

**Report on the Findings of the
July 2008 Online
Service Delivery Surveys**

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**Office of the Gene
Technology Regulator**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared by



August 2008

I. Executive Summary

Three online surveys were conducted by ORIMA Research of key Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) client groups in order to collect feedback for the Office on the quality and suitability of their services in meeting their client's needs, and the OGTR's performance as required under the regulatory system. These surveys were conducted in June and July 2008.

Survey of Accredited Organisations

- ◆ The survey of Accredited Organisations investigated their experiences in dealing with OGTR staff, their use of OGTR information material and the OGTR website, and their experiences in relation to OGTR application, compliance and reporting processes.
 - 155 Accredited Organisations were invited to participate in the online survey. 70 Accredited Organisations responded to the survey, giving a 45% response rate. These respondents were representative of the population organisation types.
- ◆ Overall satisfaction in the organisations' dealings with OGTR staff and OGTR processes was very high.
 - 47% of organisations reported that they were 'Very Satisfied' with their general dealings with OGTR staff and overall OGTR processes during the previous 12 months, with 52% of organisations 'Satisfied'. Only one organisation provided a neutral response ('Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied').
 - Respondents' comments were generally positive and supportive of the OGTR staff and their processes. It was noted that the OGTR staff made compliance an easier task, that the OGTR was one of the easier government agencies to work with, and that the OGTR staff worked well with organisations when there was a change to the regulatory environment.
 - Suggestions for areas of improvement included the lengthy timelines for approvals to licence applications and variations. There was also some concern that OGTR staff lacked the necessary level of scientific understanding. However, other respondents did state that the OGTR staff took an appropriate scientific approach in their dealings.
- ◆ Two-thirds of organisations were aware of the OGTR Service Charter, and 63% contacted OGTR staff at least once every three months.
 - Contact was most often by direct email (77% of organisations) or direct telephone contact (51% of organisations).
 - Satisfaction with this contact was very high, with 64% of respondents reporting that they were 'Very Satisfied' in the contact with OGTR staff over the past 12 months, with 31% 'Satisfied' and 4% neutral ('Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied').

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- Suggestions for improvement included having a specific OGTR ‘point of contact’ for organisations, which would help deal with circumstances where there had been inconsistencies in advice received from different officers, as well as helping to develop better working relations between the OGTR and organisations.
 - ◆ Almost all organisations (96%) had visited the OGTR website during the previous 12 months. Of these, 33% were ‘Very Satisfied’ with the website, 50% were ‘Satisfied’, 8% were neutral (‘Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied’) and 9% were ‘Dissatisfied’.
 - Concerns with the website included that the structure could be better organised, for example by having separate sections covering the information require by different audiences (e.g. scientists, IBCs, accredited organisations and the general public). Navigation through the site was felt to be somewhat difficult, especially for new users to the site, and the search function was felt to be insufficient. It was also suggested that more general information on gene technology and methods could be included within the site.
 - ◆ Information sources provided on the OGTR were generally found to be helpful, although some respondents did comment that new documents were not always referenced on the ‘What’s New’ page, and it was suggested that email notifications could be used to inform users when important items were added to the site.
 - ◆ Respondents who had used the various OGTR risk assessment information items generally found them helpful. Similarly, respondents generally found the OGTR guidelines, operational policies and IBC information helpful. More general publications (the OGTR Annual and Quarterly Reports and the National Framework for the Development of Ethical Principles in Gene Technology) were reported as being useful by only 39–57% of organisations that had used them.
 - ◆ Respondents were asked to rate various aspects of their most recent application process. Overall, 36% of respondents were ‘Very Satisfied’ with the general application process, with 56% ‘Satisfied’, 6% neutral (‘Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied’), and only 2% ‘Dissatisfied’.
 - Comments on the general application process and how it could be improved included concerns with the length of the process, and how this could cause difficulties for researchers when trying to coordinate and fund their work. Other suggestions included the development of an online application tracking system, which would assist organisations and aid transparency.
 - ◆ The majority of responding organisations (83%) had had an inspection of their trial site or certified facility conducted by the Monitoring Section.
 - 46% of these organisations reported that they were ‘Very Satisfied’ overall with the inspection process, 42% reported that they were ‘Satisfied’, 10% were neutral (‘Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied’) and 2% were ‘Dissatisfied’.

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- Comments on the Monitoring Section’s inspection process were generally positive, with reference to a ‘collaborative/cooperative model of compliance’. It was noted that there were occasional inconsistencies in what was picked up during an inspection.
 - Only a small number of respondents (n=10) had been through a non-compliance issue in the past 12 months. Of these, 90% were ‘Very Satisfied’ with the management of the process by the Monitoring Section, with 10% ‘Satisfied’.
 - ◆ Less than one-quarter of responding organisations had been subject to an investigation, audit or review by the Compliance and Investigations Section (CIS).
 - Overall, 36% of these respondents were ‘Very Satisfied’ with the investigation process, with 57% ‘Satisfied’ and 7% neutral (‘Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied’).
 - ◆ 89% of organisations reported that they used the OGTR generated template when preparing their annual report.
 - Of those respondents who had used the template, 32% were ‘Very Satisfied’ overall with the template, 54% were ‘Satisfied’, 11% were neutral (‘Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied’), and 4% were ‘Dissatisfied’.
 - Comments on the template included some technical difficulties with filling in fields and getting the macros to work, as well as comments on the duplication of information which was required in different areas of the template, information not always being saved between years, and the reasons for some of the information being required not always clearly stated.

Survey of Government Agencies

- ◆ 16 Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies were invited to participate in the online survey of government agencies. The questionnaire investigated their experiences in dealing with OGTR staff, their use of OGTR information material and the OGTR website.
 - 7 agencies responded to the survey, giving a 44% response rate.
- ◆ 71% of the agencies were aware of the OGTR Service Charter, and all contacted the OGTR at least once every three months (with three-quarters contacting at least once a month). Contact was generally by direct telephone (86% of responding agencies) or direct email (86% of responding agencies), with 71% also using written correspondence.
 - Overall, 43% of responding agencies were ‘Very Satisfied’ with the dealings with OGTR staff over the previous 12 months, with 43% ‘Satisfied’ and 14% neutral (‘Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied’).

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- Suggestions for improving interactions with OGTR staff included acknowledging and following up on correspondence when it was received, and providing a contact list of OGTR staff to assist agencies in contacting the appropriate officer.
 - ◆ All of the responding agencies had visited the OGTR website at some stage during the previous 12 months, with all but one visiting it at least monthly.
 - Overall, 57% of the agencies were ‘Very Satisfied’ with the website, with 43% ‘Satisfied’.
 - Comments on the website included the observation that it was sometimes easier to search for information rather than attempt to navigate to the subject area via the menu options, and that some content (in particular the Handbook and some of the GMO Records) were out of date.
 - ◆ The responding agencies generally found the various information sources provided on the OGTR to be helpful, noting however that the GMO records were sometimes out of date and there were some difficulties using the maps of trial sites. The risk assessment items were reported as being helpful by those agency respondents that used them. Agency also found the OGTR guidelines, operational policies, IBC information and quarterly and annual reports to be helpful.

Survey of Client Register / Website Users

- ◆ Members of the Client Register and users of the OGTR website were invited to complete an online survey accessed via the ‘What’s New’ page on the website. The questionnaire investigated their experiences in dealing with OGTR staff, their use of OGTR information material and the OGTR website.
 - There were 30 respondents to the survey, with two-thirds of those who completed the survey indicating that they were currently registered on the Client Register. One quarter of the respondents were researchers involved with gene technology, 21% were member of the public, 13% were in education, and 42% were ‘other’ (generally involved in the more general scientific sector).
 - Due to the low number of respondents to the survey and the self-selection nature of the survey process, the survey results should not be extrapolated to a wider population.
- ◆ Two-thirds of respondents indicated that they were aware of the OGTR Service Charter, and two-thirds had contacted the OGTR at least once in the past 12 months, using a variety of contact forms (direct email and telephone contact, the general OGTR email address and 1800 telephone number, and written correspondence).
 - Overall, 30% of respondents who had contact with OGTR staff over the previous 12 months were ‘Very Satisfied’ with their contact, with 40% ‘Satisfied’, 10% neutral (‘Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied’), 10% ‘Dissatisfied’ and 10% ‘Very Dissatisfied’.

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- Suggestions for improving interactions with OGTR staff included improving the level of information provided, for example by running more information forums outside capital cities, being more forthcoming on information regarding the safety of GMOs, and being more open to suggestions and advice from independent experts.
 - ◆ Overall, 13% of respondents were ‘Very Satisfied’ with the OGTR website, with 57% ‘Satisfied’, 22% neutral (‘Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied’), 4% ‘Dissatisfied’ and 4% ‘Very Dissatisfied’.
 - In addition to negative ratings on difficulties in navigating through the website, other concerns were that the site did not meet the users’ information needs, did not provide a comprehensive range of publications, and was not a good source of information on gene technology.
 - ◆ While the OGTR information items were generally found to be helpful by those who had used them, it was suggested that the data submitted in licence applications should be made available to allow the public fully evaluate and critique applications, and that applications should have separate executive and technical summaries, as well as question and answer documents.

