

MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

OVERVIEW

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Budget 2005-06 \$m</i>	<i>Budget 2006-07 \$m</i>	<i>Variation %</i>
Department of Local Government			
Total Expenses	89.4	90.4	1.1
Capital Expenditure	0.2	0.2	...
Total, Minister for Local Government			
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DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Department of Local Government provides the policy and legislative framework to local government in New South Wales. The Department aims to ensure local councils are sustainable and deliver quality services to their communities. The key legislation administered by the Department is the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Companion Animals Act 1998*.

RESULTS AND SERVICES

The Department contributes to the development of sustainable local government that meets changing community needs by working towards the following results:

- ◆ The reform of local government through implementing options aimed at ensuring councils are appropriately structured and operate strategically.
- ◆ Effective, informed and transparent decision making by local councils.
- ◆ Efficient and effective local councils with a culture of continuous improvement and best practice, financial sustainability and capacity to comply with legislation.

Key services provided by the Department to contribute to these results include:

- ◆ conducting Council Better Practice Reviews;
- ◆ managing Local Government involvement in Public Private Partnerships;
- ◆ facilitating strategic alliances between councils;
- ◆ implementing the Compulsory Councillor Training initiative; and
- ◆ drafting legislation, circulars and guidelines.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In September 2003, a reform program was introduced for local government. Promoting Better Practice Reviews are a government priority and the central piece of this reform program. The reviews have been a success and there is increasing pressure to accelerate the number of reviews. The assistance of the Internal Audit Bureau has been used to resource this activity.

Strategic alliances between councils are encouraged. A conference was held in May 2006 aimed at providing councils with the opportunity to benefit from the experience of councils already involved in alliances.

An issue has been identified regarding inadequacies in the understanding by councillors of their roles and responsibilities. In response to this, the Minister has announced that compulsory training for all councillors will commence following the 2008 council elections. The Department has a lead role in the development of this training.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The Department of Local Government provides a high-level analytical and intervention capacity, concentrating on:

- ◆ legislation and policy;
- ◆ finances of councils;
- ◆ major investigations and pecuniary interest matters; and
- ◆ performance management.

The Department is encouraging councils to develop strategic alliances, share resources and improve the transparency of governance arrangements to better meet the needs of their communities.

2006-07 BUDGET

Total Expenses

Estimated total expenses for the Department in 2006-07 are \$90.4 million, including:

- ◆ \$76 million for the pensioner council rates rebate scheme;
- ◆ \$0.5 million to review proposed projects under the Public-Private Partnership Program; and
- ◆ \$4.6 million for Companion Animals administration and payments to local councils.

Capital Expenditure

The capital allocation of \$150,000 provides for replacement of obsolete computer and office equipment.