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overview

Chief Executive's Overview

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November 2007 was a significant milestone for the Department as it marked the 100th Anniversary since we began using the name 'The Department of Internal Affairs', given in Māori as 'Te Tari Taiwhenua'. This anniversary was an opportunity to reflect on the significant role the Department has played in New Zealand's development going back to the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and the establishment of Crown authority in New Zealand.

This Annual Report outlines the Department's progress over the past year in achieving its purpose of serving and connecting citizens, communities and government to build a strong, safe nation. It also highlights areas where the Department has demonstrated leadership in some critical areas of government.

The Department has continued to work and make progress across its many areas of responsibility, as it seeks to achieve positive outcomes for New Zealanders. Our outcomes are 'strong, sustainable communities/hapū/iwi', 'safer communities' and 'New Zealand's approach to identity is trusted and well led'. This last outcome was changed from 'trusted records of New Zealand identity' in 2007/08 to better reflect the Department's leadership role in this area. We also have the objective to support Executive Government. These outcomes and this objective describe the ultimate result of our work.

Progress

The Department has a leadership role in the management of personal identity information across the public service in collaboration with our partner agencies. Our focus in 2007/08 included the ongoing custodianship of the Evidence of Identity Standard (EOI), which is expected to lead to greater consistency in identity verification processes for New Zealanders dealing with government agencies. In the year ahead, we plan to progress the EOI Standard to the next level of the e-Government Interoperability Framework (e-GIF) to become a 'Recommended' standard.

We have also progressed development of the Identity Verification Service (IVS), in partnership with the State Services Commission. The IVS will provide the public

with a way to verify their identity online, and in real time, when seeking services from a government agency. Activities in 2007/08 included public consultation on the IVS and how this will work. We are currently in the pre-implementation phase of the project, including planning for organisational structure and IT infrastructure to support full implementation of the IVS, and preparation of any associated legislative requirements. The full IVS should be implemented in 2010/11. Other areas where the Department has a leadership role include the development of the Identity Assurance Framework and the Cross-Government Biometrics Group, which aims to provide leadership across government in this area, with the goal of avoiding duplication of effort, encouraging collaboration and ensuring the best use of public money on biometric technologies.

Work has continued on the Passport System Redevelopment Programme, which is a multi-year programme designed to help the Department maintain pace with New Zealand and international challenges to passport security. Several major aspects of the programme were completed in 2007/08 including the new artwork for the passport book. The focus in the year ahead will be on implementing the newly designed passport book and personalisation technology, starting to build the new passport system and completing the redesign of the organisational structure and business processes for the issuing of passports.

The Department continues to play a leadership role in connecting central and local government. Effective local government is a key aspect in building strong and sustainable communities. In 2007/08, the Department continued to work with Auckland councils and central government agencies to strengthen Auckland's regional governance. This work has included the development of a draft 'One Plan' for Auckland for the approval of the Regional Sustainable Development Forum. The Department's leadership role will continue in 2008/09, in respect of finalising the 'One Plan' and negotiating around its implementation. The leadership role will continue to evolve with the scope and ambition of the 'One Plan' process, as relationships in Auckland develop. The Department has also provided administrative support to the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance during 2007/08, with the Commission due to report in 2008/09.

Leading work with central and local government in developing responses to the findings of the Local Government Rates Inquiry has been another key focus for the Department in 2007/08. In the year ahead, this focus will move to implementing Government decisions on rating and other funding issues for local authorities, including the issues specific for Māori.

The Department provided support for the 2007 local elections, a fundamental part of this country's democracy. This involved working in the local government sector and promoting both the opportunity to vote and understanding of the two voting methods to be used – Single Transferable Vote (STV) and First Past the Post (FPP).

The Department is taking a leadership role in the gambling area and has shifted its focus from implementing the legislation to thinking more broadly about the role of gambling in New Zealand society. The focus during 2007/08 included improving the Department's knowledge about key aspects of the sector to support a more strategic approach. We will continue to increase our understanding of the gambling environment to ensure we are well positioned to advise government on big picture and detailed issues relating to the operation and role of gambling in New Zealand.

A significant responsibility for government is to protect New Zealand's citizens. New Zealand's dynamic physical environment exposes us to a wide variety of hazards. The Department seeks to enhance the capability of the civil defence and emergency management (CDEM) sector and coordinated two major exercises as part of the National Exercise programme during 2007/08. Exercise Pandora in September 2007 involved all CDEM groups in the South Island and was based on the scenario of a Southern Alpine earthquake. Exercise Ruauumoko, the largest exercise to occur in New Zealand, with 1,500 participants, was held in March 2008 and tested national preparedness for a volcanic eruption in Auckland. The Department worked closely with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Auckland CDEM Group to conduct the exercise.

The Department, through the Office of Ethnic Affairs, continues to provide leadership in diversity across government agencies and acts as a point of contact between government and ethnic communities. During

2007/08, the Department was involved in a number of inter-agency initiatives including co-leading the Connecting Diverse Communities initiative with the Ministry of Social Development. This initiative aims to improve coordination of initiatives across government agencies to promote social cohesion and stronger relationships between diverse communities. A public engagement process was undertaken in 2007 with the findings submitted to Cabinet in May 2008.

A notable and very public involvement for the Department in the past year was its role in organising and coordinating Sir Edmund Hillary's State Funeral in January. This was a major logistical exercise and staff from various parts of the Department worked together in organising the funeral, providing transport for the large number of representatives from around the world and liaising with both local and international media to make sure their needs were met. The Department's expertise in organising official events was a critical factor in the successful outcomes that were achieved. The event was significant for all New Zealanders with the highly public and deeply personal nature of the occasion contributing to the challenge for those involved in its organisation.

The Department has been working to enhance its procurement procedures including alignment with the Government's Govt³ sustainability practices. In line with this, a tender for vehicles for the VIP transport chauffeur fleet was issued in September 2007 which required vehicles to meet mandatory requirements for fuel consumption, emissions, safety and fit-for-use criteria. A contract for new vehicles was signed in December 2007 and 13 new vehicles were in operation by June 2008. Methodologies for reporting on fleet fuel usage/kilometres travelled and whole-of-life costs of VIP transport fleet vehicles have also been developed.

The Department is known for its high standards of delivery and continues to be asked to take on new responsibilities and roles. The passing of the Unsolicited Electronic Messages Act 2007 involved the Department in a new role of enforcing the anti-spam law. The Department ensured that a new compliance unit was up and running when the Act came into effect in September 2007.

In March 2008, it was announced that the all-of-Government information and communications

technology (ICT) operations within the State Services Commission would be transferring to the Department. Although the timing of the move is scheduled to be announced later in 2008, planning is already underway to ensure we are ready for this important service delivery function.

Contributing to the Development Goals for the State Services

We have continued to take a leadership role in the State sector with projects that contribute to advancing the Development Goals for the State Services. In addition to developing identity authentication solutions for New Zealanders, these include:

- » supporting the Digital Strategy, by helping to improve skills in the community through initiatives such as the Community Partnership Fund and CommunityNet Aotearoa. During 2007/08, we successfully administered the Community Partnership Fund funding rounds (providing funding for more than 60 community information and ICT projects), and undertook a review of CommunityNet Aotearoa user demographics to assist with content development. Visits to CommunityNet Aotearoa have increased by 155% over the last 12 months.
- » improving responsiveness to ethnic diversity in policy and service delivery, by providing training and advisory services to State sector agencies. The Department, through the Office of Ethnic Affairs, promotes and monitors the Ethnic Perspectives in Policy framework (EPP), which assists government agencies to include ethnic perspectives in their policy development. During 2007/08, EPP training was provided across the State sector and further training is planned to meet ongoing demand from agencies. Intercultural Awareness training has also continued to be provided to government agencies and will continue in 2008/09 with intercultural advisors also working with agencies to manage change and highlight the benefits of diversity.

Part Two of this Annual Report provides many examples of where we contributed to shared outcomes, working with a wide range of agencies. The objective 'executive government is well supported' has involved us in working closely with the Parliamentary Service towards achieving common systems and processes in the parliamentary complex.

Conclusion

In February 2008, I took up the position of Chief Executive of the Department of Internal Affairs. I feel privileged in leading the Department in its vital role in serving and connecting citizens, communities and government and helping to build a strong, safe nation.

As well as being known for its high standards of delivery, increasingly the Department is also being recognised for its leadership role in critical areas of government such as local government, identity and gambling. We will continue to provide leadership in those areas into the future.

Good progress was made during 2007/08 in developing more integrated corporate services, including the centralisation of both the finance and the information and technology functions. This will provide stronger support from the centre and enable better use of resources, improved skill levels and overall critical mass to help build a more resilient Department. Work on a long-term property strategy to address the Department's accommodation needs into the future is also underway.

The decision to locate the all-of-Government ICT operations in the Department is a vote of confidence in our performance, as well as an opportunity for us to make a major contribution to the Government's strategic objectives. Our reputation for effective delivery in many different areas is based on significant success in the past. Our intention is to build on this success in providing all-of-Government services.

In reflecting on the 100th Anniversary, I believe the Department is in good heart as it moves into its next 100 years and that it will continue to be responsive to the challenges it faces in connecting citizens, communities and government and helping to build a strong, safe nation.

Brendan Boyle

Chief Executive