

**MINISTER'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORUM**  
**BRIEFING TO THE FORUM**  
**NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Date of Preparation: 25 June 2003

**Issues/questions for Forum's Consideration:**

- This is subject to the outcome of the consultation process on the draft Natural Resource Management Bill 2003 and the findings of the Collection of Levies Working Party report to Minister Hill and the LGA President. This topic is to remain on the Forum agenda given the various issues that need to be progressed between State and Local Government.

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**NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**July 2003**

**1. Background**

- At previous Forum meetings briefing notes were tabled on natural resource management (NRM). The notes outlined the State Government's progress in developing and implementing a policy on Natural Resource Management which seeks to integrate NRM in a number of key areas:
  - institutional and structural arrangements and relationships;
  - funding mechanisms;
  - planning and decision-making processes; and
  - regional boundaries.
- A number of issues and concerns have been raised by Local Government. The Forum's focus has been on the collection of the proposed NRM levy and the State Government proposal that this be undertaken by councils.
- There is a divergence of views within Local Government as to whether State Government or councils should be responsible for the collection of levies. Current Local Government Association policy is that Local Government should not be required to levy or collect revenues on behalf of other spheres of government unless such arrangements are acceptable to Local Government.
- At the initiation of the LGA, a working group comprising representatives of DWLBC, OLG and the LGA has been established to ensure objective consideration is given to the collection options for the proposed levy by either sphere of Government. Through the Forum, Revenue SA has been asked to provide cost estimates of collecting the NRM levy based on a detailed specification developed by DWBLC for this purpose. The Forum has agreed that these estimates be provided to the LGA, the timing of this remains unclear. The LGA is now undertaking further work on collection cost estimates by councils, with the benefit of the specification developed by DWBLC. This will enable more accurate comparisons of estimated collection costs to be made.
- At the time of writing, it is proposed that the Minister for Environment and Conservation will release a draft consultation Bill in July 2003. The LGA has been provided with an advance copy of the draft Bill for its perusal and preliminary overview comment.
- In a preliminary response to DWLBC, LGA officers have indicated two over-arching areas of concern with the draft Bill: the apparent excessive level of centralized power, control and responsibility in relation to the NRM process; and the lack of a framework for the effective involvement and

integration of Local Government activities and initiatives with those envisaged to be undertaken by the Commonwealth and State Agencies through the various proposed structures.

- The LGA has also indicated that it considers the proposed public consultation period of 6 weeks to be far too short given the magnitude of draft legislation to be considered and the importance of the proposed reforms, and that coastal areas must be included in the NRM processes from the outset.
- Due to negotiations between the State and Local Government regarding the NRM levy collection not being completed, the provisions in the draft Bill relating to the determination and method of collection of the NRM levy will not be fully detailed. The working group will continue exploring the levy collection options during the six week public consultation phase on the draft Bill, and subject to the estimated collection costs of Revenue SA being made available soon, will report its findings to the Minister for Environment and Conservation and the President, LGA during this period.

## **2. Forum discussion:**

- Minister Hill to outline to the Forum the proposed timing for the introduction of the Bill into Parliament and the consultation process with key stakeholders.
- LGA to report on the progress of the joint working party investigating the NRM levy collection issue.
- Forum members to discuss and provide advice on a preferred approach to resolution that would, as far as possible, meet the objectives of the parties. Discussion could include the desirability of the matter being elevated to become a formal referral to the Forum.

## **3. Next Steps**

- This is subject to the outcome of the consultation process on the draft Natural Resource Management Bill 2003 and the findings of the working party report to Minister Hill and the LGA President. This topic is to remain on the Forum agenda given the various issues that need to be progressed between State and Local Government.