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OFFICE OF TITLES

Department of LAND ADMINISTRATION

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IMPROVED SERVICE FOR CLIENTS OF THE LAND TITLES OFFICE

This year has seen record levels of business in the real estate industry of this State. Daily levels of business have averaged more than 30% above 1987 levels for most of the year. It is significant that the level of increase in Western Australia in land dealings for the first four months of 1988 (31%), surpassed even that of the two largest Eastern States, New South Wales (27%) and Victoria (15%). Although a welcome indicator of the State's economic health, the upsurge in real estate activity has severely tested the capacity of the land registration system to provide services with the same efficiency as in quieter times. It was clear to Titles Office management earlier this year that urgent attention was required to improve the operation and structure of the office if it was to continue to efficiently provide service to clients.

In April 1988 I issued a Customer Information Bulletin explaining the delays in obtaining title searches, some initiatives planned to alleviate problems, and tips for searchers to reduce the inconvenience suffered. Since then a number of steps have been taken to improve the situation.

In the short term, a great deal of assistance has been provided to the Titles Office from other divisions of the Department of Land Administration. Staff positions have been made available to the Titles Office on a temporary basis to sections needing help to manage their increased workloads. In the longer term, gains in efficiency are being achieved by a reorganisation and restructure of the Land Titles Office, to enable it to better service its clients. This process commenced last March, and since then, a comprehensive review of procedures used to process land dealings and survey plans, as well as the methods used to supply land title information to our clients, has been completed in all branches of the Titles Office. This information is being used to reorganise the office to enable it to more effectively service the needs of all our clients. Staff are being reallocated to the areas which have been hardest pressed in recent months and more efficient procedures are being adopted to process dealings and plans. This is leading to improved productivity and faster turnaround time.

You may have begun to notice some improvements in the provision of services by the Office. Some of the most significant are:

SEARCHROOM WAITING TIMES The time required to obtain a title search has been reduced from long delays of more than 3 hours some months ago to around 30 minutes on average.

The reduction in waiting time has been primarily achieved through the employment of 10 part time staff in the evenings to deal with the extra workload in the Client Services area. In common with other measures described here, this initiative is being supported within the existing departmental staff levels by redeploying resources to provide for after hours assistance.

DEALING PROCESSING TIMES The very large backlogs of dealings awaiting processing in the Registration Branch (around 40,000 in July 1988) have been slashed by new processing procedures and improved methods of managing work, together with assistance from reallocated staff. Average dealing processing times, which were approximately 6 weeks in July, have now been reduced to about 3 weeks.

ACCOMMODATION CHANGES AND COMPUTER UPGRADE Assistance has also been provided to the office to address some problem areas.

An extensive programme of refurbishment to office accommodation has commenced and will allow improved delivery of service to customers as well as creating a better environment for both staff and clients.

Equipment to upgrade the capacity of the mainframe computer, used by the office to deliver a range of services, has also been purchased and will be installed in the near future. This should assist the general aim of reducing waiting time for prints of title searches as well as improving response time for remote search customers.

FASTER TITLE ISSUE Perhaps of greater benefit to purchasers of newly developed land in Western Australia, is the potential for improvements to the land development process which is emerging from the review of the drafting and survey examination branches. (New Titles and Charting Branch and Cadastral Examination Branch)

The survey examination process was relocated to Titles Office, following the 1985/86 Functional Review of the Department. This has presented the opportunity for an integration of many tasks previously performed as separate activities in either the drafting or the survey examination branch. A more logical grouping of these procedures should see a reduction in the time taken to issue title after lodgement of plans or diagrams, while at the same time reducing the cost of performing these tasks.

THE FUTURE As mentioned in my April Bulletin, the most attractive long term solution to resourcing the system lies with the proposal to introduce an automated land registration system known as Register 2000. If approved, this project should significantly increase the capacity of the office to absorb current and future levels of business. Subject to funding, it is planned also to extend the title faxing service to metropolitan clients in 1989.

TIPS FOR SEARCHERS In the meantime you are reminded again of the measures which can be taken by searchers to reduce the inconvenience experienced.

They are:

1. Find out your certificate of title reference before attending the office, and if this is not possible then avail yourself of the microfiche indexes and locate your certificate of title prior to ordering prints. Microfiche sets can be purchased from the W.A.L.I.S. products officer located on the lower ground floor.
2. Phone or fax your lists to the office for later collection. This service is available to account holders.
3. For a quicker turnaround time, keep priority lists to a maximum of six titles.
4. Leave large lists in the office for later collection.
5. Search during times of low activity in the Office of Titles e.g. 8.00 - 9.00 a.m.
6. Become a user of the Customer Remote Search facility. This facility enables you to search the indexes relating to land ownership and to order prints for post or later collection from the comfort and convenience of your own office. Please contact the Manager, Client Services (2226813) for further information on this service.



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