

THE ASSOCIATION OF SURVEYORS OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA  
**THIRTY-SIXTH SURVEY CONGRESS**  
11<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> July 2002

**' SURVEYORS NEED FOR PROGRESS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY '**

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**' CUTTING THROUGH THE RED TAPE '**  
THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE  
OFFICE OF THE SURVEYOR GENERAL

By

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**Abstract**

Whereas in the past the Office of the Surveyor General (OSG) carried out land surveys on behalf of the State, over the last few years increasingly these have been outsourced to private sector consultant surveyors, allowing the OSG to focus on quality control.

Its new role is to facilitate land registration and support the indefeasibility of land titles by ensuring the integrity of cadastral surveying services and the maintenance of appropriate survey standards.

The challenge for the OSG is to ensure that proper standards are maintained without allowing them to become an impediment to efficient dealing in land. To do this, it must develop a service culture and improve its management skills while maintaining its technical competence. At the same time, it must meet its key responsibilities with fewer resources following the downsizing in the 1999 budget as part of the Government's on-going structural reform process.

The role and responsibilities of the OSG are defined in its Corporate Plan, which sets its future direction by establishing objectives and targets and identifying the resources needed to achieve them.

This paper describes the key points in the OSG Corporate Plan.

## Introduction

Firstly, may I take the opportunity to thank you for your invitation to present a paper outlining the future direction of the Office of the Surveyor General (OSG). I have given it the title "CUTTING THROUGH THE RED TAPE" as this is what we must achieve if we are to fulfil our mission of *facilitating* land registration. But I will come to that later.

My appointment as Acting Surveyor General is still quite new, dating back only three months to April when I took over from Mr Anthony Luben following his well-deserved promotion to Acting Deputy Secretary (Land Services).

I am only too well aware that I have some big shoes to fill. Tony is the most recent of a long line of illustrious Surveyors General, including people like Mr Kisokau Pochapon, and his Assistant Surveyor General Mr Francis Posanau (both from Manus Island) and the late Mr Pomaleu Salaiiau, with all of whom I have had the privilege of working. I have much admiration for these great men and will do my utmost to live up to their reputation.

I have broad practical experience in both the public and private sectors, which I hope will stand me in good stead in my new role. My career started with the Department of Natural Resources and Urban Development, which I joined in 1978, and I progressed to become Regional Surveyor for Northern Region in Lae. After ten years I left to seek greener pastures with a consulting firm. Then in 1996 I rejoined the Government as a Senior Surveyor with the Department of Mining in Port Moresby before Tony Luben recruited me to become his Assistant Surveyor General in May 2001.

The OSG is part of the Department of Lands and Physical Planning (DL&PP) and one of its major programs is Structural Adjustment and Operational Efficiency. Recognising the need to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the OSG, Tony Luben procured the services of an AusAID advisor from the PNG Advisory Support Facility, Mr Bevis Kennett (who will also be presenting a paper to Congress). The three of us worked together with the staff of the OSG to develop our Corporate Plan and I would like to share with you some of the highlights.

Before I do so, however, let me just say a brief word about the process we used. In the OSG we believe that planning should be part of a comprehensive strategic system that guides the day to day management of our business towards achieving our vision. We do NOT see it as a fad, an exercise to be completed and then abandoned.

We also believe that people support what they help create and that planning, like all good leadership and management practices, must foster involvement and participation at all levels. We therefore adopted a participatory process in the preparation of our Corporate Plan, developing our ideas in a series of workshops attended by Supervising Surveyors and other key people from the OSG.

### Background to the Plan

Land is the basic resource on which economic and social relationships are based, as well as being one of three factors of economic production (along with labour and capital). The ability to deal efficiently in land is fundamental to PNG's economic development. The role of the Government, through the DL&PP, is to ensure that property rights are guaranteed and that an orderly process exists for transactions in land to occur. Guaranteeing the integrity of surveying, mapping and valuation support the primary land management role.

The sale and leasing of land is a major source of income for the Government and revenue generation remains one of the DL&PP's highest priorities. While the OSG is not a direct source of revenue, its functions are essential to making land available through boundary demarcation and title registration. Without the OSG proper land records would not exist and the revenue from land sales and rents would be put at risk.

The challenge for the OSG is to ensure that proper standards are maintained without allowing them to become an impediment to efficient dealing in land. To do this, it must develop a service culture and improve its management skills while maintaining its technical competence. At the same time, it must meet its key responsibilities with fewer resources following the downsizing of the DL&PP in the 1999 budget as part of the Government's on-going structural reform process.

The purpose of the Corporate Plan is to define the role and responsibilities of the OSG, establish objectives and targets and allocate resources. It contains both strategic and business planning components and includes an action plan together with a budget.

Let me define what I mean by the terms "strategic planning" and business planning". Strategic Planning is a process to determine the longer-term objectives of an organisation and the strategy, structure and systems needed to achieve them. Business Planning is a process to set annual targets towards the achievement of the longer-term objectives and to allocate the necessary resources through the preparation of a budget

### Vision

The first step in our planning process was to determine a vision for the OSG – a description of the "ideal world" for cadastral surveying as we would like to see it. What we came up with was this:

**Land management in PNG is supported by the surveying profession, which is highly regarded as competent and ethical, and by the Office of the Surveyor General, which is recognised for its effectiveness and efficiency.**

We believe that it is incumbent upon us in the OSG to provide the leadership to ensure that this vision is fulfilled.

### Role of the OSG

We then did some soul searching to define our purpose in life now that we no longer carry out fieldwork. We asked ourselves why the OSG exists and decided that it is:

**To facilitate land registration and support the indefeasibility of land titles by ensuring the integrity of cadastral surveying services and the maintenance of appropriate survey standards.**

This is entirely consistent with the statutory functions of the OSG, defined mainly in the *Survey Act 1969* and the *Survey Co-ordination Act 1967*. These include:

- Examining survey plans for correctness and proper definition of boundaries.
- Registering survey plans, recording them in the Plan Register and holding them in safe custody in the Central Plan Room.
- Preparing and approving lease diagrams and survey technical descriptions for declarations and gazettals under relevant Acts.
- Helping facilitate the grant of urban development leases and the generation of revenue from them.
- Ensuring that:
  - surveys are carried out in accordance with current best professional practice;
  - the surveying profession in PNG maintains the appropriate technical, educational and ethical standards;
  - the PNG Surveyors Board is properly administered; and
  - Surveyors and Certified Measurers are duly registered.
- Devolving appropriate functions to regional and provincial level government.
- Assisting the public in matters relating to surveying and providing ready access to survey plans and information to which they have a legitimate right.

This new role also accords with the *Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local Level Governments 1995*. The responsibilities of the OSG at the different levels of Government are as follows:

- **National:**

As a Division of a National Department (DL&PP) the OSG's responsibilities are to:

  - develop policy;
  - set standards (in relation to cadastral surveying); and
  - monitor performance.
- **Regional:**

The four Regional Offices of the OSG (located at Waigani, Lae, Goroka/Mount Hagen, and Kokopo) are an extension of the National function and their responsibilities are to:

  - liaise between headquarters and the Provinces;
  - provide support and advice to the Provinces;
  - control the quality of the surveying work carried out in the Provinces; and
  - respond to provincial priorities.

- **Provincial:**  
Under the *Organic Law*, Provincial Administrations are responsible (among other things) for drawing up a plan and budget for their Province and for implementing and monitoring that plan. In relation to surveying, their role is in:
  - determining priorities;
  - preparing and implementing work plans;
  - carrying out surveys (fieldwork) using their own professional surveying staff or consultant surveyors from the private sector; and
  - lodging survey plans with the OSG for registration.

### The OSG's Values

Continuing our soul-searching, we took a long hard look at our values, the basic philosophy and beliefs that guide our activities and decisions. In our workshops and subsequent discussions, we agreed that the fundamental values of the OSG are these:

- **Integrity and Ethics**
  - Fighting corruption through the promotion of good Christian morals and values.
  - Acting with honesty and integrity at all times.
- **Accountability**
  - Being accountable for our actions and decisions.
  - Being transparent in the way we conduct our business.
  - Respect for others
  - Treating our colleagues, customers, stakeholders and the public with courtesy and respect at all times.
- **Respect for others**
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- **Customer Service**
  - Continually striving to improve the service we give to meet or exceed our customers' expectations.
  - Keeping our promises about the service we say we are going to deliver.
  - Being fair and polite.
  - Providing practical leadership.
- **Valuing our Staff**
  - Recognising our staff as our greatest asset and an essential resource.
  - Helping staff to develop their full potential.
  - Valuing loyalty and commitment to each other.
- **Innovation and Enthusiasm**
  - Readily accepting change for the better.
  - Being helpful and willing to participate.

### **Relationships and Dependencies**

Of course the OSG does not work in isolation and we made a point of identifying our principal stakeholders and what they expect of us.

- The Minister for Lands and Physical Planning is dependent on the OSG for:
  - the proper performance of the SG's statutory responsibilities (e.g. Survey Board);
  - professional advice on matters relating to surveying.
- The Secretary of the DL&PP is dependent on the OSG for:
  - the proper administration of the OSG in the carrying out of its role and responsibilities;
  - professional advice on matters relating to surveying.
- Other Government Departments have some dependencies on the OSG, for example:
  - Department of Works for professional survey standards;
  - Department of Mines for the quality control of mine surveys;
  - The National Housing Commission for the registration of plans for housing subdivisions.
- The Private Sector has some dependencies on the OSG as follows
  - the PNG Association of Surveyors looks to the OSG for leadership and guidance;
  - private consultant surveyors depend on the OSG to establish and uphold technical and professional standards;
  - utility companies (Elcom, Telicom, Eda Ranu, etc) depend on the OSG for survey information and boundary definitions.
- The General Public depends on the OSG for:
  - assistance in matters relating to surveying;
  - ready access to survey plans and other information to which they have a legitimate right.

As an integral part of the DL&PP, the OSG also has important internal relationships being reliant on the other Divisions which, in turn, are dependant on the OSG:

- The Land Management Division is highly dependent on the OSG for:
  - information on the creation of new lots suitable for development and/or sale;
  - information on existing State leases for rental assessment, revenue collection, etc;
  - confirmation of the details of land parcels (legal cadastral descriptions, etc);
  - resolution of boundary disputes; and
  - general assistance on Land Board matters (SG is a member of the Land Board for the purpose of considering grant of Urban Development Leases).

In the provinces, the OSG is reliant on the Land Management Division for Departmental documentation (e.g. purchase documents).

- The Registrar of Titles is highly dependent on the OSG for:
  - registration of cadastral survey plans;
  - maintenance of the central Plan Registry; and
  - confirmation of the details of land parcels where the lease documents are “subject to survey”.
- The Valuer General is highly dependent on the OSG for information (e.g. registered plans) on land to be valued.
- There is currently some overlapping of the functions of the OSG and the National Mapping Bureau (NMB) and discussions are in hand to transfer to the NMB.
  - all responsibilities under the Place Names Act, including chairing the Place Names Committee, preparation and maintenance of a gazetteer, publication of an index of names and places, etc;
  - assistance in the maintenance of border relations; and
  - granting of approvals for aerial mapping flights.

At the same time it is proposed that responsibility for maintaining the digital cadastre database (DCBD) will be transferred from the NMB back to the OSG:

- There is no major dependency or reliance between the OSG and the Physical Planning Division but the OSG provides survey and other information as required.
- The OSG is heavily reliant on the Policy Secretariat for:
  - making legislative changes;
  - assisting the OSG with its court appearances as an expert witness;
  - the provision of legal advice.

The issue of technical / professional policy and standards relating to surveying (e.g. the Survey Directions) is the responsibility of the OSG.

The control of land documentation and fees is a joint initiative of the OSG and the Policy Secretariat

- The OSG is heavily reliant on the Corporate Services for:
  - recruitment;
  - personnel records and administration; and
  - training records and administration.
- The Land Information Unit (LIU) is highly dependent on the OSG for land parcel details for the updating of the Land Administration and Geographic Information System (LAGIS), while the OSG is heavily reliant on the LIU for:
  - computer hardware and software;
  - computer networking;
  - Internet and e-mail access;
  - technical support and assistance;
  - user support; and
  - computer training.

### Strategic Objectives

We undertook an exhaustive (and exhausting!) process of strategy development including the usual analysis of our internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats but I won't bore you with the details. Suffice it to say that we identified a number of key strategic objectives aligned to the six major programs of the DL&PP. As follows:

1. Structural Adjustment and Operational Efficiency
  - Ensure that the OSG efficiently meets its statutory obligations and that appropriate activities are devolved to the Regions.
2. Legislation
  - Ensure that appropriate changes to legislation relevant to surveying are identified, approved and enacted.
3. Information and Equipment
  - Ensure that the OSG makes appropriate use of relevant technology.
4. Urbanisation and Physical Planning
  - Ensure the provision of reliable and up-to-date survey information to support and facilitate urbanisation and physical planning
5. Quality Control
  - Ensure that appropriate professional standards for cadastral surveying are established and maintained.
  - Ensure that survey plans are properly registered
6. Revenue Collection
  - Ensure the provision of reliable and up-to-date survey information to support revenue collection.
  - Ensure that appropriate administrative fees are charged for services provided by the OSG.

### Performance Management

Having a good set of objectives is all very well but they are of little practical use without a process or system to ensure that they are achieved. The first step was to devise a set of performance indicators and then set ourselves some targets, which we did as follows:

- Backlog of outstanding survey plans cleared by 30 June
- 60% of new survey plans approved the first time without need for amendment
- 90% of new survey plans registered within 28 days
- 90% of consolidated/non-standard LCD's allocated in 5 days
- 90% of Declarations completed within 5 days
- 90% of DCDB updates completed within 5 days
- Revenue of K22,000 from administrative fees collected in 2002

I think you can readily see how the focus has shifted to service delivery to fulfil our primary purpose of *facilitating* land registration.

The second step was to set up a series of internal monthly reports to enable us to monitor progress. From these we can see where there are problems or blockages and take immediate steps to resolve them. I am pleased to say that this is working well and we are already seeing some noticeable improvements in performance. All our staff have clear instructions to give priority to new survey plans and to ensure that they are registered within 28 days of lodgement. We are not yet achieving this in every case but the figures are starting to show that our efforts are having an effect.

At the same time we are making substantial inroads into the backlog of survey plans. We started the year with over 1,100 plans outstanding and at the time of writing (early June) this number had been halved. We may not quite reach our target of having them all cleared by end June but we will not be far behind.

It is perhaps worth mentioning how this backlog occurred as it is an historical precedent that I hope won't be repeated. The survey examination procedure in the past was based on a detailed eight-page checklist taken word for word from the Survey Directions. This was cumbersome and time consuming without adding any real value to the work already carried out by the surveyor. I have now reduced the checklist to one page and instructed the Examining Surveyors and Cartographers that they should focus only on what is essential and not waste time on unnecessary detail, placing greater reliance on the professionalism of the Registered Surveyors and Certified Measurers who carried out the surveys.

We have also reduced the backlog by excising from our records certain files that are so old they have little relevance. Many of these files date back to the late 1970s when the Town Planning Division of the DL&PP began to prepare Town Plan designs on TRP Plans. The approved TRP plans were channelled through the OSG for issuing of Survey Instructions and execution of field surveys by the OSG staff surveyors.

Prior even to that, Regional Surveyors were responsible for the design and survey of towns and patrol posts in PNG. Much of this work dates back to pre independence. The majority of the parcels of land were scattered over remote locations, especially land purchased for early mission activities, school aid posts and health centres. Many of the Survey Instructions issued, often dating back 30 years, had never been carried out due to lack of funding or other reasons.

In the unlikely case that any of these parcels still needs to be registered the Provincial Government (or other appropriate authority) will be asked to commission and fund a survey. The plan will then be lodged as a new survey and we will attend to it within the 28-day timeframe that we have set ourselves.

### Action Plan

The other tool to help us achieve our objectives is our action plan, in which we have set out what needs to be done, by when and who is responsible. I won't go through the whole plan but I will mention a few of the key initiatives that may have some impact on the profession.

- *Legislation*

Current legislation tends to inhibit rather than facilitate the registration of land and its release for development. It is also outdated and frequently inappropriate. For instance, the *Survey Act* appears to have been modelled predominately on the Australian Capital Territories Surveyors Act of 1967 and in large sections is a verbatim copy. It is not well adapted to the PNG situation. The act was amended in 1972 and again in 1987 but there have been significant changes in survey practice and theory since then, notably advances in the use of global positioning satellites and the associated technology.

Legislation is one of the Key Result Areas in our Corporate Plan and the Action Plan calls for the drafting of instructions for new and/or amended legislation. It was originally intended to base these on the Legislative Review carried out in 1998/99. However, that review was incomplete as at the time it was being carried out the Government implemented major public service staff cuts that drastically reduced the ability of the DL&PP to support the review.

Since then, it has been recognised that the terms of reference for that review were too narrow. Firstly, they were confined to the *Survey Act* and the *Survey Co-ordination Act* (and, in the event, this latter act was not considered because the review was curtailed) and did not embrace other relevant legislation. Secondly, the review did not address some of the more strategic issues that need to be resolved before any changes to legislation are considered. Thirdly, it is apparent with hindsight that there was not enough consultation with the profession and other stakeholders on the key issues.

Bevis Kennett will be talking about this in his paper, which proposes the establishment of a new Review Committee, and I will leave it to him to expand on this.

- *Delegations*

Section 5 of the *Survey Act 1969* provides that "the Surveyor General may, by instrument, delegate to any person any of his powers under this Act or any other law (except this power of delegation)". We have reviewed all the existing delegations and proposed a number of amendments, which we hope will be gazetted shortly.

Among these is a delegation to the Supervising Surveyors of the four Regions (Northern, Southern, Islands and Highlands) allowing them to approve and register Class 3 survey plans. We see this another step towards cutting through the red tape to speed up the process of land registration. In time we will be looking to extend this delegation to other classes of survey.

- *Communications*

With the changes and initiatives that we are proposing we have seen the need to communicate with the profession, and indeed with all our stakeholders, to keep them abreast of what is going on. We are in the process of considering how best we can do this – and this presentation is part of our communications strategy – following which we will draw up and implement a communications plan.

- *Educational and training*

As part of our leadership role, we have recognised the need to become more closely involved in the education and training of surveyors, particularly continuing professional development, to which end we intend to foster closer working relationships between the OSG, Unitech and the profession.

- *Review of Administrative Fees*

In facilitating land registration it is important that the whole process is made simpler, quicker and cheaper. However, at the same time we are under pressure from the Government to improve cost recovery. We have two choices, reduce costs or increase revenue and we will be vigorously pursuing both these options. Unfortunately, this does mean that we will need to review the administrative fees charged by the OSG. We will consult with the profession before increasing them to see if we can arrive at a more equitable method of charging which is fair to all parties, landowners, surveyors and the OSG. Your comments and suggestions would be most welcome.

### **Organisational Structure and Development**

The remainder of the Corporate Plan deals with matters internal to the OSG and is mainly devoted to organisational development.

Another of the initiatives arising out of the Corporate Plan has been a review of the way we operate. We have not found it necessary to re-structure the OSG but we have taken the opportunity to clarify the roles and responsibilities of our senior staff.

The Surveyor General (SG) is the executive manager of the OSG. He is responsible for administering the registration of surveyors through the PNG Surveyors Registration Board (as chairperson), regulation of the practice of surveying, maintenance of standards of surveying and the registration of official surveys.

The SG is a statutory position with responsibilities under the *Survey Act* to report directly to the Minister on the performance of certain functions. The position also has responsibility for performing those functions within the departmental structure, i.e. reporting to the Secretary of the DL&PP. The recent Functional and Expenditure Review of the DL&PP pointed out that:

"while there is no evidence that these arrangements are not working well at present they do bear the potential to create problems in the future. There is the possibility of incoherence and conflict where the Surveyor-General is required to report to and take direction from both the Minister and the Secretary."

The Review considered that a preferable arrangement would be for the Secretary to be responsible for administering all aspects of the department's operations. Accordingly it recommended that:

- the position of SG be abolished and replaced by a non-statutory position of Director of Surveying Services; and
- the Secretary of the DL&PP have the statutory powers and responsibilities of the present SG's position with these powers to be delegated to the Director of Surveying Services as appropriate.

This would require amendments to the *Survey Act* and these will be considered as part of the general legislative review that I mentioned earlier.

The Assistant Surveyor General is charged with ensuring that the OSG operates effectively and efficiently. His main responsibilities involve overseeing the work of the Central Plan Office and other Headquarters functions, maintaining the OSG's performance management system to promote continuous improvement and ensuring that the staff of the OSG are properly trained.

The Supervising Surveyor Headquarters provides specialist technical/professional support to the OSG and including research and analysis, keeping the Survey Directions and Survey Manual up to date and overseeing the arrangements for collecting the administrative fees charged by the OSG. The incumbent of this position also acts as Executive Office and Registrar of Surveyors and Certified Measurers for the PNG Surveyors Board.

The Supervising Cartographer manages the Central Plan Office and his task is to ensure that cadastral survey plans are properly registered and held in safe custody. He is also responsible for the provision of reliable and up-to-date survey information to the public. He is assisted by six cartographers a counter clerk.

Each of the four Regions – Southern based at Waigani, Northern at Lae, Islands at Rabaul and Highlands at Goroka and Mount Hagen – is managed by a Supervising Surveyor. Their job is to facilitate the registration of land and maintain and control the standards and quality of cadastral surveys within the Region. They are each assisted by an Examining Surveyor, cartographer(s) and a clerk.

The OSG currently has an establishment of 36 permanent positions under the structure approved by the Department of Personnel Management but it is likely that this will need to be reviewed in the near future.

One of our core values is the recognition of staff as our greatest asset and essential resource. We have two major goals. One is to help all staff to develop their full potential. The other is to turn the OSG into a high-performing team. We will achieve both if we can maximise the intellectual capital and professional capacity of our staff. We will do this through deliberate and planned personal development programs that support the achievement of our business objectives.

It follows that staff training and development are major initiatives in our Corporate Plan. One of the key tasks is the development of a Training Plan. We have initiated this by asking each member of staff to carry out a self-assessment of their abilities and needs. This information will assist the OSG management team and our Human Resources Division to assess the existing level of skills and knowledge and plan training to match people's needs and wants. In addition we encourage our staff to attend seminars, meetings, workshops and short courses that are conducted in the country or abroad. Many of them are attending Congress so please take the opportunity to speak with them.

We are also encouraging each staff member, in consultation with his or her immediate supervisor, to set up a Personal Development Plan outlining his/her goals and objectives, both business and personal, and the training and development opportunities he/she would like to pursue. We will then do our best to assist them to find and take advantage of such opportunities (depending on cost and the funding that we have available). The person concerned and his/her supervisor jointly monitor progress.

### Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to re-emphasise the changing role of the OSG within the DL&PP structural adjustment program which I think puts us at the forefront of public sector reform. The OSG's main function is to facilitate land registration by making sure that lodged survey plans are examined, described and registered as quickly as possible. We will also do our best to ensure that the surveys are carried out in a professional manner and cadastral survey standards are maintained.

Our Corporate Plan provides us with the blueprint to be more effective and efficient in carrying out our new role. However, we also need to rely on you to do your part. The new system places much greater emphasis on the professionalism of the surveyor in making sure that the necessary approvals have been obtained before lodging a plan for registration, that survey searches have been carried out and that the survey is complete and complies with the appropriate survey standards. When this has been done, the time taken from lodgement to registration will be 28 days and I will make sure that this target is achieved.

However, I need to issue a warning! Any survey plans that do not meet the above standards will be rejected on the spot. The OSG will not hold any survey plans to await additional information.

I believe that the new performance management system we have in place will speed up the process of the registration of survey plans and title registration making the landowner and other stakeholders happy and the surveyor satisfied and rewarded.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, let me assure you that the OSG is not only cutting through the red tape but trying to get rid of it altogether!