



CALM BRIEFING PAPER 3/88

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT WITHIN CALM

This Briefing Paper is intended to update staff on progress in this area since the issue of Briefing Paper 1/88.

Organisational Changes

Following negotiations with the Public Service Commission the proposed Information Technology Branch was approved but renamed the Information Resources Branch, to reflect the nature of its responsibilities more accurately. The Branch is now formally established as shown in the structure diagram in Briefing Paper 1/88.

The position of Branch Manager, Information Resources, was duly advertised but no suitable applicant was received. Subsequently, the Policy Directorate decided to re-advertise the position in 6-12 months time and to keep the impetus in this area going by filling the position of Manager, Land Information Section. This position has been advertised and Mr Peter Bowen has been appointed.

Until the Branch Manager position can be filled some time in 1989, Dr F McKinnell will assume direct responsibility for this function.

The former Mapping Branch will henceforth be the Mapping Group and the GIS Group will retain its title.

The Computer Policy Committee has also been revamped and now consists of the General Manager as chairman and all Divisional Managers as members, with representation from DOCIT and Mr T Morgan as executive secretary.

Recent Activities

As foreshadowed in the previous Briefing Paper, the new VAX computer was installed earlier in the year. It is being extensively used for scientific work and for geographic information system development - so extensively that the planned upgrade to a larger processor has become urgent.

Some difficulties have been encountered in making the upgrade in the way it was originally envisaged and the change to a MicroVax 350 processor will now not take place until the end of December 1988. When this has been done it will be possible to transfer Records Management System to the Vax and upgrade to Version 2 of that system.

A major revision of the Departmental accounting system is also in progress and our intention is to have this operational in time for the next budget cycle, ie, February 1989. The new chart of accounts will be much better aligned with Departmental objectives and the new system will be integrated with payroll and committal accounting for stores, contracts and equipment. Following the change in the role of the Department of Services, CALM will be required to assume responsibility for purchase and payment for its own stores.

Another initiative is the commencement of a database management project, which aims to link all the Department's databases in such a way as to enable rapid access to and combination of different data sets. The project also encompasses the development of a data dictionary through which anyone on the Department's network will have access (subject to security clearance) to any data whether it is held on-line or off-line on floppy disc. Database management is fast becoming a major problem in CALM.

In line with the strategy outlined in Briefing Paper 1/88 additional computer support staff have joined the Department and considerable progress has been made in overcoming the backlog of system development or maintenance requests. As a matter of principle CALM will in future avoid, if possible, developing in-house application systems and will purchase off the shelf packages. This will greatly increase the speed of adoption of new systems, but it requires very careful examination of users' requirements.

There has also been an investigation of the possibility of introducing Macintosh PCs into the CALM network. The use of this type of PC offers major improvements in ease of use and a reduction in training costs. In the past this option was not seriously considered as Macintosh uses a different operating system to the MS-DOS system used on the CALM network. New communication software has overcome this barrier and the tests showed that it is possible to transfer files to and from both operating systems. There is now no objection to requests being placed for Macintosh PCs, provided the extra funds required are available from the cost centre concerned. It should be noted that Macs are well suited to use as terminals on the VAX.

It has been a matter of concern that many users of personal computers have encountered problems due to the complexity of the MS-DOS operating system and some word processing packages. Craig Bowers has been occupied full time with these problems. To alleviate this situation it is proposed to employ a person for 6 months to run a series of in-house training courses to improve the level of PC literacy in the Department. These will be held all over the State to ensure all staff receive the training they require. You will be advised of the details for your region/branch in the near future.

At the same time it is hoped to devote more time to evaluation of software packages in order to provide better advice to users on what is the most cost effective system for their needs.



Syd Shea
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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