

## **SURPLUS GOVERNMENT LAND**

### **1. Issue**

The use and disposal of surplus government land in the State and Local Government sectors.

### **2. Background**

The Forum has previously considered the issue of current policy and processes for disposal of surplus government land and supported a review being undertaken, with the objectives of:

- ensuring that the assessment process and disposal policy adequately consider the broad social, economic and environmental objectives of State and Local Government;
- achieving more effective and strategic coordination between and across both spheres of government of decisions about the disposal and /or future use of surplus public land, especially land with an existing community use, from both the State and Local Government sectors.

The Minister for Local Government subsequently raised the proposal for a review with the Premier and Treasurer.

Other Ministers have also raised similar issues relating to surplus government land in the context of the State Housing Plan, regional workforce accommodation (also raised by Local Government) and urban redevelopment and infill planning.

### **3. Review proposal**

There has been considerable work recently in State Government on this issue, with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet coordinating consideration of the appropriate scope and timing of a review. This consideration, to which OLG has had input, is still in progress.

While not yet determined, it appears likely that an initial update will be undertaken of the current Government directive, Circular 114, governing land disposal procedures, with gaps/ issues being identified. This is expected to be followed by a more extensive review of policy and processes for government land management, including the broader issues regarding coordination and more effective strategic assessment of land use opportunities by the two spheres of government. The update exercise could be completed by the end of this year, with the broader review commencing in 2004, allowing the outcomes of other major strategic projects such as the State Housing Plan to be taken into account.

The Minister for Local Government and the Office of Local Government will continue to participate in the current consideration of this issue in State Government and to ensure that the Local Government aspects are raised and addressed in consultation with Local Government.

#### **4. Local level strategic assessment – possible pilot projects**

It has been suggested that the Forum consider the concept of supporting some work to “map”, within several council areas, all the land owned by State, Local and Federal Governments, and then plan a process for developing a strategic land use plan for the council area. This would require consultation with and involvement of a range of agencies and bodies.

This could be a pilot project under the umbrella of the Forum and feed into a broader review. This may provide a valuable illustration of current issues and problems at the local council level and point the way to a model for developing strategic land use forward plans (for public land) with cooperation between the spheres of government.

It is suggested that this approach would be more manageable in rural council areas, than large metropolitan councils, but this could be considered further. Two rural/regional councils have recently approached the Minister for Local Government in relation to land management and disposal issues within their areas involving both State and Local Government. Through the LGA these and other councils may be interested in being part of such a project.

If the Forum considers this proposal warrants further development, the OLG and LGA can prepare a specific proposal for consideration by the Minister and the President of the LGA and pilot councils, to commence work and report back to the Forum meeting in early 2004.

Further thought could also be given to how Local Government as a sector could most effectively participate in future in a more coordinated State/Local Government land disposal and strategic management approach, and whether this may require new processes or policies across the whole sector or on a regional basis.

In addition, it is suggested that recent ‘case studies’ of the review of the use and / or disposal of public land be studied by LGA and OLG officers to determine any lessons that may be learned for future.

#### **5. Recommendations**

**It is recommended that the Forum:**

- 1. Support this topic remaining on the Forum agenda, with a further report to be provided to the first meeting in 2004.**
- 2. Indicate whether it supports further work to review recent case studies and council level pilot projects for strategic land use assessment along the lines suggested above.**