

GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMISSION

- Dr Tom Stubbs, Chief Executive, Government Reform Commission (GRC), attended the March 2007 Forum meeting to provide an update on GRC activities.
- The Premier announced the establishment of the Government Reform Commission on 28 June 2006. Since that time, a series of initiatives have been progressed, including the creation of uniform State Government Regions.
- Cabinet approval to establish uniform State Government Regions over a two-year timeframe was given on 11 December 2006. This followed recommendations developed by GRC on boundaries for 12 regions (4 metropolitan and 8 beyond the Adelaide metropolitan area) which might provide the framework for more coordinated State Government policy and service delivery.
- Consultation was undertaken with the LGA prior to the Cabinet decision and subsequent to the decision, with Councils regarding the location of boundaries. The LGA supported the concept of uniform State Government Regions and adopted a set of criteria through its Metropolitan Group and SA Regional Organisations of Councils committees. These were essentially that: Councils should not be split by the boundaries; that Councils should be consulted on the location of the boundaries; the State should seek to apply the boundaries to all relevant agencies; and that the boundaries should not become barriers to service outcomes.
- The implementation of uniform State Government regions is primarily about allowing improved coordination of State Government services, integrated planning, and increased accountability through improved monitoring and reporting. It was recognised that councils will continue other alliances or communities of interest not reflected in the uniform regions, but this provides opportunities for closer cooperation and alignment between the two spheres of government where appropriate.
- Planning SA is the agency responsible for coordinating the implementation of the new regions. However, the GRC will remain involved through the early phase to provide continuity. The Office of the Executive Committee of Cabinet has an interest from the point of view of regionalising South Australia's Strategic Plan.
- State regions have been aligned to Local Government boundaries, with one exception (Port Adelaide Enfield) and relatively closely to Local Government regional association boundaries (although in some instances multiple State regions fit within one Local Government region). Cabinet recognised the importance of consulting with Local Government and Minister Weatherill wrote to each council Chief Executive, inviting feedback on opportunities and issues with the implementation of uniform regions.
- The GRC and Planning SA have made a number of visits and presentations including to Regional Local Government Association meetings and clarified that the Regional Boundaries are focused on State Government agency co-ordination and service delivery and on SA Strategic Plan reporting.

- Following Minister Weatherill's invitation for councils to respond in writing and for all issues raised to be tabled in the first six monthly report to Cabinet, 13 councils have taken up this opportunity. All questions raised by councils have been responded to, and where necessary passed to the most relevant agency for follow-up.
- Four councils have registered concern over their placement in the State Government regions (Tea Tree Gully, City of Adelaide, Holdfast Bay, and Flinders Ranges Council). All issues and concerns have been tabled in the six-month progress report being prepared for Cabinet, along with other questions raised including whether this would result in centralisation of State Government services, and establishment of State Government Service Centres.
- The LGA has resolved to work with Councils to identify opportunities for building stronger State/Local relationships as a result of the development and implementation of the new boundaries.
- All State Government Departments are actively progressing their transition arrangements to conform with the uniform regions. For example, SAFECOM, SA Police, Country Fire Service, and the Department for Families and Communities are pursuing more integrated emergency services based on the State regions.
- Cabinet recognised there would be other legitimate geographic views of the State for various purposes. Work has been undertaken on assessing Natural Resource Management (NRM) boundaries with recommendations for aligning NRM boundaries for the non-prescribed and less critical water areas.
- The GRC is also progressing a range of other projects, including:
 - Strengthening the role of Cabinet Office
 - Creation of the South Australian Executive Service
 - Creation of the Australian New Zealand School of Government
 - Establishment of the Premier's Awards and Public Sector Week
 - Creating flexible working options to retain older workers
 - Removing barriers to information sharing within the public sector
 - Improving customer service
 - Simplifying access to government buildings for public sector employees
 - Improving internal government reporting and reducing the burden on State Government Departments
 - Establishment of the Project Coordination Board
 - Development of Good Practice Guides
 - Development of strategies for youth recruitment and retention
- Further information on individual projects can be accessed via the GRC website – www.grc.sa.gov.au