
GOVERNMENT PROPERTY DIVISION

Estate Management Department

DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEW

The EMD's mission is to help the Government Property Division shape and deliver Government's immovable property agenda by providing quality property-related advice and services. EMD helps the Government achieve its policy objectives by contributing to three key outcomes:

- *Improved and more efficient property operations*
- *Sustaining Government finances*
- *Sustaining Government projects and initiatives*

PROPERTY OPERATIONS

Property records

The update and maintenance of Government property records is a fundamental task carried out by the EMD. This comprises several property datasets including a textual database of Government-owned property (excluding ex-Church property records maintained by Joint Office), deed packets as well as a number of mapsets. These records are an important information source for such Government projects as SmartCity, beach management, privatisation, housing, roads etc.

During 2007, EMD undertook a database maintenance exercise on the Joint Office Property Database during which more than 50,000 database updates were carried out to align database syntax with that used in the GPD's Land Management System.

Property information requests

As part of its role in maintaining the property terrier the EMD provides property related information to a varied list of clients that ranges from private individuals and companies to Government Ministries, Departments, Agencies and Authorities. Information is typically required in connection with the possible disposal of such property and in relation to government projects and initiatives. The EMD handled over 3,700 such requests/reports, apart from another 3,055 instances of generic provision of property information. In addition, the EMD carried out some 600 property inspections, apart from giving assistance to the Land Department in 50 court cases. 240 property status reports were also drawn up.

Property plans

The preparation of property plans and drawings is an essential element in the management of government immovable property and the maintenance of a property terrier. The EMD utilises a custom-developed GIS-based Property Drawing System for the preparation of all property drawings. This system also interfaces with specific off-the-shelf computer aided design software to facilitate layout drawings. The EMD put up a total of 1,020 property drawings in connection with leases, sales and permits over government-owned property. In addition 14,000 copies of plans were provided by the GPD in relation to such matters as Parliamentary Resolutions, land registrations, tenders etc.

Map-scanning project

This project involves the electronic scanning of a number of map-sets that hold information regarding government's real estate interests. Each map-set involves thousands of property parcels each of which has to be captured, checked, split-up as necessary and transferred onto an electronic geographic information system (GIS) that is to be developed. Due to funding and resource restrictions this project is planned to be implemented over a period of years. The Mapscanning project is aimed at providing the protection of unique property records and the removal of process bottlenecks through the provision of simultaneous electronic access to map records. During 2007 progress on this project was slow due to insufficiency of funds.

Protection of Government's title to property

Under the provisions of the Land Registration Act the first registration claimant to a property obtains a pre-emptive advantage over other pretenders. To safeguard government's rights the EMD checks every single application for property registration made with the Land Registry Department. During 2007 about 1,200 such applications were checked and, where applicable, the necessary cautions (41) raised. The department also investigated and resolved 92 cases of cautions raised against it by private parties. To further secure Government's title to its real estate the EMD also undertakes the laborious process of registering Government's title via *ad hoc* applications to the Land Registry. Some 618 land registration plans were prepared by virtue of which the EMD registered a total land area of 1,860,000 square metres.

Operational streamlining

The EMD's efforts to ensure an effective public service delivery are ongoing. During 2007 the department streamlined a number of operational processes including the recording of property in the Division's property database. As a result the department was able to redeploy one full time officer to other duties within the Division.

SUSTAINING GOVERNMENT FINANCES

Sale of Property

As part of its business development process the EMD continually strives for the identification of property that may be issued for sale at competitive prices. During 2007 a number of properties were referred to the Land Department for sale through tenders or redemption. Total land sales from Government property during 2007 amounted to nearly €12.8 million (this includes c. €5.8 million sale of ex-Church property).

Property Leasing

EMD also sustains Government finances by processing and approving the disposal of Government-owned land and buildings via emphyteutical grants, leases and temporary permits – with the final legal document being issued by the Land Department. Typically this involves such properties as land, shops, garages, stores, mobile kiosks, filming, tables and chairs permits etc. The EMD processed 97 cases for temporary activities on government land, 640 permits for repairs/works and 87 tables and chairs permits. In addition the EMD also approved another 150 properties for leasing and emphyteutical grants. During 2007 new leases were finalised for a total yearly rent in excess of €325,000.

SUSTAINING GOVERNMENT PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

Devolution of Property to Local Councils

The EMD's contribution in this aspect is to assess the devolution proposal, draw up necessary plans and prepare *ad hoc* conditions before referring the matter to the Land Department for finalisation of the contract of transfer. The Government Property Division concluded the devolution/leasing agreements of 3 properties as approved by EMD, including shelter at Mosta, information kiosk at Xlendi and garden and store at Victoria, Gozo. Lease agreements were also entered into with the Mosta and Sliema Local Councils in relation to their respective administrative offices.

Property Expropriation Assistance for Infrastructure Projects

The EMD also handles requests made by government departments for the expropriation of private property for public purposes, mainly in connection with infrastructural projects. The EMD collects all relevant technical data, takes corrective measures as appropriate, liaises with the sponsoring department and prepares the necessary plans for the expropriation. The EMD also provides technical assistance to the Land Department in acquisition cases taken in front of the Land Arbitration Board. EMD's efforts enabled the Land Department to issue 77 new cases of expropriation.

In 2007 the EMD approved the release back to the original owners of nearly 44,000 square metres of land that had been expropriated but was never made use of by Government.

Special Projects

The EMD continued to play an active role in special projects sponsored by central Government including the Valletta Vertical Connections, Schreiber Redevelopment, Property Securitisation and Enemalta land. The EMD also played a substantial role in the development of project proposals for the Grand Harbour Regeneration and the Marsamxetto Harbour Regeneration programmes by providing crucial research, status information and also plans for all Government-owned property in the area.

Land Transfer to Government-Owned Entities

Other major projects that involved the EMD during 2007 were those related to the transfer of government-owned properties to government-owned entities. These included the transfer of several parcels of land to Enemalta for substation purposes as well as transfer of land to the Ministry for Rural Affairs & Environment for afforestation/parks.

Facilitation of Home Ownership Schemes

As in previous years the EMD continued to sustain Government's efforts to promote home ownership by authorising the transfer to the Housing Authority of 460 properties for eventual sale to tenants.

Agricultural Land Scheme

This scheme was a corporate initiative that enabled cultivators of Government-owned agricultural land to register for the possibility of acquiring a new title to the land even where occupation was irregular. During 2007 the EMD processed and approved for leasing 640 applications.

Green Initiatives

In its own small way the EMD has also contributed to Government's green initiatives by reducing the use of paper and fuel particularly by resorting to the use of technological innovations such as the use of orthophotos to reduce the need for site inspections and hence fuel consumption. This is calculated to result in a net saving of €11,000 per annum in terms of time saved, reduced fuel costs and decreased car rental costs.

Support Services

The EMD also provides support services by providing property related information to such government bodies as the Planning Authority, the Works Division, the Department of Social Housing, the Land Registry, MIMCOL, MIP, Malta Transport Authority, Malta Maritime Authority and the Housing Authority.

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