

# Message from the Clerk and Chief Executive to the Assembly



This report covering the year from April 2002 to March 2003 sets out the significant progress that has been achieved across all areas of business within the Assembly Secretariat in the face of a lengthy period of suspension.

## Key Achievements

A comprehensive election planning strategy has been developed to ensure the smooth transition to the new mandate. In addition, dissolution guidance has been prepared for MLAs and officials.

A training needs analysis has been completed across the Secretariat and an extensive training strategy implemented. At a wider level, and following a wide-ranging consultation process with schools and other public customers, an education programme is now under way.

The other challenges laid out in the first Commission report have been addressed and proposals will be presented to the Assembly Commission, following restoration, in each of the following areas:

- Recruitment of Assembly staff;
- Assembly-specific terms and conditions of employment;
- Improved accessibility arrangements to Parliament Buildings;
- Procurement strategy;
- Equality scheme; and
- Freedom of information.

Although the period of suspension had an adverse impact on several operational areas, it

provided an opportunity for 29 officials to gain valuable experience with other legislatures and public bodies, and the Assembly's Research Service was able to carry out a number of important research projects on behalf of Government Departments. Suspension also allowed for a wide-ranging review of operations, leading to the development of more effective organisational systems.

I should like to pay tribute to all the Assembly staff for their support during a period of considerable uncertainty. Despite the constraints imposed by the suspension of the Assembly, much valuable work has been completed, which will enable the Secretariat to provide enhanced services to incoming Members after the election.

As we look forward to the new mandate, I would like to place on record my gratitude to the Speaker, Lord Alderdice, for his contribution to the work of the Assembly Secretariat, and I wish him every success in his future endeavours.

In addition to the ongoing challenges facing the Secretariat, the coming year will provide a fresh challenge of dealing with the dissolution of the current Assembly and ensuring a smooth transition to the new mandate. Knowing the commitment and enthusiasm of Secretariat staff, I am confident that incoming Members can look forward to receiving a high standard of service from all the directorates.



**Arthur Moir**

Clerk to the Assembly and Chief Executive