Introduction

This document has been prepared in response to a request to provide some commentary on the paper “Building Modern Land Administration Systems (LAS) in Developed Economies” by Enemark, Williamson and Wallace and the Integrated Land Administration Model as proposed in the paper. In this paper, the authors have endeavoured to identify an ideal and historically neutral model capable of supporting Land Administration across a range of countries. This model is based on a vision for Land Administration Systems that adopts a holistic approach capable of incremental adoption of countries at the transitional stages of economic development. Case studies in Victoria and Denmark have been used as a basis for testing the model.

The comments provided have focussed on two aspects of the paper, namely:

- The terminology used throughout the paper and within the model itself and how this may impact the acceptance of the model as proposed and as a consequence limit the degree of integration as posed in the model
- The ability of the model to adequately address the “people” and “partnerships” aspects that would be necessary for the effective implementation of the model.

The comments have been based on the author’s experience within Australia and do not attempt to provide solutions to the concerns raised but merely endeavour to suggest some areas for possible enhancement of the model and the supporting documentation. The comments made assume that, as per the definition provided for “Land Development” (Page 2 of the paper by Enemark, Williamson & Wallace being reviewed), utility organisations and similar organisations involved in delivering urban infrastructure services are within the scope of the proposed model. Given this it is also assumed that it is the intention of those involved in the development of the model to gain support for the model beyond the land related professions.

Terminology

Within any society, particularly within highly complex urban areas, there exist a broad range of organisations from both the public and private sectors involved in the activities that impact the “administration of land”. Each of these organisations will have their individual goals and objectives. The nature of these organisations will vary between jurisdictions as will the public / private sector mix. Within this network of organisations, people from many disciplines will be involved and as such bring to the mix another tier of objectives and expectations. Given that model’s objective as outlined in the paper is to achieve the highest level of integration possible between all those activities that use the land, one of the greatest challenges faced is gaining the broad acceptance of all organisations and people considered to be part of this holistic model.

From the terminology used throughout the paper and within the model itself, one gains the impression that it is presented from the perspective of “Land Related Professionals”. This
view is supported by the emphasis placed on the on the land tenure systems, land markets compared to other activities that contribute to the holistic view the model is assumed to embrace. To a large degree, the role played by the Utilities for example, in terms of their contribution to the building and ongoing maintenance of land related information systems within Australia has not been adequately recognised. For example, the overview of the Victorian LAS indicates that it is “state based, through departments of the executive government”. Given the power and gas industries are in private ownership and the water industry is operated through government owned corporations, the scope of the model becomes confused.

Assuming however that it is the intention to embrace the Utilities within the framework of the model, it is questionable as to how would an organisation with the responsibility of delivering, water and sewerage services or alternatively power and gas services will see the model as proposed. It is possible they do not see their role as part of the implementation of “Land Administration Systems” but rather for example, “Urban Infrastructure Systems”.

Another instance of where the terminology could possibly limit engagement of organisations, is the use of the term “land development”. The paper refers to this as “implementing utilities, infrastructure and construction planning”. In Australia, this term would generally be applied to those activities involved the initial development of land as opposed to the ongoing delivery of services following the development. Those charged with the responsibility of the ongoing operations and management of utility assets once again could perceive themselves as being outside of the scope of this model. The fact that many of these organisations have historically established stand alone land related asset and billing systems in many jurisdictions could be seen to support the existence of this perception.

If organisations, such as these, do perceive the model as being outside the scope of their activities this poses risks in terms of achieving the level of integration sought by the model as they are less likely to have a sense of ownership given their perception regarding “land administration” and “land development”.

In Australia and possibly other countries in recent years, the implementation of computer aided emergency dispatch systems have had a considerable impact on the collection and dissemination of land related information, particularly geocoded addresses. As with the Utility organisations, does the model as proposed lend itself to acceptance by organisations outside of the mainstream “land based” organisations.

Given the above, will the model and supporting documentation encourage acceptance by all organisations with an interest in land? If the model and paper are specifically aimed at providing a tool for the ‘land related professionals’ to assess the progress made by any particular country then the model than it should go a long way to achieving this goal. If however the model is intended to promote more effective integration through understanding of the broader picture at a policy level, beyond “the “land related professions” it is possible the model may not achieve its full potential. This obviously poses the question what form should the terminology take that is used for overall model and its various components. The solution to this must lie in the direct involvement of all those organisations and professions within each country with an interest in the development and promulgation of the broader “LAS model”.

People and Partnerships – Relationship Management

The paper under review uses as a case study the situation that has evolved in Victoria. From a Spatial Information Infrastructure perspective, Victoria has made significant headway since 1995 in establishing the basis of a sound and sustainable spatial information systems capable of supporting the wide range of land related activities as proposed in the model. Much of the
success achieved can be attributed to the initiation of a broad range of partnerships established since 1995. These partnerships have embraced government departments, Utilities, Local Government and the private sector. They reflect to some degree the integrated approach necessary to support by the LAS model under review. The establishment and maintenance of these partnerships has involved a wide range of changes in culture, systems and policies. The key to these changes has been an underlying commitment by those people involved in establishing and maintaining these partnerships, notwithstanding the effort that has been required.

The adoption of a successful partnership approach can also be seen at a National level within Australia given the considerable success that has been achieved by PSMA Australia Limited. As a company owned by the Jurisdictional Governments and the Commonwealth Government of Australia, PSMA Australia has been able to successfully compile, maintain and distribute a series of National datasets by focussing on the establishment of strong relationships (i.e. partnerships) with the organisations comprising its ownership, other non land related Government agencies and the private sector who have undertaken the bulk of the data management and distribution activities. These datasets include a national Cadastral database, a national Road centreline product and a geocoded national address file. Viewed from one aspect, PSMA Australia’s role could be seen as one of a relationship management company that has been able to successfully bring about the integration of many discrete datasets to the benefit of Australia’s Spatial Information Infrastructure.

To some degree, the requirement for relationships/partnerships are implicit in a number of aspects of the model as proposed. The paper “building Modern Land Administration Systems in Developed Economies” raises the “people” aspect in its Introduction however the impact of people is not specifically dealt with in the paper. From an implementation perspective perhaps the model would benefit from a specific element that sets out the requirement for effective partnership management. If the model was to be used as a basis for measuring performance, it would seem to be a key element in the effectiveness of an integrated model.

The Private Sector within the LAS framework

In considering the aspect of partnerships as indicated above in the building of integrated “Land Administration System” it may be worthwhile to specifically consider identification of role of the private sector in the model and its relationship to Government. Not merely as the supplier, and at times the implementer of systems, but also in terms of long term Service Delivery.

Using the example of Victoria again, LogicaCMG have for the past 10 years managed and maintained Vicmap Property (Victoria’s digital cadastral and property system) for the Victorian Government. Over this period the contract has been through a public tender process on two occasions. A similar process has been used for the management and maintenance of Vicmap Transport. The distribution of spatial data is also undertaken by a number of Value Added Retailers (VAR’s) on behalf of the Government.

These long term contracts also require the private sector organisations involved to prepare Development Plans for the activity covered by the Contract over coming years for consideration by Government and to actively participate with the Government department in its strategic planning processes. The involvement of the private sector in this manner often brings to the discussion another set of views that can often assist significantly in the planning and subsequent implementation process and promoting “partnerships”.

This approach where the day to day service delivery is undertaken by the private sector under clearly defined long term contracts and the strategic policy and implementation are undertaken by Government has played a significant role in assisting the development of a
shared view in many aspects of “land administration systems” in Victoria over the past decade.

Whilst traditionally the majority of the systems under discussion have been within the domain of the public sector, there are many instances where the mix is different and in some countries has changed over time. The example of Victoria outlined above is one example. As indicated previously, with the “people” aspect there may be value in modifying the model to specifically measure and evaluate this particular aspect of multi-sector partnerships as experience indicates it can assist significantly in promoting a culture which actively supports integration across industries and professions.

**Conclusion**

From a land professional’s perspective, the model as proposed covers all the key aspects in that it focuses on the requirements necessary to ensure the key land systems such as tenure, valuation and planning are closely integrated in a holistic system. Given the establishment of effective systems of this nature, one would expect they should provide an appropriate foundation for all other land related systems. Viewed from another perspective, it is uncertain whether the model will achieve its goal and whether it has the potential to overcome the situation, as experienced in some countries, where other participants in the “development of land” have seen fit to develop and maintain their own independent systems.

More than ever before, the technology available today will certainly support the level of interoperability required to achieve more integrated systems. The challenge remains one of encouraging people and organisations to strive collectively for this integration through the development of the appropriate policies and underlying culture. This requires any model and supporting documentation established to support such a system being seen an inclusive and where the scope of the model is clear to all those potentially embraced by the model.

The challenge for this model is to demonstrate that it is inclusive and with the development of the appropriate partnerships is capable of achieving the goals established by its authors.