23 June 2006

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Circular F.06/06 Dunos Augustas Station and Local Government and L

Preparing and Maintaining the Register of Electors Guidance for Registration Authorities

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I am directed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to refer to the preparation and maintenance of the Register of Electors.

In November 2005, new draft Guidance on Preparing and Maintaining the Register of Electors, and associated Appendices, were circulated for comment to all registration authorities (circular F 21/05), Returning Officers and members of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Local Government. The Guidance and Appendices have now been finalised and copies are enclosed for your attention.

The main changes to the draft Guidance arising from the consultation are as follows:

- the table setting out examples of particular cases when deciding where a person is ordinarily resident has been amended to state, as in earlier Guidance, that a person who normally returns to their parents' home at weekends and for holidays should be registered where they live for work purposes (section 3.2),
- periodic reviews of procedures by registration authorities should take place at least once every three years (section 6.1),
- authorities should arrange for calling back to premises where no initial response is received (section 6.2),
- authorities should consult with other organisations who have experience in door to door data collection, e.g. CSO, to identify procedures and approaches that may be of value in work on the Register (section 6.2),
- authorities should liase with other relevant statutory authorities and utilities who deal with households to explore opportunities for assistance in compiling the Register (section 6.2),
- authorities should make maximum use of, and cross-check with, the various sources of information and databases available within their own organisations, including planning permission records and information concerning local authority tenants (section 6.2).

The aim of the Guidance is to support registration authorities in working to secure significant improvement in the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the Register. It has been prepared in the context of the current policy and legislative framework relating to the Register and is without prejudice to any future developments in these regards. In particular, circulars F. 02/06 and 05/06 of 5 and 25 May 2006 respectively advised registration authorities of a package of measures announced by the Minister

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to assist registration authorities to improve the quality of the Register; further details will be notified to registration authorities as soon as possible.

The Guidance is intended to identify best practice for registration authorities in preparing, publishing and updating the Register in its various forms:

- the draft Register,
- the final Register,
- the supplement to the Register,
- the postal and special voters' lists,
- the supplement to the postal and special voters' lists,
- the edited Register, and
- the supplement to the edited Register.

In replacing the "Memorandum for the Guidance of Registration Authorities in the Preparation of Register of Electors" published in August 1997, the Guidance details the statutory provisions relating to the registration process to help bring greater clarity to the responsibilities and duties of registration authorities under electoral law. It incorporates the extensive legislative changes that have been made to the registration process since 1997.

The Guidance should, therefore, be implemented by registration authorities as best practice in preparing and updating the Register. However, the Guidance does not give a definitive statement on any specific point of law. Where there is any doubt as to the legal requirements, the Guidance should be regarded as an initial point of reference and authorities should consult the relevant legislation; in this regard, the Guidance includes references to the relevant parts of primary legislation which give rise to specific rules and procedures.

A second volume (comprising Appendices) accompanies the Guidance. This includes copies of all the application and claim forms relating to the Register (revised and added to as appropriate), and samples of advertising notices and posters used in Draft Register publicity campaigns. The forms, notices etc. set out in the Appendices should be used by registration authorities in their work relating to the Register.

A PDF version of the Guidance has already been forwarded to each registration authority by email. If you require additional copies of the Guidance or if you have any queries in relation to this circular you should contact Eugenie Carter, Telephone – 01-8882421; e-mail eugenie carter@environ.ie

Mise, le meas,

Nora Rowland, Franchise Section.

To Each:

City / County Managers

Registration Authority

Returning Officer/County Registrar