



Foreword

From the Minister of Conservation

For some years I have been anxious to modernise some aspects of the administration of the Reserves Act, especially to focus on the core purposes of the Act, simplify bureaucratic processes and achieve consistency of application of the law across different administering bodies. To address these issues I readily accepted the proposal of *Local Government New Zealand* to set up “The Reserves Act Review Working Party” with representatives from local authorities, and the Department of Conservation.

The Working Party recommended a number of changes to the Act, and to administrative procedures and policy. They also recommended the development of this practice Guide which has been prepared jointly by the Department and *Local Government New Zealand*, with contributions on best practice from local authorities.

I am sure that local authorities and other reserve administering bodies will find this Guide useful in achieving the purposes of the Reserves Act, and an indispensable reference in the effective day-to-day administration of reserves.

The Guide includes some new policy on matters such as the disposal of redundant reserves and the use of revenue from such disposals. These changes are intended to encourage local authorities to audit and manage their reserve portfolios so that they continue to meet the heritage conservation and community needs of their districts. The streamlined administrative provisions developed by the Working Party and contained in this Guide will offer new opportunities and rewards for Councils wishing to strategically manage their reserves.

The Working Party has produced a much-needed impetus to improved reserve management. I thank them for their wide-ranging and careful review of procedures. I congratulate *Local Government New Zealand* and the Department of Conservation for compiling this Guide. I urge all reserve administrators to take the opportunity of this initiative to initiate their own reviews of policy and procedures, for the reserves they administer.

Hon. Dr Nick Smith
Minister of Conservation

From the President of Local Government New Zealand

The 1997/98 Work Plan of *Local Government New Zealand* included a commitment to explore issues and formulate recommendations to improve the efficiency of the Reserves Act 1977.

The Act has now been operational for 21 years without major amendment. While the Act has, in the main, stood the test of time, the National Council of *Local Government New Zealand* considered a review was necessary as some aspects had lost much of their relevance and practicability in today's world.

In June 1997 *Local Government New Zealand* sought views on the Act from all local authorities. Their concerns suggested three primary needs:

- the devolution of a higher level of decision making to local authorities
- greater flexibility in approaches to management
- standardisation and updating of process and terminology.

Those needs led to a joint local government and Department of Conservation Working Party being constituted.

At the same time the Reserves Act Review Working Party considered a parallel issue concerning the difficulties of rationalising existing reserve holdings. This step is necessary to ensure that the mix of reserves held by each local authority best meets the present and future needs of communities for open space, community services and conservation values.

The Reserves Act Review Working Party produced two reports: *Improving Administration and Understanding of the Reserves Act 1977* (December 1998); and *Rationalising Reserves Act Land Holdings* (December 1998).

This Guide is an essential tool to implement the recommendations in both reports, to assist with improving practice and understanding of the Act.

We welcome two important outcomes from the review. They are:

- wide acceptance that the underlying philosophy and structure of the Reserves Act is still sound, and that no major reform beyond a few technical amendments is warranted at this time. This situation differs from the commonly held view of the Working Party at the beginning of the process
- the establishment of a first-class working relationship between senior staff from *Local Government New Zealand*, various local authorities and the Department of Conservation on Reserves Act matters.



I thank Wynne Raymond, Mayor of Timaru, the Chair of the Reserves Act Review Working Party, and all of his team for their efforts. Their work will prove invaluable to all who are interested in Reserves Act administration.

It is a great pleasure for me to launch this document with the Minister, reflecting the productive and close working relationship established in this exercise between local government and central government.

Louise Rosson
President
Local Government New Zealand

