

The ACT Government has made a clear commitment to reform make changes to the current planning system to make it simpler, faster and easier to use for industry, business and the community.

One of these reforms improves the granting and administration of concessional leases, which are detailed in the December 2005 Government response to the Report on the granting and administration of concessional leases in the Australian Capital Territory that was prepared by Kla Australia Pty Limited on behalf of the ACT Planning and Land Authority.

### What is a concessional lease?

Concessional leases are leases granted for an amount that is less than the market value that would otherwise be paid if the lease was sold on the open market. Although the term “concessional lease” was only introduced under the *Land (Planning and Environment) Regulations 1992*, this class of lease has been granted since the inception of the leasehold system.

Concessional leases have been an effective means for Government to provide and augment a range of social, economic and community objectives, including the delivery of core community and social facilities. They have also been offered as part of business incentive packages to help the economic growth and development of the Territory.

### What did the concessional lease review look at?

The review looked at current policy and practices for granting and administering concessional leases. The review included a major consultation program in 2004, inviting community comments on a discussion paper and holding workshops with a cross-section of government, community and industry stakeholders.

The review produced 27 recommendations for consideration by Government that were grouped into four main areas:

- strategic recommendations;
- procedural recommendations;
- community concessional leases recommendations; and
- business concessional leases recommendations.

### What has the Government decided to do after considering the review of Concessional leases?

The Government supports recommendations that in some cases will involve changes to legislation. The reforms include:

- a process for declaring leases to be concessional to provide certainty for current leaseholders;
- a clearer more transparent process to consider proposals seeking to remove the concessional status of a lease;
- a more rigorous whole of government approach to an improved process for community needs assessment to inform decision-making; and
- an alternative to concessional leases that provides greater transparency for offering incentives to business.

The Government response aligns with the goals of the Canberra Social Plan and recognises and supports the important role played by community organisations.

### What do the changes mean for the community and for industry?

The reforms will clarify current policy and provide greater administrative transparency. The changes to legislation and procedures will enhance the strategic directions of the Government and meet the community's expressed concerns with the current administration of the scheme.

### What further consultation is planned?

An exposure draft of the new planning system reform legislation is scheduled to be ready early in 2006.

### When will the changes take effect?

The agreed recommendations of the review will be implemented as an integral part of the broader planning system reform project. The Government has already implemented two recommendations – amending the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991* in August 2005 to introduce a formal statutory definition of concessional lease.

Administrative systems will now be strengthened in the lead up to the legislative amendments, to be implemented with the full package of planning system reforms.

In addition to legislation, a number of recommendations will require further policy development for implementation, particularly in relation to community facility needs assessment. The Department of Economic Development has committed to review arrangements for offering incentives to business. While the Government will continue to provide appropriate incentives to support the economic development of the Territory, a more transparent funding arrangement is favoured over continuing concessional business lease grants.

### Where do I get more information?

Inquiries can be made to the ACT Planning and Land Authority. You can:

- email [planning.systemreform@act.gov.au](mailto:planning.systemreform@act.gov.au);
- write to The Planning System Reform Project, GPO Box 1908, Canberra, ACT, 2601;
- visit 16 Challis Street, Dickson, ACT; or
- phone (02) 6207 1923.

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