

APPENDIX 21

(FAKALAH I 21)



MINISTRY OF LANDS, SURVEY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

GOVERNMENT OF TONGA

P.O. Box 5, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

General Office: +(676) 23 611 Fax: +(676) 23 216 CEO Direct: +(676) 23 210

E-mail: secretary@lands.gov.to

BARON FIELAKEPA

6th March 2012

Chairman

Royal Land Commission

Your Lordship,

It is my honour to provide the following brief as an update on the work of the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Natural Resources in relation to the First Interim Report of the Royal Land Commission.

As I had stated in my letter dated 15th July 2011, the Government of Tonga's response to the Commission's First Interim Report was to initiate and commit funding for the Land Administration Project with the broad mandate of –

- a. reviewing and clearing the backlog of land applications in the Ministry of Lands;
 - b. providing executive and legal assistance to the Ministry of Lands with the engagement of a Legal Administrator (Ms. Rosamond C. Bing);
 - c. improving work flow and procedures; and
 - d. drafting of a Land Practices and Procedures Manual.
2. The Land Administration Project commenced on 24 June 2010 with a moderate amount of funding and His Majesty's Cabinet has continued its commitment by supporting the project for over 18 months now. The key achievements of the project, which are ongoing and due to be completed by June 2012, are –
- a. streamlining and standardizing procedures relating to Ministerial briefings and approvals.
 - b. data entry/capture of the first-ever Databases of Land Registers – Town Allotment Register, Tax Allotment Register, Mortgage Register and Lease Register.
 - c. on-the-job training for staff on basic automated land administration procedures and systems.
 - d. public notice in the local newspapers of land applications and leases to be registered by applicants.
 - e. completion of assignment backlogs in land registration, mapping/draughting and surveying divisions.

- f. sorting/filing/indexing of land applications and mortgage documentation.
 - g. completing reporting compliance for the Revenue Services Department.
 - h. drafting of standard operating procedures for all land applications to be compiled as the Land Practices and Procedures Manual.
3. A major achievement is the approval last week by the Project Aid Coordination Committee of a Land Administration Project with a major component being a phased approach towards an automated lands administration system. This project proposal was submitted by this Ministry and reflects a coordinated effort by the Ministry's staff to take ownership of its project proposal. The proposal refines and builds on the recommendations and technical assistance of the International Finance Corporation (Lands Information Systems Adviser in January 2011); the Commonwealth Secretariat (Archive and Records Management Adviser in June and September 2011); and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (SOLA Open Source Software Project Coordinator in February 2012). The Ministry anticipates a positive commitment by donors to fund this project with the Aid Management Division of the Ministry of Finance and National Planning taking on the responsibility for sourcing funds.
4. A further development relates to the current restructure of the Tongan public service in which the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Natural Resources is to be combined with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change under the auspices of one Minister and one Chief Executive Officer. The new title of the combined Ministry is the Ministry of Lands, Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources. The formal merger is yet to take effect. Upon merger, the organizational structure will be reviewed and if necessary, a new structure will be put into place.
5. The Ministry acknowledges the First Interim Report as an impetus for the Ministry to move forward with improving and enhancing its statutory functions. His Majesty's Government's strong support in assisting this Ministry is evident in its commitment of funding and resources through the Land Administration Project. The endorsement of the Project Aid Coordination Committee is a solid and continuing pledge of support. The Ministry assures your Commission that it is committed to drive the Land Administration Project within its capacity and ability to do so.

Yours Respectfully,


SALESI FOTU

Acting Secretary for Lands, Survey and Natural Resources

