

# MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, AND MINISTER ASSISTING THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (MENTAL HEALTH)

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## OVERVIEW

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Budget 2006-07 \$m</i>	<i>Budget 2007-08 \$m</i>	<i>Variation %</i>
<b>Department of Local Government</b>			
Total Expenses .....	90.4	91.3	1.0
Capital Expenditure .....	0.2	0.2	...
<b>Department of Aboriginal Affairs</b>			
Total Expenses* .....	49.5	29.2	-40.9
Capital Expenditure .....	0.4	0.4	...
<b>Total, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Mental Health)</b>			
Total Expenses .....	<b>139.9</b>	<b>120.5</b>	<b>-13.9</b>
Capital Expenditure .....	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.6</b>	...

\* *The reduction in Total Expenses between 2006-07 and 2007-08 is mainly due to the winding down of the Aboriginal Communities Development Program, which is in the final years of operation.*

## 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 pieces of legislation administered by the Department are the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Companion Animals Act 1998*.

## RESULTS AND SERVICES

The Department contributes to the development of a sustainable local government sector through monitoring of councils and the delivery of capacity building programs. These programs are designed to achieve the following results:

- ◆ Good governance and strong leadership.

- ◆ Sound policy to support excellence in decision making.
- ◆ Representative councils that are supported by and connected to their community.
- ◆ Meaningful planning and appropriate allocation of council resources.

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

- ◆ conducting Better Practice Reviews and monitoring council finances;
- ◆ developing and implementing an integrated planning and reporting framework including an asset management framework;
- ◆ facilitating strategic cooperation between councils;
- ◆ implementing leadership development training for councillors;
- ◆ providing policy advice and guidelines on a broad range of local government issues such as community consultation, councillor pecuniary interests, workforce planning and skills shortages; and
- ◆ drafting supporting legislation, circulars and guidelines.

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

As part of the reform program for local government introduced in September 2003, the Department implemented Promoting Better Practice Reviews. These reviews are in the form of a 'health check' of council operations that enable the Department to identify poor performance and promote examples of good practice.

In late 2006 the Department issued a paper entitled "*A New Direction for Local Government - A Position Paper*". This paper sets out a proposed reform agenda for local government for the next three years. It signals a strengthening of the Department's capacity building program designed to build the elements required for a strong sustainable local government sector.

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

Cooperation between councils is being further encouraged through the reforms in "*A New Direction for Local Government*". The Department is developing a coordinated approach to resource sharing between councils through the Strategic Alliance Network.

Key elements of the program proposed in “*A New Direction for Local Government*” position paper include the development and implementation of an integrated planning and reporting framework that incorporates an asset management planning system consistent with National Sustainability Frameworks. The success of the Department’s capacity building program is dependent upon State and local government working together.

## **2007-08 BUDGET**

### **Total Expenses**

Estimated total expenses for the Department in 2007-08 are \$91.3 million, including:

- ◆ \$76 million for the Pensioner Council Rates Rebate Scheme;
- ◆ \$5.6 million for Companion Animals administration and payments to local councils; and
- ◆ \$0.5 million to review proposed projects under the Public-Private Partnership Program.

### **Capital Expenditure**

The Department’s capital allocation of \$0.2 million provides for new computer and office equipment.

## **DEPARTMENT OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs, through the partnership between the Government and the Aboriginal people of New South Wales, is the lead agency for driving positive change and achievements in Aboriginal affairs and strengthening Aboriginal communities. The Department is also responsible for the administration of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*.

### **RESULTS AND SERVICES**

The Department has lead agency responsibility for coordinating with partner agencies to ensure delivery of the following State Plan priority:

- ◆ F1: Improved health and education for Aboriginal people.

The Department achieves this and the strengthening of Aboriginal communities by working towards the following results:

- ◆ Aboriginal communities are socially, economically and culturally strong.

- ◆ NSW Government agencies are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people, and coordinate on Aboriginal issues.
- ◆ Aboriginal people and communities are engaged in developing and implementing government policies and programs on Aboriginal issues.
- ◆ Aboriginal people have access to culturally appropriate services.

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

- ◆ advising and influencing government agencies in their development of policies and delivery of services to overcome Aboriginal disadvantage;
- ◆ coordinating the NSW Government Aboriginal Affairs Plan 2003-2012 - *Two Ways Together* which achieves a collaborative approach by relevant agencies in addressing Aboriginal issues;
- ◆ providing clear and appropriate policy advice to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on the impact of government programs, services and decisions on Aboriginal people;
- ◆ promoting and advocating Aboriginal culture through administration of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, support for local projects and events and maintenance of the Aboriginal family records database;
- ◆ supporting Aboriginal participation in decision making at regional, state and local levels; and
- ◆ coordinating the work of agencies addressing access for Aboriginal communities to satisfactory environmental health infrastructure through the Aboriginal Communities Development Program.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In 2006-07, the Department continued to focus on the delivery of services and programs under the *Two Ways Together* framework, and used its greater regional focus to enhance the delivery of these services and programs to Aboriginal communities across New South Wales.

The Aboriginal Communities Development Program (ACDP), which is a \$240 million capital construction and infrastructure upgrade program for better wellbeing in Aboriginal communities across New South Wales, continued during 2006-07. The program is aimed at raising the health and living standards of 22 priority Aboriginal communities by providing environmental health and essential infrastructure targeting a high level of identified need in housing, water, sewerage, roads, and recreational and cultural facilities. Expenditure in 2006-07 on ACDP is expected to be \$27.5 million, which is less than the budgeted amount, owing to delays in construction and other approvals.

The review of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* was completed and Stage 1 amendments were passed by Parliament.

The Department continued improving access to records to provide verification of claims under the Aboriginal Trust Fund Repayment Scheme. The Scheme was established to repay Aboriginal people's "stolen wages".

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

The Department has an ongoing commitment to key initiatives for increasing social, economic and cultural strength for Aboriginal people in New South Wales. These include the continued development of the *Two Ways Together* framework under the Aboriginal Affairs Plan, as a whole-of-government approach to achieving improved outcomes for Aboriginal people across a range of priority areas.

The *Two Ways Together* Package, which commenced in 2004-05, is a four year, \$10 million per annum multi-agency response to the Aboriginal Affairs Plan priorities.

The Department is coordinating the development of the *Two Ways Together* Regional Action Plans which focus cross agency effort on a small number of priority goals in each region. The Plans are intended to make a practical difference in the coordination and delivery of services to Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal Job Compacts and Aboriginal language programs will continue to be supported and promoted.

A bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth forms the basis for joint planning and investment to fill service gaps and eliminate duplication in service delivery to Aboriginal people. The agreement outlines how the Governments will work together through the establishment of a state-level Steering Committee and involvement of Commonwealth agencies in *Two Ways Together*.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs is the lead agency in coordinating and monitoring NSW Government agencies' responses to the Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce recommendations. The responses include State-wide and specific location actions.

## **2007-08 BUDGET**

### **Total Expenses**

Estimated total expenses for 2007-08 are \$29.2 million. The decline of expenditure in 2007-08 when compared to the 2006-07 Budget is due to the winding down of the Aboriginal Communities Development Program, which is in the final years of operation.

Expenses for 2007-08 include:

- ◆ \$16.9 million for the Aboriginal Communities Development Program including new housing, non-housing infrastructure and housing for health, which involves conducting repairs and replacements so that houses are safe and the occupants have the ability to carry out healthy living practices;
- ◆ \$0.8 million for the Aborigines Assistance Program allocated to support Aboriginal Job Compacts, Aboriginal Language Programs and significant Aboriginal sponsorships and events;
- ◆ \$0.7 million for the Registrar Aboriginal Land Rights Act to support the work of the Registrar's Office; and
- ◆ \$0.2 million continuing support for the NSW Reconciliation Council to assist promoting the way Indigenous and non-Indigenous people live together.

### **Capital Expenditure**

Capital expenditure is budgeted at \$39,000 for 2007-08 for minor improvements and upgrading of computer and office equipment.