)	Contact person helping identify best practice between Authorities	✓		
		(b)	Contact person fostering continual improvement	✓		
		(c)	Contact person providing for effective comm. with other Authorities for feedback and evaluation	✓		
21.15	(i)	(a)	Appropriate system for handling complaints	✓		
		(b)	Appropriate system for taking preventive/corrective actions	✓		
		(c)	Appropriate system for offering feedback to users	✓		
	(ii)	(a)	A procedure for monitoring user satisfaction & perception	✓		
		(b)	A procedure for ensuring their legitimate needs and expectations are met	✓		
	(iii)		Clear and concise guidance on the S&E process for the user	✓		

Chapter 21 requirement			Extent of compliance		
			full	part	no
	(iv)	Indication where and how the Authority makes its quality objectives publicly available	✓		
21.16		Established communication with WIPO and designated and elected Offices	✓		
21.17		QMS of Authority clearly described (e.g. Quality Manual)	✓		
21.18	(a)	Documents making up the Quality Manual have been prepared and distributed	✓		
	(b)	Media available to support the Quality Manual	✓		
	(c)	Document control measures are taken	✓		
21.19	(i)	Quality policy of the Authority and commitment to QMS	✓		
	(ii)	Scope of QMS	✓		
	(iii)	Organizational structure and responsibilities	✓		
	(iv)	the documented processes are carried out in the Authority	✓		
	(v)	Resources available to carry out processes and implementing the procedures	✓		
	(vi)	a description of the interaction between the processes and the procedures of the QMS.	✓		
21.20	(i)	Records which documents are kept and where they are kept	✓		
	(ii)	Records of results of management review	✓		
	(iii)	Records about training, skills and experience of staff	✓		
	(iv)	Evidence of conformity of processes	✓		
	(v)	Results of reviews of requirements relating to products	✓		
	(vi)	Records of the S&E process carried out on each application	✓		
	(vii)	Record of data allowing individual work to be tracked	✓		
	(viii)	Record of QMS audits	✓		
	(ix)	Records on actions taken re. non-conforming products	✓		
	(x)	Records on actions taken re. corrective actions	✓		
	(xi)	Records on actions taken re. preventive actions	✓		
	(xii)	Records referring to search process documentation	✓		
21.21	(i)	Recording of the databases consulted during search	✓		
	(ii)	Recording of keywords, combination of words and truncations during search	✓		
	(iii)	Recording of the languages used during search	✓		
	(iv)	Recording of classes and combinations thereof consulted during search	✓		

Chapter 21 requirement			Extent of compliance			
			full	part	no	
	(v)		Recording of a listing of all search statements used in databases consulted	✓		
	(vi)		Records about other information relevant to the search	✓		
	(vii)		Records about limitation of search and its justification	✓		
	(viii)		Records about lack of clarity of the claims	✓		
	(ix)		Records about lack of unity	✓		
21.22			Report on its own internal review processes	✓		
21.23-21.25			Additional information on further inputs to its internal reviews	✓		
21.26			Initial report called for by paragraph 21.26	✓		

21.06 Indicate with reference to the organizational chart those bodies and mechanisms management uses to ensure:

- (a) the effectiveness of the QMS; and
- (b) that the process of continual improvement progresses.

Paragraph 21.06

A formal management review is undertaken every three months by the IPAQIC and reported to the Finance & Planning Committee. ~~as well as biannually and annually by IP Australia's and Executive Board conducts an annual review of the QMS respectively.~~ These reviews assesses how well the system is performing, what can be improved and whether it is meeting the policy and objectives set for it. Results of the review are provided to the Director General ~~as part of the and-Executive Board-members.~~

The QMS is continuously monitored corporately by the IPAQIC and through the Group operational quality areas for each core business.

The IPAQIC meets on a monthly basis throughout the year and reviews the state of health of the IP Australia's QMS, such as Document and Record Control; Corrective and Preventative Action; Internal Audits; Customer Feedback; Product Quality Review and other quality issues. The IPAQIC considers outcomes from quality reviews, internal and external audits, and ensures appropriate improvements are made to business processes, IT systems and staff training as well as actively contributing to the continuous improvement, promotion and maintenance of IP Australia's QMS.

The IPAQIC includes the Director of the QIS, the Quality System Manager and an Improvement Manager for each Business Group within IP Australia that is ISO 9001 certified.

The QIS is responsible for developing, implementing and managing the QMS at IP Australia.

Another key mechanism IP Australia uses to help define and measure product quality is the Product Quality Standards. IP Australia's Product Quality Standards incorporate key requirements of the PCT search and examination guidelines. IP Australia's search and examination work is reviewed against these Product Quality Standards which are read in light of

the Patents Manual of Practice and Procedure. The Product Quality Management team within the QIS comprises a number of Product Quality Reviewers who review a sample of work for all Examiners with Acceptance Delegation across all the examination sections.

The QIS is responsible for providing quality related reports to Business Groups (**monthly**) and Committees (**monthly and quarterly**)~~on a regular basis~~. **Among other quality elements**, these reports provide an indication of aspects of search and examination which are performed well and areas which may require improvement.

IP Australia seeks to continually improve the effectiveness of the QMS through a variety of mechanisms, including:

- conducting and reassessing risk assessments
- defining and revising quality objectives
- measuring quality objectives against minimum performance undertakings
- reviewing quality system audit results
- performing corrective and preventive actions
- conducting management reviews
- complying with the quality policy statement.

IP Australia administers an Improvement Log, a database which allows all staff at IP Australia to make suggestions on how to improve our processes and practices. Each suggestion is tracked and progressed through the relevant area until a resolution is determined and implemented.

Internal quality audits **are planned 12-18 months in advance via an audit schedule approved by the IPAQIC and** are conducted on processes within IP Australia **to assess their ongoing compliance to the ISO standard**. Audit findings and recommendations are recorded in the Improvement Log.

Regular surveillance audits are conducted by independent assessors to ensure continuing compliance with ISO 9001:2008. **IP Australia is currently preparing to move to compliance under the 2015 version of the standard. As such, IP Australia is currently conducting internal audits for compliance in line with ISO 9001:2015.**

21.07 Indicate how management of the Authority communicates to its staff the importance of meeting treaty and regulatory requirements including:

- (a) those of this standard; and*
- (b) complying with the Authority's QMS.*

Paragraph 21.07

IP Australia communicates to staff the importance of quality issues (in particular meeting treaty and regulatory requirements) by various means, for example, messages and documentation on the IP Australia's Intranet, staff newsletters and emails, **as well as through agenda items in various quality, management and committee meetings.**~~Section meetings~~, The Manuals of Practice and Procedure, **the Product Quality Standards and** ~~including reference in~~ individual performance agreements **all promote the importance of meeting these treaty and regulatory**

requirements. Internal audits and product quality review process outcomes and findings are also communicated to staff and/or progressed through training.

21.08 Indicate how and when top management of the Authority or delegated officers:

- (a) conducts management reviews and ensures the availability of appropriate resources;
- (b) reviews quality objectives; and
- (c) ensures that the quality objectives are communicated and understood throughout the respective Authority.

Paragraph 21.08

IP Australia has a [Corporate Plan Strategic Plan](#) that outlines ~~our~~ the vision, purpose and strategic priorities for ~~IP Australia~~ the IP system. The plan also sets the key strategies we will use to deliver those priorities. ~~The plan~~ It is designed for staff to share a common set of goals for the future of the organisation and its activities, including quality related objectives and activities. The document is also publicly available on [IP Australia's website](#).

Group operational plans are linked to the [Corporate Plan](#) in order to ensure the objectives and planned initiatives at all levels of the organisation are aligned. Key performance indicators are set out in the operational plans and used to measure success against these plans. [Quality outcomes and the activities to ensure continued improvement in relation to quality are also set out in the operational plans.](#)

The [IP Australia Quality Policy Statement](#) is endorsed by the Director General and Group Executives. It is reviewed annually for suitability, adequacy and effectiveness. Staff are made aware of the statement [through QMS related documentation and updates to the statement are communicated widely at the time.](#) The statement ~~The which~~ is also available on IP Australia's website.

With the maturity of IP Australia's QMS we have been able to establish the IPAQIC, as the committee through which the governance of the IP Australia QMS occurs. The Committee membership comprises Senior Managers from the groups which are currently operating under ISO 9001 certified quality system. The IPAQIC reports to the Finance & Planning Committee on a ~~biannual~~ [quarterly](#) basis and the Executive Board on an annual basis. The IPAQIC meets monthly to review and consider QMS issues.

The IPAQIC members form the link to their respective Business Group. This link provides the communication and consultation conduit between the IPAQIC and the Business Group Management Committees. This link helps to ensure that quality matters are appropriately reflected in each of the Business Group's Operational Plans. Each of the IPAQIC members is the primary point of contact for quality matters related to their Business Group and each has a responsibility to report on quality activities within their Group in order to share learning with other Groups and promote good quality practice throughout IP Australia.

The Finance & Planning Committee determine and provide resources needed to deliver desired outcomes including the maintenance and improvement of the quality management system. The Executives and leadership teams of each of the Business Groups provide resources as needed to meet customer requirements within their area of responsibility.

Detailed information relating to the Quality Management System, the **Strategie Corporate Plan**, Operational Plans and the quality governance structure is available to staff via IP Australia's intranet and **via the internal Quality Management System Manual**.

21.09 Indicate whether top management or delegated officers of the Authority perform an internal review of the QMS in accordance with paragraphs 21.22-21.25:

- (a) at least once per year (cf. paragraph 21.22);*
- (b) in accordance with the minimum scope of such reviews as set out in Section 8, namely:
to determine the extent to which the QMS is based on Chapter 21 (cf. paragraphs 21.22, 21.24(i));
to determine the extent to which Search and Examination work complies with PCT Guidelines (cf. paragraphs 21.22, 21.24(i));*
- (c) in an objective and transparent way (cf. paragraph 21.22);*
- (d) using input including information according to paragraphs 21.24 (ii)-(vi);*
- (e) recording the results (cf. paragraph 21.25).*

Paragraph 21.09

(a) The QMS is continuously monitored corporately by the IPAQIC and through the Group operational quality **reporting areas**. A formal management review is undertaken every quarter by the **IP Australia Quality Improvement Committee (IPAQIC)** as well as **biannually quarterly** by the Finance & Planning Committee and annually by the Executive Board. The review assesses how well the system is performing, what can be improved and whether it is meeting the policy and objectives set for it.

(b) The extent of compliance of search and examination work with the PCT Guidelines is based on the review of work sampled from each Examiner having Acceptance Delegation (AD) within the Patent Groups. A number of designated Product Quality Reviewers in the QIS perform reviews against a set of Product Quality Standards (PQS). The PQS were selected by the Patent Groups as representing the requirements for a quality product. The review findings are reported to the AD Examiner and the Supervising Examiner of their respective examination section. Reports are regularly provided to the Senior Management of the Patent Groups on the extent to which work complies with the PQS. The PQS include requirements relating to search and examination. **Internal quality audits are also carried out periodically on the processes and procedures used to ensure their compliance with IP Australia's QMS, Chapter 21 and the PCT Guidelines.**

(c)-(e) IP Australia has a database (the Improvement Log) which is a designated record keeping tool for raising and progressing issues. The Improvement Log allows IP Australia to record improvements and recommendations from other sources, including audit recommendations, IPAQIC recommendations and feedback from customers. The Improvement Log is an open and transparent means for tracking issues for all staff **and is available for all staff to view and use via our intranet. All issues logged in the Improvement Log are assessed to determine the root cause of the issue, determine and record actions to be taken to address the cause as well as the subsequent action(s) that have been taken to address the root cause and resolve the issue.**

2. RESOURCES

21.10 Explanatory note: The granting of ISA/IPEA status means that the Authority has demonstrated it has the infrastructure and resources to support the search and examination process. Chapter 21 calls for assurance that the Authority can continually support this process while accommodating changes in workload and meeting QMS requirements. The responses below, should provide this assurance.

Human resources:

(i) Provide information about the infrastructure in place to ensure that a quantity of staff: sufficient to deal with the inflow of work;

which maintains the technical qualifications to search and examine in the required technical fields; and

which maintains the language facilities to understand at least those languages in which the minimum documentation referred to in Rule 34 is written or is translated

is maintained and adapted to changes in workload.

(ii) Describe the infrastructure in place to ensure that a quantity of appropriately trained/skilled administrative staff is maintained and adapted to changes in workload:

at a level to support the technically qualified staff and facilitate the search and examination process, and

for the documentation of records.

Paragraph 21.10

The Finance and Planning Committee along with IP Australia's Director General and Executive determine and provide resources needed to deliver desired outcomes including the maintenance and improvement of the quality management system. The Executives of each of the Groups along with their respective leadership teams provide resources needed to meet customer requirements within their areas of responsibility.

(i) A defined framework has been established for IP Australia to assure that the appropriate resources are allocated for administration and international search and examination.

The framework includes the following elements:

- The online nature and flexibility of our new **IP Rights Examiner Program (IPREP) STEP** training program has allowed IP Australia to move away from cyclical recruitment campaigns. IP Australia is now recruiting on an as needs basis (allowing for training timeframes) using forecasted workload and current staffing modelling across our technology areas. Currently we have approximately 400 patent examiners.
- IP Australia has continued to develop the skills of patent examiners under a competency based **training framework, IPREPsystem**. In February 2015 IP Australia implemented a new training program **under this framework for Patents examiners** called STEP: Self-paced Training in Examining Patents. As part of the implementation of the new model, all of our training content ~~was been~~ was revised, updated and made available via online training modules. The new online blended learning modules allow trainees to start in their section, rather than as a separate training group, with a section based Workplace coach who oversees their trainees from day 1 and is responsible for developing the training and assessment plan. Trainees and workplace coaches are supported by the Learning Community Facilitator who facilitates and leads the new examiners through the online learning community; and the Coach Coordinator who facilitates and leads the

workplace coaches' community of practice, supports the coaches and moderates assessments. All training is available online through self-paced material, participation in online communities and virtual classrooms. Trainees can start at any time, from anywhere, rather than having to wait for a group start date. Trainee examiners are able to progress at their own speed, not held back to a rigid timetable. They are also able to go back and review learning as required. Through this new model IP Australia is able to offer positions to trainees to commence as out-posted workers if desired. The normal expectation is that new patent examiners will have attained the Acceptance Delegation competencies within 2 years. Depending on the individual's skills, knowledge and application, examiners may achieve the competencies in a shorter period of time.

- IP Australia has a competency based program for experienced examiners to undertake development to become Hearing Officers.
- IP Australia has an ongoing development program called the Technical Examiner Learning Program (TELP) to aid all examination staff in maintaining their currency in technological developments. The TELP operates across all technology areas and includes in-house technical trainings sessions by experts in the field, attendance at conferences or visits to various companies in the relevant industries. Examiners' knowledge/technical needs are constantly monitored. Strategies to address these needs are formulated through this program.
- IP Australia is committed to the ongoing professional development of its staff and offers a Professional Development Program. Activities include update/refresher courses in study and attendance at industry conferences, forums and the like.
- IP Australia has established ~~the IP Rights Technical Excellence Centre (IPTEC) a Learning and Development section~~ which provides a single point of access to all IP Rights learning and development services. ~~IPTEC The Learning and Development section~~ delivers all aspects of job specific learning, including patents technical learning. Since July 2011, a number of courses were offered to patent examiners in searching (including essential steps; keywords and classification marks); and advanced searching techniques (including for nanotechnology applications). Further courses have been developed and run since July 2013 and include – Advanced Furthers, EPOQUE training, Searching Masterclass, a Re-examination Online Module, IP Reform Training and Searching Non Patent Literature.
- Apart from English, IP Australia has a policy of maintaining competencies in other languages. This currently includes translators in French, German, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, Spanish and Korean covering all the main technology areas.
- IP Australia has a comprehensive Patent Manual of Practice and Procedure which has been in place for many years and is available electronically to staff. The Manual comprises 6 comprehensive volumes of practice and procedure. [Volumes 1-3](#) (International; National; and Oppositions, Courts, Extensions & Disputes) are publicly available on the Internet.
- IP Australia has implemented a series of PCT best practices, which have been incorporated into the Manual of Practice and Procedure; and the IPREP training. These practices regularly undergo review.

- Additional support tools for examiners include ready access to internal and external databases, technical books, journals and legal resources on IP Australia's Patent Examination Workbench.
- *The Search Technical Team (STT) ensures examiners are provided with best-practice search techniques and access to high quality search tools. The STT provides two primary capabilities:*
 - *in-section support, training, and promotion of best-practice search techniques and;*
 - *evaluation of search tools and databases for patent examination.*

In addition the STT activities encompass:

- *classification activities, including the IPC and CPC;*
 - *maintaining expertise in EPOQUE and STN amongst other search tools;*
 - *providing subject matter experts to the training projects team;*
 - *maintaining the searching volume of the PMPP, and;*
 - *contract management responsibility for the commercial search tools used by examiners.*
- ~~IP Australia has a Search Technical Team (STT) which focuses on the evaluation of new search tools and databases, and the enhanced utilisation of current search tools and databases for patent examiners. For example, trials of Amberscope, Patsnap, Deepdyve and the NICTA Patent Classification Service were undertaken. The Search Technical Team reports regularly to the Patents Management Committee.~~

(ii) IP Australia has a PCT/~~Bilateral~~ Unit within the Patents and Plant Breeder's Rights Administration branch of the Customer Operations Group. The PCT/~~Bilateral~~ Unit is responsible for processing PCT filings and actions related to matters concerning IP Australia's role as a Receiving Office, an International Search Authority and an International Preliminary Examination Authority. The PCT Unit is responsible for the initial processing of PCT applications (including creation of records in the International Examination and Search System (INTESS)) and creation of a new folder for electronic copies of relevant citations for each PCT application, and also for final processing of PCT actions.

~~Since As of~~ June 2011, all new PCT application requests (eg. search requests and demands) ~~have been are~~ in electronic format. Examiners are provided with instructions for the use of INTESS within Volume 4 of the Patents Manual of Practice and Procedure.

Material resources:

(iii) *Describe the infrastructure in place to ensure that appropriate equipment and facilities such as IT hardware and software to support the search and examination process are provided and maintained;*

(iv) *Describe the infrastructure in place to ensure that at least the minimum documentation referred to in Rule 34 is available, accessible, properly arranged and maintained for search and examination purposes. State whether it is on paper, in microform or stored on electronic media, and where.*

(v) *Describe how instructions:*

to help staff understand and adhere to the quality criteria and standards; and;

to follow work procedures accurately and consistently

are documented, provided to staff, kept up-to-date and adapted where necessary.

(iii) Examiners at IP Australia utilise an electronic document management system (PAMS- Patent Administration Management System) to process, store, retrieve and examine national patent applications. IP Australia also has an electronic system for international search and examination work (INTESS). Examiners are provided with a Patent Examination Workbench which includes a wide assortment of examiner resources, including access to patent search tools and search engines; electronically-available Manuals (eg. Patent Manual of Practice and Procedure and Quality Management System Manual); patent law materials; and WIPO and PCT materials.

The IP Australia IT department – Business and Information Management Solutions Group (BIMSG) – has responsibility for maintaining and monitoring the IT software and hardware for IP Australia. There are internal Service Level Agreements in place between IP Australia and BIMSG.

The IP Australia Improvement Log helps to facilitate changes required to IT systems and/or business processes and/or staff training.

(iv) IP Australia provides examiners with access to the PCT minimum documentation as defined in Rule 34 PCT via the Patent Examination Workbench.

(v) An electronic version of the Patent Manual of Practice and Procedures is available to all examiners on IP Australia's intranet. The Manual comprises six volumes (three of which are available on IP Australia's website), with;

Volume 1 covering the practice and procedures for international work. An introductory chapter of the Manual sets out the quality requirements for all search and examination work. This part of the Manual also provides examiners with a link to the IP Australia Quality Policy, as well as providing guidance on the quality assessment process. The Product Quality Standards are included in this section of the Manual.

Volume 2 of the Manual sets out the practice and procedures for all national work, including for national phase applications. Suggestions by examiners for improvement of the Manual can be placed on IP Australia's Improvement Log.

IP Australia also has a Quality Management System Manual which provides staff with information and instructions on all aspects of IP Australia's quality management system. The Quality Management System Manual includes a chapter on the Quality Review System, which provides instructions and information on all aspects of the product quality review process.

IP Australia established within the Patent Groups a Patents Technical Working Group (PTWG) to support quality management arrangements. Its main focus is to ensure that the PMPP are effective and that changes to the PMPP are carried out in a coordinated and efficient manner, drawing on relevant technical expertise. The PTWG (through the Patents Manual Editor) also ensures that changes to the PMPP are communicated appropriately to examiners.

Communications generally occur through the Improvement Log, via email, or through the Patent Groups newsletter.

Training resources:

(vi) Describe the training and development infrastructure and program which ensures that all staff involved in the search and examination process:

acquire and maintain the necessary experience and skills; and

are fully aware of the importance of complying with the quality criteria and standards.

IP Australia has a competency based training (CBT) and assessment program for all IP Australia examination staff. The IP Rights Technical Excellence Centre (IPTEC) was formed in October 2016. IPTEC brings together all the individual training areas from the different groups into section with the aim of improving the quality and consistency in the delivery of CBT and continuing technical training (CTT) as well as making optimal use of resources. The Learning and Development section at IP Australia IPTEC now manages the governance and administration of all CBT programs. The IP Rights Examiner Program (IPREP), includes the new STEP program which is an online learning tool that includes units of competency for all key patent product lines, including undertaking international search and examinations. After completion of the STEP program (including all competency assessments) examiners obtain the Acceptance Delegation whereby they are deemed competent at exercising their search and examination responsibilities with minimal supervision. All aspects of the competency based training programs are documented in the IPTEC procedures and supported by IP Australia's IP Rights Learning and Development Manual.

IP Australia also provides a competency based training program for experienced examiners to undertake development to become Hearing Officers.

IP Australia operates an ongoing development program called the Technical Examiner Learning Program (TELP) to assist all examiners in maintaining their currency in search and examination. The program is administered by the TELP Committee which receives submissions on possible TELP activities from examiners and decides on which activities to pursue.

IP Australia has a policy of maintaining competencies in other languages. This currently includes translators in German, French, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Spanish and Korean.

IP Australia has a comprehensive Patent Manual of Practice and Procedure (PMPP) which is available electronically to all IP Australia staff. Volume 1 is dedicated to international work while Volume 2 deals specifically with national work, including national phase applications. The PTWG is responsible for administering the PMPP, including progressing any changes to the PMPP. The PMPP is constantly under review as part of IP Australia's commitment to effective Documentation Control. The PMPP includes a Quality Chapter which includes the PQS for national and international work. The PQS set the benchmark against which to assess the quality of search and examination and are read in consideration with the practices and procedures set out in the PMPP.

IP Australia's QRS randomly samples a defined amount of work for review, for all examiners with Acceptance Delegation. Work that is sampled for quality review includes search and examination work. Reviews are conducted against the PQS by a dedicated group of Patent Product Quality Reviewers within the QIS. Results of the reviews are provided to the individual examiner and their Supervising Examiner. Reports of review findings are regularly provided to the Patents Management and high level outcomes are externally available on IP Australia's internet via our [Customer Service Charter](#).

Oversight over resources:

(vii) Describe the system in place for continuously monitoring and identifying the resources required:

to deal with demand; and

comply with the quality standards for search and examination.

The Finance & Planning Committee provides the resources needed to deliver desired outcomes, including the maintenance and improvement of the QMS. An IP Australia specific steady state model Excel spreadsheet is used to assist in predicting the required number of resources with a 3-5 year forecast. The Executive of each Business Group, including the General Managers of the Patent Groups, along with their respective leadership teams provide resources needed to meet customer requirements within their respective areas of responsibility. **The Performance Analysis, Planning and Reporting (PAPR) team, within FQRPG, provide reporting and analysis supports to the General Managers on workloads, average staffing levels, pendency and other relevant trends in order to ensure our staffing levels match required outputs and can deal with demand.**

During 2015 IP Australia made a significant organisational structure change, with the former Patents and Plant Breeders Right Group (PPBRG) being separated into two Patent Groups. This change was made proactively in recognition of the challenges, now and into the future, of running a group with such a large span of control **and to allow the groups to better align into three main technology streams under an assistant general manager responsible for each stream, namely Mechanical, Electrical and Chemical.** The Patent Groups remain part of the IP Rights Division and report to the Deputy Director General of that Division. Both Patent Groups have a General Manager, who is a member of IP Australia's Executive Board. IP Australia's new Patent Groups are:

Patents Chemical, PBR and Electrical Group (PCPEG); and

Patents Mechanical and Oppositions Group (PMOG).

Through the rest of this document the term Patent Groups is used to refer to both groups. The new Patent Groups organisational structure is publically available on IP Australia's website as part of the [IP Australia Organisational Chart](#).

IP Australia established a Quality Review System (QRS) – in which a sample of work of all examiners with Acceptance Delegation is reviewed. A team of independent Patent Product Quality Reviewers, **within the QIS**, assesses the search and examination work of examiners for compliance with the PQS. Review findings are reported back to the Examiner and their Supervising Examiner and reports are regularly provided to the Patents Management team **and other committees in the quality governance structure**, which then ensures appropriate action is taken to address any specific issues. There are currently 5 permanent Patent Product Quality Reviewers (2 for chemical technologies and 3 for mechanical/electrical technologies) along with up to 2 rotational positions to help promote understanding and increased knowledge of the QRS. The number of anticipated cases for quality review is estimated each year to ensure that adequate staffing levels are maintained to perform reviews in an efficient and timely manner. **All Product Quality Reviewers are experienced examiners and were transferred or promoted into these roles through a competitive, merit based selection process. All Product Quality Reviewers maintain their Acceptance delegation and make use of the same continual training opportunities as Examiners.**

3. MANAGEMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE WORKLOAD

21.11 Indicate how the following practices and procedures for handling search and examination requests and performing related functions such as data-entry and classification are implemented:

- (i) Effective control mechanisms regarding timely issue of search and examination reports to a quality standard as set by the respective Authority; and
- (ii) Appropriate control mechanisms regarding fluctuations in demand and backlog management.

Paragraph 21.11

The IP Australia Customer Operations Group (COG) is primarily responsible for managing most aspects of IP Australia's service delivery. This includes the effective and efficient administration of IP Rights through process management of IP Rights service requests and transactions through their lifecycle. The COG is proactive in managing quality delivery of customer outcomes and reporting against performance with respect to IP Australia's [Customer Service Charter](#) and Work Quality Standards (which are the equivalent of the examination Product Quality Standards). The COG is part of the IP Rights Division at IP Australia and is responsible for the effective operation of IP Australia's business processes and systems, as well as delivery of information, products and services to address customer needs. Within COG, the Patents and PBR Administration Section focuses on effective and efficient administrative proceedings of IP Rights and customer service requests relating to IP Rights.

The PCT Unit operates within the Patents and PBR Administration Section. The PCT Unit is responsible for initial processing (including data entry) of new PCT applications. New applications are then assigned to an experienced patent examiner for preliminary classification and are then forwarded to the appropriate examination section.

The COG have an established Quality Standards framework as part of the QRS. The standards are designed to focus COG staff on consistently achieving high quality output at each step in the processing of service requests. The QRS contributes to the effectiveness of the quality management system, enabling identification of staff training needs, continuous improvement of service request processing, quality, and customer satisfaction.

IP Australia has a [Customer Service Charter](#) (CSC) which sets out what customers can expect from IP Australia in relation to quality and timeliness of its services, including its international services. The CSC identifies the specific timeframes within which IP Australia will produce international search and preliminary examination reports. IP Australia's performance against these timeframes is measured quarterly and performance against the Charter is reported to the Australian Government annually. The [CSC](#) is publicly available on IP Australia's Internet website. The quarterly reports highlight our level of compliance with the Quality Standards and Quality Objectives.

4. QUALITY ASSURANCE

21.12 The following are required quality assurance measures for timely issue of search and examination reports of a quality standard in accordance with the Guidelines. Indicate how the following are implemented, including the use of any checklists to verify reports before their issue or for monitoring the quality standard as part of a post-issue review process:

(i) An internal quality assurance system for self-assessment, involving verification, validation and monitoring of searches and examination work:

for compliance with these Search and Examination Guidelines;

for channeling feedback to staff.

(ii) A system of measurement and collection of data and reporting. Show how the Authority uses the system to ensure the continuous improvement of the established processes.

(iii) A system for verifying the effectiveness of actions taken to correct deficient S&E work, eliminate the causes, and to prevent issues from recurring.

Paragraph 21.12

(i) The IP Australia Product Quality Standards incorporate the requirements of the PCT search and examination guidelines. All our search and examination is undertaken in relation to these Product Quality Standards.

IP Australia has an established QRS which is administered by the QIS. This includes randomly sampling the work of each patent examiner with Acceptance Delegation for quality review. A dedicated group of Patent Product Quality Reviewers assesses the work for compliance with the PQS. Results (positive and negative) of each review are provided to the AD Examiner and their Supervising Examiner. In the case of a negative finding, if the Product Quality Reviewer and the Supervising Examiner are unable to reach agreement on the review findings, an Arbitration process is used to resolve the issue. The Supervising Examiner utilises the product quality review outcomes for the provision of positive reinforcement and recognition as well as the provision of guidance and/or training for their staff. There is an additional sampling process which is used when necessary to validate the initial quality performance findings.

IP Australia employs an additional strategy to ensure quality at the front end of the search process in the form of a 3 person search strategy team. The team reviews the patent application and, in consultation, formulates the search strategy. The search results are reviewed by the team and the search may be further refined before being deemed completed.

The quality of searching is also supported by the Search Technical Team (STT). The STT manages the ongoing evaluation and assessment of searching tools available to examiners as well as examiners' knowledge of those tools. The STT is responsible for investigating new search tools, updating software, eliminating obsolete resources, etc. The team is made up of a number of examiners, including quality reviewers, selected across a range of technologies, and is headed by a Supervising Examiner.

IP Australia utilises a three tier approach to the quality assessment of all search and examination work in which:

1. Less experienced examiners (generally without Acceptance Delegation) are closely supervised;
2. In-section quality checks are performed by peers;

3. Independent quality reviews are performed on a random sample of cases across all examination sections by a group of Patent Product Quality Reviewers.

Additionally, under our ISO 9001 certifications internal quality audits are conducted on processes within IP Australia, including search and examination processes. Audit findings and recommendations are entered into IP Australia's Improvement Log. The Improvement Log is an important corporate tool which is primarily used to capture findings of non-compliance as well as suggestions for improvement from staff and customers.

(ii) The QRS includes the use of a database specifically designed to capture the results from quality reviews. Review findings are reported back to the AD Examiner who produced the work as well as to the Supervising Examiner of their examination section. The QRS Database is used to generate reports of quality review findings and compliance at the individual, examination section and group levels. IP Australia operates an Improvement Log which captures suggestions for improvement from staff. The PTWG monitors issues raised on the Improvement Log that relate to the Patent Manual of Practice and Procedure and resolve issues as appropriate. The Improvement Log records the outcome and/or corrective action taken for each issue.

The measurement of services and product delivery elements of IP Australia's business model **are is primarily derived from IP Australia's IT systems and reported back to the Business Groups for validation and appropriate follow on actions. ~~the responsibility of each Business Group.~~**

Suggestions and feedback received from our external customers is recorded by staff in IP Australia's Customer Feedback Database. The Executive analyse trends in complaints about aspects of IP Australia's business, including search and examination.

(iii) IP Australia has a number of processes in place for the control and correction of non-conforming products. **The QRS and Improvement Log have defined processes and procedures for handling non-conformances and** each Business Group is expected to correct any non-conformance in accordance with the relevant procedures for that Group.

Procedures for the correction of non-conforming search and examination products are outlined in the Quality Management System Manual and include both mandatory and discretionary corrective action. The Patent Manual of Practice and Procedure also provides information on the procedures for correcting or amending deficient search and examination work.

The IP Australia pre-grant opposition process also serves as a feedback process to quality management. Each decision is peer-reviewed prior to issue. Issues arising that identify potential areas for improvement are reviewed and used to adjust processes, reaffirm existing practices or identify further training needs. Similarly, issues identified from court proceedings involving Office decisions are reviewed and used to identify process, practice or training changes.

5. COMMUNICATION

Inter-Authority communication:

21.13 Explanatory note: Each Authority should provide for effective communication with other Authorities.

(Note: This point is informative. No response is required by the template to paragraph 21.13)

21.14 Provide the name, job title and contact details of the Authorities designated quality contact person who will take responsibility for:

- (a) helping identify and disseminate best practice among Authorities;*
- (b) fostering continual improvement; and*
- (c) providing for effective communication with other Authorities to allow for prompt feedback from them so that potential systemic issues can be evaluated and addressed.*

Paragraph 21.14

IP Australia's designated quality contact persons are:

Mr Leigh Tristram, Improvement Manager for the Patents Mechanical and Oppositions Group (PMOG)

Mr George Hearder, Improvement Manager for the Patents Chemical, PBR & Electrical Group (PCPEG)

Mr Michael Debenham, Director, Quality Improvement Section.

Communication and guidance to users:

21.15 Describe the system in place for monitoring and using customer feedback including at least the following elements:

- (i) An appropriate system for handling complaints and making corrections; taking corrective and/or preventative action where appropriate; and offering feedback to users.*
- (ii) A procedure for: monitoring user satisfaction and perception; and for ensuring their legitimate needs and expectations are met.*
- (iii) Clear, concise and comprehensive guidance and information to users (particularly unrepresented applicants) on the search and examination process, giving details of where it is to be found e.g. link to Authority's web site, guidance literature.*
- (iv) An indication of where and how the Authority makes its quality objectives publicly available for the users.*

Paragraph 21.15 Customer satisfaction is monitored at IP Australia by the following means:

- Customer Satisfaction Benchmark Survey;
- Feedback from our customer engagement and business intelligence programs; and

- A Customer Feedback Database

IP Australia's external [Customer Feedback](#) process accommodates complaints, compliments and suggestions. IP Australia is committed to providing an informative response to any complaint within 15 working days.

There are several ways external customers can give us feedback. They can:

- fill in the online feedback form on our website ([see link above](#))
- phone or email the Customer Service Centre, and
- write to IP Australia at our postal address.

IP Australia uses a number of different mechanisms to consult our customers and stakeholders. These include surveys, publications (both internal and external) and meetings with various advisory and consultative bodies. We also hold formal and informal meetings with other government agencies to discuss matters of common concern.

The IP Australia external research program provides the organisation with effective, relevant and timely customer and business information to assist us to make informed and meaningful business decisions. **In 2016, IP Australia launched our [beta products page](#) which provides an avenue for our customers and other stakeholders to view and give feedback on IP Australia's systems and decisions before they are released.**

IP Australia undertakes longitudinal customer satisfaction surveys to measure customer satisfaction across all relevant customer segments. The timeframe for these surveys has been reduced from the two years to allow for a more flexible and targeted approach. The survey is currently run on a yearly basis to provide IP Australia with more timely information.

IP Australia meets regularly with a number of bodies to seek feedback on strategic, operational and legislative issues.

[IP Australia has an Internet website](#) that provides guidance and information to users on the search and examination process. The website has recently been updated to better support customers in finding the information they need to understand in order to protect their intellectual property. The [CSC](#), [quality objectives](#), [quality policy](#) and [PQS](#) are publicly available on IP Australia's website.

21.16 Communication with WIPO and designated and elected Offices:

Describe how the Authority provides for effective communication with the International Bureau and designated and elected offices. In particular describe how the Authority ensures that feedback is promptly evaluated and addressed.

Paragraph 21.16

IP Australia, as an International Searching and Preliminary Examining Authority, has several [communication channels](#) (electronic, **phone and** post (and fax for emergencies)) that are open to anyone, not just WIPO and the Receiving, Designated and Elected Offices. **IP Australia prefers electronic versions of communication from customers and for other transactional business to allow for those transactions to be recorded, processed and tracked in our IT Systems.** In common with all other feedback received by IP Australia, WIPO feedback is forwarded to the relevant

section so that it can be addressed. Any learning is communicated to staff through such channels as emails, newsletters, amendments to the Manual of Practice and Procedure and so forth.

6. DOCUMENTATION

21.17 Explanatory note: The QMS of the Authority needs to be clearly described and implemented so that all processes in the Authority and the resulting products and services can be monitored, controlled, and checked for conformity. This is done in the documents that make up the Quality Manual of the Authority (see paragraph 21.18).

(Note: This point is informative. No response is required by the template to paragraph 21.17)

21.18 The documents that make up the Quality Manual serve to document the procedures and processes affecting the quality of work, such as classification, search, examination and related administrative work. In particular, the Quality Manual indicates where to find instructions on the procedures to be followed.

For the purposes of this report indicate:

- (a) the documents making up a Quality Manual that have been prepared and distributed;*
- (b) the media on which it is supported (e.g. Internal Publication, Internet, Intranet); and*
- (c) document control measures taken e.g. version numbering, access to latest version.*

Paragraph 21.17-21.18

(a) In accordance with ISO 9001:2008, IP Australia has developed a variety of documentation to support our QMS. These include a quality policy and objectives, the Quality Management Systems Manual, each business groups' Manuals of Practice and Procedure, and other documents necessary for planning, reporting, operating and controlling processes.

IP Australia continually reviews and improves its quality documentation **and we have started internal audits of these processes in line with the 2015 version of the ISO standard.** IP Australia's manuals and documentation are available on IP Australia's intranet and provide staff with a central source of information on how IP Australia does business in order to assure quality of service.

The Patents Manual of Practice and Procedure (MPP) is the primary document for guidance on search and examination processes. The Manual comprises six volumes, all of which are available on IP Australia's intranet. [Volumes 1-3](#) are publicly available on IP Australia's website, with Volume 1 providing guidelines on search and examination processes for international work. Additionally, the MPP includes a chapter on Quality, including the PQS.

These Manuals and other documentation are controlled documents in line with the requirements of ISO 9001. If there is a change to any of the content of the Manuals, this is communicated **through multiple channels** to all relevant staff.

(b) The QMS Manual and MPP are available on IP Australia's intranet site. Three of the six volumes of the MPP are publicly available on IP Australia's website, including the chapter in the MPP relating to Quality.

(c) IP Australia provides information to all staff on the correct procedures for document control. Controlled documents for the intranet are to include a document title, an effective date, a revision history and a disclaimer. Controlled documents that are published on IP Australia's website are to include a document title and an effective date. The "effective date" allows the reader to see when a document came into effect, assists in version control, and is intended to prevent the use of obsolete/superseded documents.

21.19 Indicate whether the documents making up the Quality Manual include the following:

- (i) the quality policy of the Authority including a clear statement of commitment to the QMS from top management;
- (ii) the scope of the QMS, including details of and justification for any exclusions;
- (iii) the organizational structure of the Authority and the responsibilities of each of its departments;
- (iv) the documented processes carried out in the Authority such as receipt of incoming applications, classification, distribution, search, examination, publication and support processes, and procedures established for the QMS, or references to them;
- (v) the resources available for carrying out the processes and implementing the procedures; and
- (vi) a description of the interaction between the processes and the procedures of the QMS.

Paragraph 21.19

The Quality Management System covers the criteria detailed under 21.22 (i)-(vi). Although this Manual does not include the processes as specified in part (iv), they do make reference to the relevant documentation, i.e. the MPP.

21.20 Indicate which types of records the Authority maintains, such as:

- (i) a definition of which documents are kept and where they are kept;
- (ii) results of management review;
- (iii) training, skills and experience of personnel;
- (iv) evidence of conformity of processes, resulting products and services in terms of quality standards;
- (v) results of reviews of requirements relating to products;
- (vi) the search and examination processes carried out on each application;
- (vii) data allowing individual work to be tracked and traced;
- (viii) records of QMS audits;
- (ix) actions taken re. non-conforming products, e.g. examples of corrections;
- (x) actions taken re. corrective action;
- (xi) actions taken re. preventative action; and
- (xii) search process documentation as set out in Section 7.

Paragraph 21.20

(i) Control of Documents is managed within IP Australia in accordance with the Document Control guideline and procedure outlined in the Quality Management System Manual. Control of records is in accordance with IP Australia's information principles, the Records and Administration Management policies, and Chief Executive Instructions for Records and Information Management.

(ii) A formal management review is undertaken every three months by the IPAQIC. The review assesses how well the system is performing, what can be improved and whether it is meeting the policy and objectives set for it. Results of the review are provided to the Finance & Planning Committee and the Executive Board.

(iii) Staff development and training are integral to IP Australia's focus on delivering quality services and products. The comprehensive and timely training of staff ensures that there is a continuous focus on satisfying staff development needs to meet desired customer outcomes and ensures that staff have the skills and abilities to deliver high quality work and service.

Staff development and training are implemented corporately through:

- Performance Management Policy and Guidelines which provides organisational policy on managing staff performance.
- Work Level Standards which outlines general standards of work performance in areas relevant to staff duties.
- Performance conversations ~~Work Plans~~ and Individual ~~ACHIEVEMENT Performance~~ Plans which provide a process to set standards of individual work performance and provide feedback of progress against standards.
- Study bank which enables staff access to tertiary and further education and training.

(iv)-(v) IP Australia utilises an electronic QRS Database to record, store and report on results relating to quality review activities.

(vi)-(vii) IP Australia utilises an electronic Patent Administration Management System (PAMS) for National Work and an electronic International Examination and Search System (INTESS) for International Work.

(viii) Internal quality audits are conducted within IP Australia in accordance with the Internal Quality Audit Procedure. Audits are based upon the results of a risk analysis undertaken in accordance with Australian Standards. The risk analysis will be periodically reviewed for its relevance and accuracy. Audits are stored in the official IP Australia record keeping tool Business Records, Information Knowledge (BRIK) and available on IP Australia's intranet.

(ix)-(xi) Corrective and preventative actions are progressed through the IP Australia Improvement Log.

(xii) IP Australia staff utilise a Manual of Practice and Procedure which includes search process documentation.

7. SEARCH PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

21.21 For internal purposes the Authority should document its search process.

The Authority should indicate

(a) which of the following are included in this record:

- (i) the databases consulted (patent and non patent literature);
- (ii) the keywords, combinations of words and truncations used;
- (iii) the language(s) in which the search was carried out;
- (iv) the classes and class combinations searched, at least according to the IPC or equivalent;
- (v) a listing of all search statements used in the databases consulted.

(b) which other information relevant to the search itself is included in this record e.g. a statement of the subject of search; details of special relevance to internet searching; a record of documents viewed; on-line thesaurus, synonym or concept databases, etc.

(Explanatory note: The IA is requested to list other information it may collect to monitor and improve the search process)

(c) which special cases are documented and whether records are kept denoting any:

- (vi) limitation of search and its justification
- (vii) lack of clarity of the claims; and
- (viii) lack of unity.

Paragraph 21.21

IP Australia examiners are required to complete a Search Information Sheet (SIS) which records the search strategy and includes members of the three person search team; the databases consulted; the keywords, combinations of words and truncations used; the class and class combinations searched; the search statements used in the databases consulted; details of relevance to internet searching; and a record of documents viewed.

Any limitation of search and justification; lack of clarity of claims; and lack of unity are reported in the International Search and/or International Preliminary Examination Report, which are stored in INTESS.

8. INTERNAL REVIEW

21.22 Explanatory note: The Authority should report on its own internal review arrangements. These reviews determine the extent to which it has established a QMS based on the model of Chapter 21 and the extent to which it is complying with the QMS requirements and the Search and Examination Guidelines. The reviews should be objective and transparent to demonstrate whether or not those requirements and guidelines are being applied consistently and effectively and should be undertaken at least once a year. With reference to point 21.08 of this template, the Authority may provide additional information on its internal review arrangements under this section if it so wishes.

21.23-21.25 These arrangements are reported according to this template in Section 1, above, at points 21.04 - 21.09. The Authority may provide additional information on further inputs to its internal reviews under this section, if it so wishes.

Paragraphs 21.22-21.25

As already indicated above.

9. ARRANGEMENTS FOR AUTHORITIES TO REPORT TO THE MIA

21.26 There are two stages in the reporting arrangements outlined in Chapter 21: the initial report called for by paragraph 21.26(a), and supplementary annual reports in accordance with paragraph 21.26(b). At the second informal meeting of the Quality Subgroup in Canberra on February 6 and 7, 2012, the Subgroup recommended that, instead of submitting full reports every five years and cumulative updates in the intervening years, Authorities should submit each report in the form of a full report, making the differences from the previous year's report clear, for example using "track changes" or other form of highlighting. The template for the supplementary annual reports is therefore no longer used.

[End of document]