

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC LAND

- At the January meeting, Forum members received an update report on the progress of the strategic assessment of public land project.
- Members were advised on the completion of a report and supplementary discussion papers on findings of a study into the strategic assessment of surplus and underutilised land owned by State and Local Government.
- The report discussed key issues identified in the study that could be explored by the Forum, namely:
 - The disposal of surplus State Government land to councils for less than full market value where it was intended that the land be used for public or community purposes;
 - Reciprocal arrangements between councils and state agencies for first right of purchase for surplus land;
 - The potential for a regional body or similar (possibly the Regional LGAs) to provide strategic advice, coordination and planning regarding the disposal of surplus land by either local or state agencies in the interests of regional development and the delivery of community and social infrastructure needs;
 - The possibility of a model framework for the development of collaborative approaches between State and Local Government; and
 - Operational issues in respect to the administration and implementation of Premier and Cabinet Circular 114 which sets out Cabinet approved policies and processes for the purchase and disposal of State Government real property (including Crown land).
- At the time, it was flagged that the State Government was carrying out a review of the policy and administration requirements of Circular 114. The findings contained in the Forum report have been fed into that review and have substantially influenced the consideration of Local Government's involvement in the strategic assessment of public land process.
- Cabinet has yet to formally consider the proposed changes, however, it is expected that State agencies will be required to take a more strategic approach to assessing surplus and underutilised property under their ownership or control.
- Any revisions of the Circular that impact on the relationship between State and Local Government need to be clearly articulated and both spheres of Government have an agreed understanding of each others' roles and responsibilities.
- It is considered that a formal mechanism may be appropriate to clarify arrangements, obligations and opportunities between the two sectors. It is proposed this will now be further explored by State and Local Government Association officers.
- Issues that could be covered include:
 - Reciprocal arrangements for negotiation about surplus or underutilised land;
 - Regular reviews of assets by both State agencies and councils;
 - Joint strategic planning and notification of surplus or underutilised land, particularly for priority projects or in defined locations;
 - An agreed understanding on the "rules for the sale/transfer of land between State agencies and councils.