

## Joint Office

The Joint Office manages and administers the estate transferred to Government by the Ecclesiastical Authorities in terms of the Ecclesiastical Entities (Properties) Act Cap.358. This Office forms part of the Ministry for Home Affairs.

### PROPERTY ADMINISTRATION

#### **Ixtri Darek jew lfdi c-Cens Schemes, 1996**

These Schemes, introduced in 1996, involved the sale of leased property used by tenants as their ordinary residence, the redemption of temporary emphyteusis of over 30 years duration and of perpetual revisable ground rents imposed on property used for residential purposes.

On 30<sup>th</sup> May 2000 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between representatives of the Government and of the Holy See, as a result of which a solution was found to difficulties of interpretation resulting from the agreement signed by the two sides on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1991. These difficulties had had a negative effect on the processing of 465 applications for the redemption of unclassified temporary ground rents.

Since then, 46% of pending applications were redeemed.

#### **Other Schemes**

The Scheme entitled Joint Office - Scheme Number 1, whereby tenants who lived in property leased from the Joint Office could apply to purchase such property, was wound up on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2000. Twenty-four applications were received in 2000 bringing the total number of applications received since the Scheme was launched to 110.

Late in the year the Ministry for Home Affairs announced that new schemes were in the pipeline.

## Lease of Agricultural Land

On 7<sup>th</sup> August 2000 a scheme for the lease of agricultural government land was introduced. The scheme offers the possibility to those who occupy government land for agricultural purposes without a title, to regularise their position.

## Transfer of Properties

In 2000 the Joint Office sold 62 leased properties under the above-mentioned schemes. Twenty-five perpetual revisable ground rents and 106 temporary ground rents were redeemed as a result of the 1996 Schemes, while 25 ground rents were redeemed on terms stipulated in deeds originally signed with the Ecclesiastical Authorities. Seven properties were sold following the issue of a call for tenders.

Sixteen thousand six hundred and forty five (16,645) square meters of land in Birkirkara, Qrendi and Marsaxlokk were transferred to the Housing Authority to be developed for social housing. Other plots were leased to Enemalta Corporation to build substations to improve electricity supply in certain areas. Three plots of land were also transferred to the Roads Department for widening or building of new roads.

The Department continued with its policy of transferring vacant premises to the Department of Social Housing. Vacant premises which were not suitable for social housing or which required extensive repairs were issued for sale by tender.

Four vacant houses in Valletta were transferred to the Housing Authority to be allocated to the Welcome Home Organisation which provides shelter for the homeless.

## Request for Recognition or Repairs

The Department also received and processed requests from tenants for recognition. In 2000, the Department also incurred a substantial sum of money on the repair of ex-Church property.

## RECONCILIATION, VERIFICATION AND REGISTRATION (RVR)

### Transfer of Information on Properties

The transfer of information from the Church Administrative Offices to the Joint Office regarding

the properties transferred to the Government by the Church continued at a steady pace. Up to December 2000 about 85% of the property forms concerning properties listed in Annex 8 of the Church/State Agreement were forwarded to the Joint Office by the Ecclesiastical Entities.

A large number of corrections had to be raised or confirmed regarding this information which corrections had to be approved by the Control Committee in terms of Section 4 (2) of the Agreement. This inevitably slowed down the work involving reconciliation, verification and registration. These corrections entail additions of properties inadvertently left out of the Annexes to the Agreement, deletion of others which were erroneously included, and corrections to the capitalised amounts of properties

**Registration of properties**

The Department continued with the registration of property with the Land Registry. During the year, 1,482 properties were registered, bringing to 4,820 the total number of registrations as at end 2000.

**ADMINISTRATION**

**Revenue Collection**

The following table shows the comparative figures of revenue collected in 1998, 1999 and 2000:

	1998	1999	2000
	Lm	Lm	Lm
Rent	366,166	408,948	405,253*
Sales	<u>197,215</u>	<u>604,882</u>	<u>900,716</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>563,381</b>	<b>1,013,830</b>	<b>1,305,969</b>

\* The Estimate of Revenue 2000 arising from rents, ground rents and “*qbiela*” was placed at Lm260,000. However at the end of 2000, the sum of Lm405,253 was collected, i.e. Lm145,252 more than the anticipated amount.

During the year, the Joint Office also gave particular attention to the collection of arrears of ground rent.

**Computerisation**

The property data at the Archdiocese of Malta was transferred to the Joint Office. Action is also being taken to render the DOCREG system more user-

friendly, although not enough progress could be achieved in this regard.

**Geographical Information System**

Through the link-up with the Land Registration Certificate System, the Technical Section of the Joint Office is able to download and print data from this Geographical Information System (GIS). This will continue to facilitate and speed up the process of drawing up plans and accelerate the work in connection with the registration of properties with the Land Registry in terms of Cap 358.

**The Control Committee**

The Control Committee, set up in terms of the 1991 Agreement between the Holy See and the Government of Malta in order to monitor the application of the provisions of the Agreement, met nine times in 2000.

**Joint Office Gozo Branch**

The services offered at the Gozo Branch are restricted to the collection of rents, ground rents and *qbiela*, and the provision of customer care services.

**Human Resources**

Although the staff complement should hover around the 47 mark, actual staff at the Joint Office at the end of 2000 was 34.

The Joint Office tried to alleviate this problem by farming out and co-ordinating with other departments within the Home Affairs Ministry. In fact during the year the Joint Office successfully utilised staff from the Land and Public Registry and from the Land Department to work in synergy with this Office. The result was a substantial increase in the production of plans for registration purposes and in the calculation of the correct capitalised amounts of over 3,000 properties transferred to the government by the Church.

DR GODWIN GRIMA  
*Director General*