

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER
(To Elected Members and CEOs)

ANNUAL REPORTING

Councils will have recently received, or will soon receive, revised guidelines from the Local Government Association on the preparation of their Annual Reports. Most Councils will be well advanced in the preparation of their Annual Reports, and I would like to highlight some specific matters that Councils should ensure are covered before they finalise and forward their annual reports.

Reporting on rate rebate applications for retirement villages

Section 23 (4) of the *Local Government (Implementation) Act 1999* sets out a requirement to provide specific information in relation to the receipt and treatment of rate rebate applications received from retirement villages. The report is required to be submitted to the Presiding Members of both Houses of Parliament in conjunction with the Council's annual report. This information can be included in the annual report or provided as a separate, accompanying report to Parliament.

Reporting on the application of competition policy

The *Revised clause 7 statement on the application of competition principles to Local Government under the Competition Principles Agreement* requires Councils to include specific information in their annual reports. In previous years surveys were sent to Councils to obtain this information to assist in State reporting to the National Competition Council. State reporting this year will be based on Councils' annual reports in place of a separate survey. Consequently, Councils' attention in meeting this reporting obligation under the Competition Principles Agreement would be appreciated. Details can be found in the LGA annual report guidelines, or in the *Revised clause 7 statement* which can be accessed through the web site <http://www.premcab.sa.gov.au/html/natcomp.html>.

Progress in the preparation of strategic management plans

Schedule 4 of the *Local Government Act 1999* sets out that the Council must report on "performance in implementing its strategic management plans during the relevant financial year and the council's projections and targets under its plans for the next financial year". Under s40 of the *Local Government (Implementation) Act 1999* a Council is not required to have the 3-5 year strategic management plans set out under s122 of the *Local Government Act 1999* in place until 1 July 2002. Some Councils may report against plans that predate the new requirements, some will be referring to strategic management plans they adopted under s122, and some may outline progress being made with the preparation of, and consultation on, strategic management plans under s122. All Councils are encouraged to indicate the stage they have reached in the preparation of strategic management plans under s122, for the information of residents, ratepayers and other readers.

Reporting on specific freedom of information matters.

Councils were specifically required to report on council certificates issued in respect of restricted documents pursuant to the freedom of information provisions of the *Local Government Act 1934*. That provision was repealed with the introduction of the new Local Government Acts. There is a Bill currently before Parliament to amend the *Freedom of Information Act 1991* to replace this annual reporting requirement with the current practice of Councils reporting to the Minister responsible for the Act, who then reports to Parliament.

Until that Bill is passed, Councils are encouraged to continue reporting on this matter in their annual reports and voluntarily providing such information to the Minister for Government Enterprises.

Statement on Council representation

Schedule 4 of the *Local Government Act 1999* sets out that Councils must include in their annual reports a statement of their representation quota, and the average representation quota for Councils of a similar size and type taking into account various factors prescribed by the regulations. No such factors are currently prescribed on the basis that the LGA has agreed to assist Councils in determining comparable Councils in order to fulfil this annual reporting requirement. Consequently, Councils are encouraged to facilitate this by providing the LGA with representation and other data, so that Councils can easily access the information they need for this requirement.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Dorothy Kotz', written over a horizontal line.

HON DOROTHY KOTZ MP
MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS