

The Director General's Report



2006/07 was a year of change for the Department of Lands with the restructuring of the Crown Lands Division to a program management model and the transfer of responsibility for the Western Lands Division from the Department of Natural Resources. Land and Property Information Division also experienced change with the restructure of Valuation Services following the transfer of Property Valuation Services from the Department of Commerce. The consolidation of the administration and management of all land related services within one agency is a reflection of Lands' ongoing achievements.

Although there were considerable internal and administrative changes, we continued to meet our customer, community, government and workplace obligations.

Despite decreases in revenue streams linked with the downturn in the property market, Lands generated operating revenue of \$188 million, an increase of 9% compared with 2005/06. As well as a strong financial performance, Lands continued to deliver new or improved electronic services, opportunities for regional development, sustainable land

management and leadership in spatial information technology.

In November 2006, the NSW Government released its State Plan identifying priorities for government action over the next 10 years. Lands has a fundamental role in delivering the promised results by enabling the people of NSW to build harmonious communities; facilitating prosperous business growth; enhancing an environment for living; and developing and delivering better public services. Lands was able to adjust its business priorities wherever possible during the second half of the reporting year to align with the State Plan. During 2007/08, Lands will undertake the development of a new Corporate Plan which will provide the strategic management framework for Lands as a whole, setting high level performance goals and measurable objectives to deliver the priorities of the State Plan.

Land and Property Information Division (LPI) has delivered major advances in our online service delivery this year, providing public access to a number of specialist land information indexes and launching the Survey Services Portal, which provides registered surveyors and survey searchers with a convenient

single entry point for all survey related products and services.

LPI completed stage one of the Government Property Register (GPR) redevelopment, providing online access for government agencies through Lands' Spatial Information eXchange (SIX), and enabling automatic updating of information to be captured and recorded by the Integrated Titling System and Notice of Sale system. Significant progress was also made with ePlan with a number of projects initiated to develop the new electronic information management system which will reduce plan processing times benefiting all parties associated with land development.

LPI's Data Conversion and Cleansing Program continued during 2006/07 with the bulk of Old System land parcels and Manual Torrens titles being converted to the electronic Integrated Titling System. The program expanded this year with the commencement of the digitisation of 700,000 aerial photographs and the conversion of 100,000 parcels of Crown land.

During the year, the Emergency Information Coordination Unit provided ongoing support to security planning for a number of large events to be staged in Sydney during 2007/08

including APEC, the Papal visit and World Youth Week. This involvement will significantly increase as the events approach.

In an ongoing commitment to optimise environmental and socio-economic benefits to the people of NSW, **Crown Lands Division** has continued working with state and local government agencies, local trust boards, private enterprise and industry and community groups to help identify and utilise the potential of Crown land assets in the rural, maritime, industrial, residential, and tourism development areas. During 2006/07 Crown Lands established the Regional Crown Reserves System, finalised master plans for the future direction of a number of maritime precincts and created a new Crown Reserve at Coleambally.

Crown Lands continued to manage the minor ports, river entrances and waterways programs on behalf of the NSW Government, undertaking maintenance and repairs to wharves and break walls in Ulladulla and Coffs Harbour, breakwater repairs and upgrades at Tweed River and Camden Haven and the provision of a new vessel sewage pump-out facility at Huskisson.

Crown Lands extended its support of communities impacted by the ongoing drought by implementing the Drought Communities Crown Reserves Improvement Program which aims to provide financial relief to landowners and rural workers engaged by Crown Reserve Trusts to undertake improvement and maintenance projects on local community assets such as public halls and showgrounds.

Soil Conservation Service Division (SCS) continued in 2006/07 to deliver a high standard of soil conservation and environmental services to land owners and local and state government agencies. In addition to their consulting services, SCS provided vital support to the Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Services during the summer bush fire season and recent Hunter floods.

Despite the ongoing drought, SCS's environmental consultancy continues to experience strong demand with major projects undertaken on behalf of government agencies and Catchment Management Authorities including water catchment environmental works, erosion control on major highway construction, and conservation and rehabilitation works at derelict and operational mine sites.

SCS provided strong increases in sales in all three service areas, exceeding budget for the financial year. SCS will look to further expand operations following the completion of their business and marketing plans during the year.

The Office of Rural Affairs (ORA) continued its work in providing support to the Rural Communities Consultative Councils, communicating the interests and concerns of country NSW to government and advising on rural issues, services, policy and initiatives.

Telecommunications and broadband expansion is a major vehicle for regional development and social enhancement, and this year the ORA supported a number of technology awareness programs in support of the NSW Government's 'Broadband for the Bush' program. These programs will assist country towns to attract new business and expand traditional businesses into the global marketplace.

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Surveyor General's report

In my statutory position as Surveyor General I have continued during 2006/07 to foster the surveying and spatial information industry not only in NSW but nationally and internationally. The past year has seen a focus on strategic issues including a new whole-of-government framework for spatial information, and initiatives to address the current skills shortage in surveying and spatial information.

Strategic direction

The second stage of the development of a NSW Spatial Information Strategy branded the Common Spatial Information Initiative (CS2i) was completed during 2006/07. This initiative provides a whole-of-government industry policy framework for spatial information. CS2i, developed from extensive stakeholder consultation, proposes a cross agency service that will provide common eBusiness functions required by customers accessing spatial and related information online. Further information on CS2i is reported under the Board of Surveying and Spatial Information (BOSSI) on page 83.

To ensure the continuing development and improvement of the surveying and spatial information industry it is essential that relationships with industry and government agencies are fostered. As Surveyor General I attended a number of strategic forums during 2006/07 including the inaugural 'Spatial Impacts' conference held by BOSSI aimed at canvassing best practice. I also continued involvement in the organisation and promotion of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) World Congress to be held in Sydney in 2010.

Over the course of the reporting period Lands has continued to support research relating to the development

of spatial information, including Australian Research Council Linkage Project industry grants relating to the development of national integrated spatial infrastructure initiatives relevant to the built and natural environment and real time atmospheric modelling. In addition Lands has been involved as a core participant of the Cooperative Research Centre for Spatial Information, supporting cross sectoral research and education programs.

Skills and education capacity building

During 2006/07 a number of initiatives were introduced to further enhance skills and education capacity including the:

- development of joint industry workshops on town planning and engineering for candidate surveyors seeking registration
- establishment of a Professional Appointment in Spatial Information at the University of NSW to assist the leadership and coordination of research in the area of spatial information for NSW. This appointment was established in partnership with the University of NSW and the Cooperative Research Centre for Spatial Information.

Two scholarships in surveying and spatial information were granted again this year:

- Undergraduate Scholarship in Surveying and Spatial Information granted to Dean Watkins who commenced training in Bathurst in February 2007
- International Fellowship in Surveying and Spatial Information granted to Stephen Barr (Surveyor) who travelled to Indonesia, New York and Hong Kong to better understand world's best practice in land administration and planning and how to relate that back to the Australian scene.

Survey and drafting directions

In accordance with Surveying Regulation 2006, the Survey and Drafting Directions for Mine and Coal Mine Surveyors were revised and reissued jointly by the Surveyor General and the Department of Primary Industries. The Directions form the major standards framework for surveying in all major mining operations in NSW.

In my role as the Surveyor General I hold the statutory positions of President of the Board of Surveying and Spatial Information (BOSSI) and Chair of the Geographical Names Board (GNB). A detailed report from BOSSI begins on page 77 and GNB on page 71.

Registrar General's report

As the Registrar General my role is to safeguard and maintain the integrity of the register of land ownership in NSW. The activities of this office are integral to the process of and confidence in, the property market.

During 2006/07 the focus remained on the conversion of Manual Torrens titles to the electronic Integrated Titling System (ITS), the National Electronic Conveyancing System (NECS) readiness program and measures to effectively combat attempts at property fraud.

Integrated Titling System (ITS)

The Torrens Title System, established in 1863, provides landowners, and those who wish to deal with land, with proof and security of ownership. The Torrens Title System also provides a level of protection against uncertainty and fraud, enabling the transfer of land assets within a sound legal environment.

Work continued during 2006/07 on the conversion of Old System and paper-based Torrens titles to the ITS. As at 30 June 2007, 17,806 (85%)

of Old System parcels, 46,241 (79%) of manual titles, and 27,143 (70%) of lease titles have been converted to ITS. The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2007.

National Electronic Conveyancing System (NECS)

The NECS is a proposed national system for lodging and settling property transactions electronically. It will provide a single interface for national property transactions especially benefiting consumers and practitioners in the more remote parts of Australia. As the most significant development in conveyancing since the introduction of the Torrens Title System, the NECS program requires the coordinated efforts of state and territory government agencies, and LPI is playing a key role in its implementation.

During 2006/07, NECS readiness projects included the development of practices and procedures, legislation, supplements to the Integrated Titling System, IT infrastructure assurance, electronic examination, business rules and stakeholder communications. These projects will remain the focus during the next reporting period as LPI works to develop NSW market readiness for implementation to NECS.

Property fraud prevention

Strengthening my commitment to protecting the public from attempts at property fraud involving identity theft, a new unit was established to examine high risk dealings and recommend new procedures and security measures to ensure public confidence in the Torrens Title System.

Unfortunately, incidents of property fraud do occur and during 2006/07, several payments totalling \$433,937 were made in response to claims against the Torrens Assurance Fund. This sum includes compensation

payments and disbursements such as Counsel's fees (further details are reported in Appendix 19).

Boundary determinations

As Registrar General I also have a duty to undertake boundary determinations in accordance with Part 14A of the *Real Property Act 1900* upon the application of a land owner, purchaser under contract, or public or local authority. During the past year eight boundary disputes were resolved.

Amended legislation

The following Acts were amended under the *Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (No 2) 2006*:

- *Conveyancing Act 1919*
- *Real Property Act 1900*

The following Acts were amended under the *Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007*:

- *Community Land Development Act 1989*
- *Conveyancing Act 1919*
- *Strata Schemes (Freehold Development) Act 1973*
- *Strata Schemes (Leasehold Development) Act 1986*

Details of amendments are provided in Appendix 19.

As we look to the future Lands faces many challenges, including the loss of experience and knowledge through a retiring workforce, managing the ongoing impact of drought conditions on land management and soil conservation earthworks and balancing the needs and expectations of individuals, community groups, industry and government. However, our strategic planning and commitment to improving services leaves us well placed to meet these

challenges and we will continue to offer specialist land information and management services to the people of New South Wales.

I wish to thank the management team and staff within our organisation who enable Lands to meet its financial and service delivery targets each year.



Warwick Watkins

Director General
Surveyor General
Registrar General