



**NORFOLK ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
11<sup>TH</sup> NILA HANSARD – 1 JUNE 2006**

CLERK           Honourable Members I have to report that a vacancy has occurred in the office of Speaker consequent on the resignation as Speaker of the Hon Neville Christian effective close of business on 31 May 2006. It behoves me at this point in time Members we will proceed to the election of a new Speaker and I call for nominations

**ELECTION OF SPEAKER**

MR BUFFETT   Madam Clerk I move that Geoffrey Robert Gardner be elected Speaker and do now take the Chair as Speaker

CLERK   Mr Gardner, do you accept nomination.

MR GARDNER                                       Madam Clerk I accept nomination.

CLERK   Thank you Mr Gardner. Are there any further proposals. If there are no further proposal, I declare the time for proposals has expired and I declare that Geoffrey Robert Gardner has been elected Speaker and would ask Mr Gardner to now take the Chair

MEMBERS   Hear, hear

SPEAKER   Honourable Members I invite you now to join me in the Prayer of the Legislative Assembly

**PRAYER**

Almighty God we humbly beseech Thee to vouchsafe Thy blessing upon this House, direct and prosper our deliberations to the advancement of Thy glory and the true welfare of the people of Norfolk Island, Amen

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

SPEAKER   Honourable Members, we move to suspension of Standing Orders and Mr Christian I turn to you for a formal motion to suspend Standing Orders

MR CHRISTIAN                                   Thank you Mr Speaker, I move that so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent the House from only dealing with the matters listed on the Programme. Mr Speaker I don't think there is anything more that I need to say at the moment. It is just a formality. I have nothing further to add to the debate

SPEAKER   Thank you Mr Christian. Any further debate. The question before us is that Standing Orders be suspended and I put that question to you

QUESTION PUT  
AGREED

The ayes have it thank you the motion is agreed to

**NOTICES**

Honourable Members the next order of business is termination of appointment to designated executive offices

**TERMINATION OF APPOINTMENT TO DESIGNATED EXECUTIVE OFFICES**

MR CHRISTIAN Thank you Mr Speaker, I move that this House advises His Honour the Administrator to terminate the appointment of the following members to the executive offices respectively designated below: (a) Geoffrey Robert Gardner as Chief Minister; (b) Ronald Coane Nobbs as Minister for Finance; and (c) David Ernest Buffett as Minister for Community Services

MRS JACK Mr Speaker I would ask you to come down from the floor just to advise the community on your stand and your feelings over this motion and I would ask that the Deputy Speaker take the Chair in your place

SPEAKER Thank you Mrs Jack, I'm happy to oblige in that and will do so when other Members have had an opportunity to enter into debate

MR NOBBS Mr Speaker I must say that I was quite surprised to learn of this activity which went on when I was off island. I'm completely disgusted with it and I think it is a situation where we put ourselves at grave risk with the Norfolk Island community and what they seek to achieve as far as our self Government arrangements are concerned. I think we've shown to the Australian Government, Ministers etc that we have grave difficulties in maintaining any cohesion in this area, our people as you are aware, we have a record of very few Legislative Assembly's actually lasting the distance. There are usually a number of spills in the arrangement and this is just another case of taking what I believe is a step which will be quite backward to what's happening now I'm involved in all of this arrangement so I'll say no more at this stage but I'm very concerned that there seems to be a grab for power and some sort of ego ride that people are embarking on

MR BROWN Mr Speaker point of order. To suggest that any Member has an ego ride is a breach of Standing Orders and the suggestion should be withdrawn

SPEAKER Mr Nobbs if you could contain your remarks to the comment on the motion before us rather than dealing with personalities involved around the table that would be appreciated

MR NOBBS Mr Speaker I would be very interested to hear your views on it as you were here at the time and also Mr Buffett as to why this motion is necessary particularly at this point in time. I wasn't advised of it until a couple of days after the event as I was away, off island, and I know that some Members here will say that Mr Brown was away when the NSL went through but he was warned in writing before he left the island that we had to get the NSL through as quickly as possible and that we were awaiting a redraft of the legislation to allow us to have it assented to by the Administrator and as soon as that redrafting was completed it was put before the House and it was essential that it go ahead as we were running out of time and as it was the vote was seven to one then seven to two when Mr Brown was actually in the house when originally debated at the previous meeting so that I disagree with this arrangement. I find it extremely difficult to accept that something like this can be done in a Members' absence and I look forward to hearing both yourself Mr Speaker and Mr Buffett having some say in this

MRS JACK Mr Speaker I think it is imperative too that as Mr Christian has moved this motion that he also state his reasons or his views behind a, b, and c of this motion and I look forward to hearing that

MR CHRISTIAN Thank you Mr Speaker, I'm quite happy to respond to Mrs Jack's query. My name appears on the termination notice purely as a formality. It doesn't mean that I necessarily proposed these changes in the first place but if I go back a step when this process commenced and if my recollection of events is incorrect well I'm happy to be corrected by any Member around the table. As I understand it, at last Monday's MLA's meeting, at the conclusion of that meeting there was a meeting of MLA's alone. Mr Nobbs was absent from that meeting, he was on the mainland. The Chief Minister indicated that he was standing down from the position of Chief Minister and nominations were sought from other Members at that meeting as to who would be prepared to take on the position of Chief Minister as a consequence of Mr Gardner's indicating that he would stand down. Mr Buffett was the only person to indicate a willingness to take on the role of Chief Minister and accordance with the protocol that was extended to Mr Gardner after the last election the Chief Minister was basically allowed to go off and choose a cabinet if you like or Ministers of his choosing. That invitation was extended to Mr Buffett and after a couple of days of deliberation he announced the team that he would like to lead as the new Government of Norfolk Island. I was approached to see if I would take the finance portfolio and I told Mr Buffett at the time that I was quite happy in my job as Speaker, I had only been there for two or three months, and I was willing to continue in that role if he could find another Member prepared to serve as Minister for Finance. Having said that I also gave Mr Buffett an undertaking that I would discuss the matter with my family that evening and after further consultation with Mr Buffett I agreed to take the Minister for Finance position if it was offered to me. It was formally offered and so I have accepted that and at the moment it is at the mercy of the House. If the House wants me to serve as Minister for Finance I'm happy to and if the House wants to toss me out well I can equally deal with that. Thank you Mr Speaker

MR SHERIDAN Mr Speaker I think I said my piece last Monday when MLA's met but I don't intend to support this motion. I said on Monday that I did not agree with the change of the Chief Minister and I certainly won't be supporting the nominations of the Membership to executive positions. I will say more on that later on if it gets down to the individual appointments for executive positions

MRS BOUDAN Mr Speaker I was at that meeting and when the Chief Minister indicated that he would relinquish his position as Chief Minister and put it out for talk amongst the Members it was discussed. I know that I said that if the hat had to land on another head I would support David Buffett in that capacity. I indicated that Ron was not available, he wasn't at the meeting and I preferred that we discussed this with all nine Members in attendance and that's where I am with that. Thank you

MR BUFFETT Mr Speaker I really would like to give a wider perspective to the situation that we are in, notwithstanding the individual points of view that have been said to date. You will know as all Members will know and as Members of the community will know, that we do have a crisis situation in Norfolk Island. We have of course had crisis before but this one is of some significant magnitude and the identification of the crisis was made on the 20<sup>th</sup> February of this year by message from the Australian Government through its Minister for Territories, the Hon Jim Lloyd. The message was this, you that is, you in Norfolk Island, you are going to be insolvent in two years, you are going to be turned into a local Government body or a state type Government body and many of your powers and responsibilities will be taken away. Such a message although unpalatable, unpopular and although factually challengeable, such a message cannot be ignored. Coupled with this is the real fact that the Norfolk Island economy based on tourism, is experiencing significant downturn and indeed, in that area particularly, we are vulnerable and our task in this context is this. That we must

demonstrate financial sustainability for Norfolk Island and we do want to demonstrate that we are able to maintain the island's sustainable self Government. This is a significant task. It's a many faceted task and to tackle the magnitude of this particular task requires vigour and it requires resources, commitment, skill and those things beyond the normal and the primary role falls to we nine Members who are around this table because we are elected to attend to such crisis when they arise and one of the challenges in all of this is that of course we are nine, who are representative of the community which elects us, and that does mean this. It means that we are diverse and it means that we are different in our views and our actions, in how we go about our affairs, our aspirations and our priorities and therefore it is difficult to get people to work together, given that particular diversity, but the key to surmounting this difficulty of diversity on this occasion, is the fact that many do share the common goal of how we want to move forward. Again let me mention it. We want to demonstrate sustainability and we want to have sustainable self Government and in that context if we are able to put aside our differing characters at least for the duration of this crisis and forge an alliance to pull together in this crisis we can achieve our goal. If we continue to be divided, that is divided amongst the nine, or divided within the community, let's be very clear. Our lot will be decided by others. Not by ourselves and the real question to us therefore is can we rise to that occasion. At best we all can. But yes we can, and indeed, yes we must and this set of motions proposes that a diverse group of people combine our skills and resources for the benefit of the community. I know that there are varying views and some of them have been said and a lot of things alluded to, but this really isn't a time for political maneuvering or personal preferences. Nor have I got to say that I think it's a time to try and force an election because a new election will provide a group of nine equally diverse views. It's always been so. That's how it has been made up here in this community and the representative group. But another particular fact in terms of the pressing for election situation is that we do not have the time available to us in the negotiating process with the Commonwealth Government. So if we believe our community is worth strong and resourceful representation in urgent communication, dialogue and negotiations with the Commonwealth Government then we nine must demonstrate we have the breadth of commitment to tackle that task and this series of motions, and it's not just one or two motions, it's all of them, this is really a package as we will have all seen, and it commenced obviously with the election of yourself Mr Speaker, a commendable task but it will be a package that will set a team in place to negotiate Norfolk Island's position in the crisis we face. And whilst people may have the sort of views that have been put today I'm really asking Members not necessarily to not debate that, that's their prerogative but to bear in mind this bigger and more substantive picture that I'm endeavouring to paint because unless we come to grips with that, as I've mentioned earlier others will decide our fate, it won't be us. I commend the motion that is in front of us

MR NOBBS  
life because I'll tell you why

Mr Speaker I've never heard so much waffle in all my

SPEAKER  
to the matter before us without necessarily having to condemn the debate of other Members around the table that would be appreciated

MR NOBBS  
We shouldn't have any political maneuvering. Well it's not political maneuvering I don't believe. It's just a take over and why I'm concerned is this, that this issue that we have with the Australian Government will not be finalised by this arrangement. This is going to be ongoing. The issues are, it's going to be, the war will last until possibly the middle of next year. There'll be a series of battles within that war and we've seen it, the Commonwealth Grants Commission coming across, the ABS, some people are against it, and they put up their views as to why we shouldn't be here and submissions were put in place and on it went. It's not something and that's what the community has to do, it won't be clarified, it won't be cleaned up for some time, at this point, but we must keep up

the fight against what is proposed or against what Mr Jim Lloyd, the Minister for Territories proposed and that's where I'm concerned, that we've sent a very bad message at this point in time and I'll say it again. If talking was going to get us actually nowhere, I doubt whether there will be... there is in the community a complete and utter... I came back to quite disturbing vibes from the community itself in relation to this particular exercise and how this group here think that we will achieve, there's been talk of wishing to go to an election; there is other such moves afoot to showing a complete and utter lack of concern in relation to the community concerns, the way this was done as well as the outcome and I'm still... I will be voting against all of these motions. It's not on a personal basis but I have real concerns at the way we are doing things

MR GARDNER Mr Deputy Speaker in accord with the request from Mrs Jack I'm quite happy to address this forum and provide some background views and some of the background in relation to the development of this matter over the last few days. I think if I go back to where this matter was, probably at the point of initiation, I think it was at an informal meeting convened with executives on Tuesday of last week to discuss some concerns within that executive group of an impending visit of Mr Nobbs to Australia for surgery, on private business and with an indication to us that he intended to further some of the consultation and discussion with the Commonwealth that a number of Members both around this table and in the community had been so passionate about. I think it's appropriate to inform Members that as the Chief Minister of the Norfolk Island Government at that point in time and as we speak now I still remain in that position but at that time I reaffirmed my confidence in the ministry that I had and in Mr Nobbs' ability to undertake whatever necessary discussion he believed was appropriate to further advance matters in relation to the best interests of Norfolk Island. I think it's important to also point out that Mr Nobbs has under his own volition developed fairly strong, I think is a fairly appropriate word, fairly strong relationships with Members of the Federal Parliamentary sphere and the Federal Ministry and every indication to me is that that was to be furthered in his visit to Canberra subject obviously to his own personal affairs being tidied prior to taking the opportunity whilst in Australia to do so. I think it's fair to say that at that meeting serious concerns about the confidence held in Mr Nobbs abilities were raised. As I said I confirmed my support for Mr Nobbs and for the Ministry as a whole and I probably need to suggest that I was somewhat gobsmacked that that matter had been raised, particularly on the eve of departure of Mr Nobbs to Australia and at that time clearly questioned why that matter had not been raised at an earlier occasion so that if there was a question of confidence in the ability of any of the executive Members that the matter should appropriately immediately addressed by all Members of the Legislative Assembly because, as Mr Buffett has already pointed out, it is important that we present a united front in going forward and defending Norfolk Island's position, its self Government arrangements and in discussing, consulting and negotiating with the Commonwealth the future for Norfolk Island. Shortly after that meeting I had reason to talk to Mr Buffett about the concerns that he held which I did, and following those discussions was of a view with which he agreed that there needed to be further discussion not only amongst executives but amongst the Membership as a whole as to the solution to I think the impasse that we had come across during the course of that day in relation to the confidence in the executive Membership to lead Norfolk Island in the reaming term of this Legislative Assembly. Unfortunately, because of a number of significant discussions that needed to take place last week with visiting people to Norfolk Island the executive were unable to meet the following day, on the Wednesday and it wasn't until later on the Thursday that we had an opportunity to sit down and discuss what had occurred. At that meeting the view of the executive was that it was important that the matter of confidence be taken to the full Membership of the Legislative Assembly for free and open debate, conscious all the time that Mr Nobbs was off island I had informed Mr Nobbs of the state of affairs and that it had been the proposal with the executive members to take the matter forward for discussion with the Membership of the Legislative Assembly this last Monday. It provided an opportunity for the executive to consider the matter further over the weekend but already by that time I think word had surfaced in the community that things were somewhat unstable at Kingston which

generated in itself a lot of discussion, a lot of speculation and a large number of rumours eventuated from the discussions that had taken place late last week. Membership of the Legislative Assembly gathered on Monday and following our normal course of business I asked all Members of the Legislative Assembly to remain behind so that we could have in House discussions about the issue. I attempted at that meeting to impress upon Members the importance of ensuring that we dealt with this issue as quickly and as efficiently as we possibly could in the interests of not only continuing self governance in Norfolk Island but also in an attempt to quell certainly the rumblings within the community. I was conscious at that time of significant lobbying that had gone on behind the scenes, with various Members of the Legislative Assembly, myself included of what would be the best outcome for Norfolk Island. Significant lobbying I understand of Mr Buffett and others in relation to this matter and the course of action we were advised that should have been taken. It was at that meeting on Monday that Mr Buffett clearly indicated to me and to Members of the Legislative Assembly his lack of confidence in my leadership abilities in leading this Government and taking it forward in what are particularly difficult times. Not unusual times but difficult times. Again to say the least I was probably floored by that revelation though I'm sure many Members around this table and certainly many in the community harbour all sorts of reservations about my abilities to do anything whether it be the Chief Minister the speakership or even as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and they are perfectly entitled to harbour those views. However my view of Government in Norfolk Island is that the only way it will operate or you can attempt to operate with a clear conscience knowing that you retain the full support of your executive colleagues and for that reason at the meeting of the Members on Monday morning I felt that there was no further role for me to play particularly following those revelations as the Chief Minister of Norfolk Island and that it was in the island's best interest that we put our hats back in the ring, enable the Membership of the Legislative Assembly to give consideration to who they thought might be able to pick up the pieces forge a team and allow Norfolk Island to forge ahead. As I think previous speakers have said, Mr Buffett was the only person at that time to put up his hand to indicate a willingness to take up that challenge and with the general agreement of Members he was asked to go away and hold discussions over the ensuing days as to what he would see as the necessary make up of a team to take these matters forward in Norfolk Island's best interest. As Mr Christian point out that was the process that I was asked to undertake in October 2004 when this Legislative Assembly was elected. We've had I think a good strong team work ethic develop in that period of time. Unfortunately we did have a hiccup in that process earlier in the year but that hiccup was not a reflection on anybody's capacity or capability to discharge their duties, it was a matter that was dealt with by a committee of this House and appropriately dealt with. However, obviously as tensions have increased since February 20<sup>th</sup> as Mr Buffett spoke about, there have been significant discussion in the community, around the table and further a field about Norfolk Island's capacity to deal with the issues that have confronted us since February 20<sup>th</sup>. I, in developing my strategy for the Norfolk Island Government held firmly to the view that you need to be properly prepared before you formally engage in negotiations particularly in relation to the proposals that were placed by the Commonwealth and as all Members around this table are aware, we are well advanced in putting together a package to be able to negotiate with the Commonwealth. In my view as the Chief Minister of Norfolk Island Government I felt it appropriate that we were properly prepared so to avoid any embarrassment in engaging in formal discussions to ensure that we had the necessary back up, the necessary credibility as far as our documentation is concerned, and I'm sure that, that process is professional, is appropriate and carried weight, rather than an urgency as I think it was referred to before, to scramble over ourselves, race headlong into a full front attack and find at the end of the day, potentially that we had fired all our bullets and had nothing in reserve. There is a properly measured way of doing things. That clearly did not carry a great deal of weight with some Members around this table or with many Members in the community and may well have been a matter of frustration to many within the Commonwealth because it is difficult to engage whilst there are too many unknown factors remaining on the table. As I said, on Monday in not putting my hat back in the ring I had given very

lengthy consideration to whether I should, whether I would command the necessary numbers, and it goes without saying that it's a numbers game in this forum, but even if I were to command those numbers, was there the resolve of the Membership of this Legislative Assembly to turn their minds away from personalities, to turn their minds away from each of our individual potential conflicts of interest in various areas, and to turn our minds to the betterment and advancement of the community of Norfolk Island as a whole. At the end of the day I was very disappointed to have to tell myself that I could not command that type of support going forward which is absolutely critical to advancing our position in Norfolk Island. People have asked me why am I not outwardly disappointed. Why am I not outraged by this. Of course I'm annoyed. I'm annoyed that after the best part of 18 months in leading this Norfolk Island Government I find my abilities questioned, not questioned last week, but questioned on Monday of this week, I have never attempted to do anything other than try and be as open and honest as I can be with Members of the Legislative Assembly as I expect them to deal with me, so disappointment, anger, yes, I'm angry about it, but as I appealed to Members on Monday this isn't about Geoff Gardner, this isn't about David Buffett or John Brown or any other Member of the Legislative Assembly, this is about Norfolk Island and as I said on Monday I'm prepared to put aside any bias, any previous disagreement, any previous arguments to try and ensure that we are going to have a group that is forged as one, that is united in dealing with the issues that confront Norfolk Island. If we can do that then we can go a long way because I think in the last 150 years this community has been able to forge a united front when it's become necessary even though we might splinter in the years in between and fragment and fall about all over the place, but when the crisis really do occur and they really do turn up the heat, this community is amazing in its will and resolve to join together to – the words aren't right to say to fight the common enemy – but in order to ensure that there is a bright and prosperous future for Norfolk Island many have suffered the trials and tribulations of downturns in economies in the past and there will be many more of those in years to come, whether it's under the flag of Norfolk Island or whether it is under somebody else's flag, those things will occur and there is no way of avoiding them. The island has a very colourful history of the ups and downs of the economy of Norfolk Island. That said. It is absolutely imperative that there be a support for Norfolk Island to take its arguments ahead and a desperate need for the Membership of Legislative Assembly, each and every Member who sits around this table to voice their concerns, to voice their support for or disagreement with, whatever matters come on the table, and I implore Members to ensure that going forward from here on in they take absolutely every opportunity available to them to openly and freely debate all of the issues that come before this House in this forum so that our constituents, so that the public, so that the Commonwealth, so anybody who has a listening ear to what we are undertaking around this table very clearly receive the message that each individual Member of this Legislative Assembly wants to transmit, rather than just waiting for the vote to be called at the end of a motion or at the end of a lengthy debate on discussion of legislation that's before this House rather than to wait just to say purely yes or no, but to actually have an active input to put their views forward. It's so vitally important and unfortunately, I believe in successive Assembly's the quality of debate and input has been steadily declining and that needs to be reversed because it's very clear that this community and others desperately want to hear from each and every one of their elected representatives and not just the Chief Minister or not just the Speaker or not just a certain Minister but from every Member of the Legislative Assembly. On Monday I supported Mr Buffett in his desire to wish to form a new Government. As I said I was prepared to put aside a whole host of motions and a whole host of issues that I may have disagreed on in the past and issues with different personalities around the table to support whoever was asked to go away and form a Government in doing that job, and offered my full commitment to that Government in its endeavours in engaging with the Commonwealth in the best interests of Norfolk Island. I haven't ever relinquished my role. I simply did not put up my hand for the role going forward. And I think it's important to say that. Mr Buffett in considering the make up of his Government approached me and asked me if I wished to participate in that and even though I had said that I'd put aside all of my differences I just did not feel comfortable in participating in the formation

of a new Government but that said, I have given my commitment to ensuring that I will give it my full support to ensure that it does deliver the goods. In saying that I implore Members of the Legislative Assembly to give consideration to what I've said. Some may say well Geoff, you know that's the biggest load of garbage that I've ever heard but this is about Norfolk Island and I can't keep hammering that enough. This is about Norfolk Island. Minister Buffett has a difficult task ahead of him. The Ministry as proposed has a difficult task ahead of them. I can say that I had confidence in my executive team, that is, Mrs Jack, Mr Buffett and Mr Nobbs. That confidence unfortunately was not overwhelmingly supported by the Membership of the Legislative Assembly and the community as a whole and I can only say that I regret that situation but fully appreciate the views of the Membership of the Legislative Assembly and the community. I think it's fair to say that the outcome of today and the developments over the last week or so are fraught with all sorts of dangers. It has probably brought to head at probably a time that wasn't of the best design some of the instabilities that are within Government, within the way that we have been managing things, but probably appropriate that it needed to happen now rather than six weeks down the track when we were fully engaged in any discussion if that was obviously to be the time frame. The team will need the support of the Membership of the Legislative Assembly. The Membership of the Legislative Assembly hold in their hands the ability to demand the transparency and accountability in decision making of Government. It's always had that in its hands and it is the non executive Members who have a vital role in taking matters forward. It is the non executive Members who will need to question the direction of Government to ensure that it is in the best interests of Norfolk Island and if there is anything untoward, anything at all, it is incumbent upon the Members of this Legislative Assembly particularly the non executive Members of this Legislative Assembly to ensure that the Ministers responsible are brought to account. In winding up I think its very important to send a very clear message to the incoming Government that where I believe there will be support and as I've said, I will support this because it has to work, Minister Buffett and his team are on notice and that notice is perform, or perish because the hopes and aspirations of this community rest solidly and soundly in your hands and I will be watching closely. Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker

**MRS JACK** Mr Speaker the events of the last few days have left me somewhat gutted but through your I suppose standing down and the words that you have just spoken I too will offer my full support and hope the confidence shown in the incoming Ministers that they believe I can continue on with the job but it has been a hard, rough, week and the 24 hours in politics is nothing like the drag seven days can have. I think that's it. I appreciate your words and I'm sure the community appreciates your stance and your honesty in what you've just said. It is no easy task and I'll move on and continue to put Norfolk Island there in the picture. Thank you

**MRS BOUDAN** Mr Speaker whichever way the ball bounces we must get on with the job. We must make it work. Each Legislative Assembly Member contributes in ways that they believe is best for Norfolk Island and if we are to work together we will not succeed if we are about tearing each other apart and being judgemental one towards the other. If it is going to bring us closer together as a team, then that will be great. I believe the community whom we serve will let us know. They put us here. It will be up to them. I've witnessed the time work and energy that each one of our Ministers have put in on our behalf, and I commend them each once. Geoff I believe has excelled, I believe he had the perfect structure when he selected his team of Ministers. We need to remember that not all of us were prepared to take on board Ministerial responsibilities and in saying that I come to our Minister for Finance. Ron has worked and worked and worked. He has waited and waited and waited for alternative options while NSL sat on the table. He deserves better than this behind his back treatment. He has tried hard in putting forward his ideas for us to consider while waiting for us to come up with options. I certainly commend him for all that he has done. I had no trouble at all working with John Brown when he was Minister for Community Services. Vicky is tireless in putting her very best, heart and soul energies for Norfolk Island and

deserves full recognition in her environmental ministry. In my mind David has been impeccable as Speaker and had very good control of how things run. If I have in any way shown ingratitude or lack of support to my colleagues then I humbly apologise. Somewhere along the way we have dropped our bundle and have floundered and tripped along since. This is indeed the most difficult time that one could envisage for us and pressures from the Commonwealth will grow. I fear that this sudden change of Government could be seen as evidence that the island is not mature enough to maintain self Government at past levels. I feel that this will for certain go against us badly where the Commonwealth is concerned and I wonder if maybe we should defer any further action for six months say, and then see if there is a need for a new election. I'm sure the people will let us know. I just repeat. Whatever way the ball bounces, we must get on with the job. We must make it work

**SPEAKER** Thank you Mrs Boudan. The motion before us is that this House advises His Honour the Administrator to terminate the appointment of the following members to the executive offices respectively designated below: (a) Geoffrey Robert Gardner as Chief Minister; (b) Ronald Coane Nobbs as Minister for Finance; and (c) David Ernest Buffett as Minister for Community Services. The question before us is that the motion be agreed and I put that question to you

#### QUESTION PUT

**SPEAKER** Could the Clerk please call the House

MR BUFFETT	AYE
MR GARDNER	AYE
MR SHERIDAN	NO
MR NOBBS	NO
MR CHRISTIAN	AYE
MRS JACK	AYE
MR T BROWN	AYE
MRS BOUDAN	NO
MR BROWN	AYE

**SPEAKER** The result of voting Honourable Members, the Ayes six the Noes three, the motion is agreed

#### **APPOINTMENT TO EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF CHIEF MINISTER**

**MR CHRISTIAN** Thank you Mr Speaker, I move that David Ernest Buffett be chosen as Chief Minister and that His Honour the Administrator be advised accordingly

**MR T BROWN** Thank you Mr Speaker so long as this appointment and the others here today are all performance based and that those elected here today are prepared to communicate with the Commonwealth and are prepared to make the hard decisions which need to be made for the true welfare of the people of Norfolk Island I will support this motion. Thank you

**MR NOBBS** Mr Speaker I don't support this proposal Mr Speaker because I believe that you have done as best a job that was possible under the circumstances and I'm not licking your boots or kowtowing to you in any way. It's been an extremely difficult time, and not only for the community but also for the Ministry and the Legislative Assembly in general and I thought that you have done a good job and I'm disappointed that you withdrew from the race as I felt we should carry on as was as you know and I've spoken to you about it and go on with this and I commend you for your efforts. It's a really difficult job if you're fair dinkum about it. If you're not fair dinkum about it then I guess its fairly easy because you just run with the hare and hunt

with the other mob so as far as I'm concerned with this, you showed a lot of leadership in the process. You've had a term and a half as Chief Minister. We've had our differences but I think we were always able to sort them through and I would just like to commend you and I really cannot support us going back to Mr Buffett and once again I'm concerned at the way this issue was handled. Mr Speaker I wish you well in your endeavours in the future and I hope that for a young bloke that you don't give up because we need people of your age as I've told you before and you've got the experience now in the organisation and I would hope that you would stick to it. Thank you

MR SHERIDAN

Mr Speaker I will certainly not be supporting the motion to install Mr David Buffett to the Chief Ministership of Norfolk Island or for that matter none of his selection of Ministers. This man has so quickly stuck up his hand on Monday when yourself as Chief Minister had felt at the time that he had no option but to throw open the doors to all, has indicated that he is the person to lead Norfolk Island out of the turbulent waters that we now find ourselves in. I believe that on Monday he indicated he had no confidence in the Chief Minister and that he was more than capable of leading this Government into the future, being the one responsible to reverse our economic climate and restore confidence and rebuild tourism. He has Norfolk Island's best interests at heart and being the most capable person of this Membership to lead the quote "fight against the Commonwealth unquote. Mr Speaker for a person who must have the confidence of the Memberships of this whole forum to fully undertake the role ahead he has commenced this undertaking by not even having the courtesy to sit down with me for five minutes or even give me a phone call to explain his perceived ideas of how he will form a Government that will have the necessary qualities to lead Norfolk Island. He must believe that I have nothing to offer or what I have to offer does not fit his ideals. What he has offered us after consultation with the wider Membership, obviously I'm not part of the wider Membership in his eyes, is, in his own words, an alliance between the warring factions of this Membership in an attempt to appease all. An attempt to gain the total Memberships confidence for what can only be called self gratification. I could not give my confidence or support to a person who will not even talk to me. If Mr Buffett is the person to allay all of our fears I would like to know how after 27 years he has finally found the solution to all of Norfolk Island's ailments. Especially when he intends to remove the responsibilities for tourism away from eh Chief Minister's portfolio and into another Minister's area of responsibilities. For the past few months Mr Buffett has claimed that tourism is the foundation of what Norfolk Island must build its recovery and he here is passing the buck to another Minister. It must be getting crowded on top of the fence and one must watch out that one doesn't fall off Mr Buffett claims that he is the one to lead Norfolk Island in the fight against the Commonwealth. I thought that this Government was going to enter into determined discussions with the Commonwealth in an attempt to maintain and retain most of that we already have. If one was to enter discussions with a fight in mind I do not believe that the right outcome would be achieved. I believe that we would not even be sitting here today except for the underhandedness of a few who have been undermining, backstabbing and showing no support for this Government for some time now. Support that was required to enable this Government to fully undertake all of the tasks that are required of it to enable a proper function able Government. Lobbying from groups, individuals, even the Commonwealth to destabilise this Government coupled with the lack of support from its Membership has resulted in this debacle that we now find ourselves. I believe now that we have no option but to call a general election and I would be moving in that direction except for the lack of support from the wider Membership at this time. I won't waste anyone's time today, especially mine. I believe that the community are not as stupid or as self centred as some of this gathering and will soon let us know that enough is enough

MR BROWN

Mr Speaker point of order. To suggest that this gathering is stupid is a breach of Standing Orders and should be withdrawn

**SPEAKER** Mr Sheridan maybe if I could caution you in your choice of words through parts of the debate has ranged on personal reflections on Members of the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Assembly as a whole and I would ask if you could contain your words to the matter before us with entering into personal reflections on Members of the Legislative Assembly

**MR SHERIDAN** Mr Speaker I believe that the community are not silly as some may think and they'll soon let us know. If they think enough is enough they'll kick us out and if this motion succeeds today then we'll see their concerns later. I find this unbelievable that after the actions of the past few weeks we now find ourselves with a proposal to nominate – I'd better be careful here – a person who has been around for the total period of self Government. The 27 years or so and has been re-elected from one Legislative Assembly to the next, moved from one portfolio to another and now believes that he is the chosen one to lead us out of this disaster that we find ourselves in. I know that with time one gains experience but one must use that experience wisely and for the right reasons. I believe that this community deserves better than what is proposed and will demand better so it is with this in mind that I will not support the nomination

**MRS BOUDAN** Mr Speaker considering that you have relinquished your position as Chief Minister it is with regret that I have to accept that and we've got a job to do. We're a team here. We've been put here by the people and we must get on. We must move forward and in that light I can only see David to be the only one to be in that position and I will have to support the motion for him to go in as Chief Minister

**MRS JACK** Mr Speaker while listening to Mr Sheridan's heartfelt words one must also remind that it was a hat in the ring on Monday morning and we could have all put our hat in the ring to see if support or other Members' views lay with regard to taking up or seeking to be Chief Minister. Now Mr Sheridan had the opportunity at that time to take up the gauntlet and to run with it. I don't know how his numbers would have been but with all due respect to Mr Sheridan he missed a golden opportunity perhaps to take up that gauntlet and whilst he may be going on about views that he has over lengths of time, only one person put their hand up. Only one person came forward and even today no-one else has said, as has happened in the past, what about you, what about you, what about you and you yourself relinquished is Mrs Boudan's adjective, and are prepared to do various things in order that you feel is best for Norfolk Island. Now we may not agree with it but trying for a smoother transition one has to go with people who are prepared I suppose to put their hand up and they are able to form a Government. Now we may not all be 100% and there are still factions, but my God we've got to try and move forward and it is with that in mind, while I have my reservations, we all do, that we must try and start working once again as a team and moving forward. Thank you

**MR BROWN** Mr Speaker to use the words of a Senator to whom I spoke recently, I'm not renowned for my left wing views. Nor am I renowned for my support for Mr Buffett. He and I have been probably best described as foes over a long period of time but between us we have close to fifty years of experience in this place. Long ago I realised that it is necessary to provide leadership to the community and that it is necessary to have a sound reason for what's done and for that reason over the last 18 months people will have noticed that I've started to swing behind supporting Mr Buffett and that has been because I've believed that that has at the end of the day been in the best interests of Norfolk Island and I believe that that's the case today. Certainly I commend the outgoing Chief Minister for the dignified way in which he has handled these discussions. I commend him for ensuring that he kept in touch with the outgoing Minister for Finance and for ensuring that the outgoing Minister for Finance had the opportunity perhaps through the outgoing Chief Minister or whatever other fashion to comment on the way through the process but more importantly the outgoing Chief Minister insisted that today's meeting not take place without all nine of us being present

and having the opportunity to speak. Mr Sheridan made comment about the extent to which he had been consulted about some aspects of Mr Buffett's thinking. Then could I say to Mr Sheridan that in the hard world in which we all live, if we were in Australia or elsewhere it's most unlikely that the Labour Party would ring each and every Liberal and National Member before deciding on their incoming ministry. Because the fact of life is that sometimes people are known to be antagonistic at day one. There is nothing wrong with that. We do have freedom of speech here and that is a very important thing. Mr Sheridan is quite entitled to vote no to whatever he likes. He's quite entitled to speak against whatever he likes but the fact is, we all were told what was going on one way or another. Mr Sheridan might or might not have had calls from Mr Buffett but he certainly had discussions with others. I think what's proposed is the best course in a very difficult situation. I intend to support the new Speaker. I intend to support the proposed incoming ministry and I intend to encourage each of the Members of the Legislative Assembly to say whatever it is that they have to say at any time so that they can always be considered. Thank you

**SPEAKER** Thank you Mr Brown. Any further debate. The question before us is that David Ernest Buffett be chosen as Chief Minister and that His Honour the Administrator be advised accordingly. I put the question that the motion be agreed and I put that question to you

#### QUESTION PUT

Could the Clerk please call the House

MR BUFFETT	AYE
MR GARDNER	AYE
MR SHERIDAN	NO
MR NOBBS	NO
MR CHRISTIAN	AYE
MRS JACK	AYE
MR T BROWN	AYE
MRS BOUDAN	AYE
MR BROWN	AYE

**SPEAKER** The result of voting Honourable Members, the Ayes seven the Noes two. The ayes have it thank you that motion is agreed to

#### **APPOINTMENT TO EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF MINISTER FOR FINANCE**

**MR BUFFETT** Mr Speaker I move that Neville Charles Christian be chosen as Minister for Finance and that His Honour the Administrator be advised accordingly

**MR SHERIDAN** Mr Speaker just a quick word on this. I have indicated that I won't be supporting any of the nominations but I just will say that in another time and another place I would have supported this motion but today, unfortunately, no

**MR NOBBS** Mr Speaker Thank you. I'm of a similar mind. I've got nothing against Mr Christian personally otherwise and he's helped me a fair bit in my role here but under the circumstances I really can't support it I'm sorry to say Neville but that's the way it is and so I won't be voting in favour of it

**MRS BOUDAN** Mr Speaker under the circumstances I will not be supporting this motion thank you. It's just that we discussed this in the absence of our Minister for Finance and he has worked honestly and as hard as he possibly can. He's

turned himself inside out to do what he believes is the best for Norfolk Island and he deserves better than that and I won't be supporting this motion

MR BROWN Mr Speaker I would like to move an amendment and my amendment is that Lorraine Boudan be chosen as Minister for Finance and that His Honour the Administrator be advised accordingly

SPEAKER Thank you Mr Brown. Is there debate on the proposed amendment Honourable Members. Mrs Boudan do you accept nomination

MRS BOUDAN Mr Speaker no I won't accept nomination for that

MR BROWN That's a shame

SPEAKER Mr Brown are you happy to have that amendment withdrawn

MR BROWN Mr Speaker if the nomination is not accepted then obviously it must be withdrawn

MR T BROWN Thank you Mr Speaker I see this as a continuation of I believe the second day in which we were all down here when we had all basically decided that after approximately twelve months, Mr Nobbs would give way to Mr Christian to move into the finance position. It's now approximately 18 19 months now I believe so we are actually overdue for this move and as a result I'll be supporting it

MR BROWN Mr Speaker I would like to endorse those words. There is absolutely no doubt that, that was our agreement, that Mr Nobbs would fill the role for twelve months. He asked to be given the opportunity to hand down one budget that has occurred. It is time for the change which was agreed within days of the election of this Legislative Assembly and that's a change which I certainly support. I'm not wanting to suggest that one person did a bad job and another person did a good job. It's a change that we agreed on a long time ago and it's time has come

MR BUFFETT Mr Speaker I really wanted to confirm that Mr Christian's participation prospectively in the team is an important role. Certainly it is a component of the mix of which I referred to hopefully at not to much length but importantly spreading out the arrangements in which it is important to have various components from various parts of the community who have skills and are willing to put it towards our principle aim and Mr Christian has indicated his willingness to do that

MRS JACK Mr Speaker when this all started going pear shaped the other day I asked Mr Buffett where his lack of confidence was with the Minister for Finance because he went and supported the NSL as seven of us did at the time and I asked him where his lack of confidence lay and I would like him to tell us again where his lack of confidence lies, if he is able to. I understand and I agree with Tim Brown, we all sat around the table and we said in 12months, and Ron agreed with it, but what can be said in one time and move on, circumstances change and I'm just wondering where the lack of confidence is. I have troubles with this motion. I am very very caught up at this whole process at this stage. I appreciate everything that has gone on with Mr Nobbs and I certainly value and have found Mr Christian to be extremely practical and capable as well. I would just think that we need to find out further why here and why now, but I can see Mr John Brown signalling that we've moved beyond, of where has it all gone wrong and we are here to vote yes or no to Mr Neville Christian, and I'm just saying that I'm finding this an extremely hard call and right up until the vote is taken I'm just not sure which way to go

MR NOBBS Yes there was an agreement at an earlier time when we commenced in relation to Mr Christen and I working together and then he would if appropriate, take on the role, but when you are sitting off the island and you get the call, it's a little bit difficult, just a little bit different to the way that the transition I thought would actually go and as he had said to me, he was happy in the role as Speaker in the last couple of months, I was quite aghast at what happened. There have also been some major changes in the period that we've been in of course in the last four or five months with the Commonwealth and their particular activities or activities in one particular department, let's put it that way and their respective Minister because I don't accept that it's a whole of Government edict that was given to us by the Minister responsible. However there was some arrangements put in place within the Australian Government cabinet and we've sent the outcome of that as far as the Commonwealth Grants Commission and the Bureau of Statistics in looking at our actual financial feasibility and that's one of the key issues but there are a couple of other issues that have come out. The second one is the border control issue which I've said all along is a Furphy and it's not one that any particular politician would state but it has been brought up. We've got a very good border control, we have an excellent arrangement between the customs department and the quarantine organisations on Norfolk Island and also in the Commonwealth and also throughout the Pacific actually as far as customs and immigration are concerned, so the border control issues, and bearing in mind of course we have both the security arrangements in shipping and the aircraft which are cleared I guess you could say by the Australian authorities, it seems a real Furphy that any person could think that the issue of Norfolk Island that we are facing with the Commonwealth relates in any shape or form to border control. The third issue which we've seen is in relation to particular issues that have been brought up and they relate specifically to our governance and that's the third problem that we have at the present time. This exercise is showing the great difficulties we have in that area. Now to say that governance is not an issue, we should look at the Commonwealth Grants Commission, the initial report which said that we need ed to change in some areas. You should look at the Joint Standing Committee Reports which have been thrown at us and regurgitated, sections of it have been put before us, we've had misinformation put out even recently in the senate Finance committee and I've taken the opportunity to take the particular people to task in relation to those accusations which are completely false, and they've been dealt with as appropriate. The governance issues of course we've been informed by the Joint Standing Committee that within the governance of the island there is fear and intimidation, and standover tactics and those other issues which flow from that type of arrangement in any community, and I have asked.

MR BROWN Mr Speaker I'm uncertain as to whether Mr Nobbs is intending to suggest that there have been fear, intimidation and standover tactics within the Legislative Assembly but if that is his suggestion it is clearly a reflection of Members and should be withdrawn

SPEAKER Thank you Mr Brown. I haven't read it that way

MR NOBBS I haven't read it that way myself either Mr Speaker. I think it was fairly clearly put out that there was within the community some concerns in relation to that and my believe at the time when that report was brought out, that if you have these concerns, if the Commonwealth supports that type of accusation being made, well for goodness sake bring it out and get on with it and have a Royal Commission into those issues and clean it up once and for all because we really can't have accusations like that laying over our heads, it's very difficult to counter some claims that are being made by the Commonwealth or the Australian Government representatives in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Just getting back, they are the three points that we have to come to grips with. The financial side of it is extremely important. We know that the accusations that have been made that we don't accept the Acumen Report, that Minister within the Government that's still existing and I think will be superseded some time tomorrow, that Minister within there don't accept the

Acumen Report. That's a complete and utter fallacy, the report was in October last year, it was over a two week period and it spells out very clearly that we have a cash flow problem. Some of the suppositions and information that was provided in relation to roads and those sort of expenditure that's required and also in relation to the airline, were not accepted, or not accepted by me anyhow and I would say that the majority of the people who read it felt that there were some difficulties, but as far as where we were at that particular point in time we were facing difficulties and we have moved on from that and that is an area where I have been in discussions with various people and they are pleased obviously and there are people within the community, that we are moving beyond that point in time and we are progressing. It has to progress farther and whoever is the Minister for Finance from henceforth will have to make some really hard decisions, but he can make all the decisions he likes in the world, but if he aint got four other guys there who are prepared to put their hands up it is extremely difficulty and I can assure you that it is extremely frustrating and you have to hang on like a mongrel dog to a particular thing if you really want to achieve something of the island and I wish if Neville gets the nod, and I think he will by the numbers, I wish him well in his role because it's extremely difficult. It's not a part time job any more. It's a full time job. We are back to where the island was in 1995. as I explained, and I'll keep telling you, we are back to where we were in 1995, the number of tourists, the economy the whole lot. How do we get out of that. Open up the building industry, open up the tourism accommodation, we got an increase in numbers, we had a good guy I believe at the time in charge of tourist promotion, we got the numbers back up again. We went through a really buoyant period, all the advise of the 95/96 changes we needed to make were just ignored. The Commonwealth Grants Commission Report was ignored and that was the problem and now we have gone over the hump from the year 2000 through to a ditch again. We are back in the ditch and we've got to fight our way out of it, but we can't keep doing this. The island for 150 years has been in a series of peaks and troughs and we must get away from that. Tourism at the moment is one of the longest sustained periods of prosperity I guess in the island's history and it's gone far longer than the banana boom or all the other booms that have been on before but it has difficulty. Tourism has difficulties in being a primary industry and we must ensure and we must work to get other industries going within the community or other activities if you like, more stable financial returns to the island. I mean, we are surrounded, and people say oh there's oil and all this sort of thing, well that's fine, but we are surrounded by a huge area of ocean. It's quite incredible in that area, and yet we are importing fish. Why is that. We just need to get a little industry going in that area. I've suggested that we have a boat repair facility. I've suggested that. I've put it up because I've had advise on that because we need to vary it, even within the tourism operation, we need to vary the way we are doing things. We need to get on and look at – they've been talking about the more prosperous type of tourists. Nobody wants to cut out the everyday walk up people who come in here in busloads and what have you, this is in addition to it, and that's what we need to do. With what we have in the tourist industry, we have to add on. We have to get primary production more active and on it goes so there are a number of issues that we need to look at but I won't go into that now because I probably will be talking on it on the 21<sup>st</sup> June because I'll be looking down over the incoming Minister for Finance's budget for the period of the next financial year. I can't support it under the present arrangements and I'm like, as I said earlier, I'm like Mr Sheridan at other times, I've got no problem, but not now because we are just showing instability. Instability to the community, instability to the Commonwealth Government. They'll laugh at us. Thank you

MR BROWN

Mr Speaker there might not have been an appreciation by some Members that actually the position of Minister for Finance is vacant at the moment and we need to fill it. We need to appoint an appropriate to it in whom we are prepared to have confidence. A person has been selected by Mr buffet and that is Mr Christian. I'm prepared to respect and support that selection. Mr Nobbs has asked why are we importing fish. Well there are probably a few reasons for that. One is that it is probably cheaper. Another is that it's probably simpler. Another is, there's no economies of scale for a local fisherman. Another is the local fisherman who

does invest in a decent boat and who tries to earn a living from it, finds that he's got lots of other people who go fishing, catch a few fish, and get into the particular sales outlet and sell before him, so he has difficulty selling his fish. But probably the biggest thing is, there's no encouragement. If a fisherman tows his boat into a service station to fill up before he goes fishing, we charge him 20 cents per litre fuel levy, so if we are wanting to say, what are we going to do about encouraging fishermen, we can not charge him the Fuel Levy to start with, that would be one thing, we can get behind the concept of a harbour, because that might let him get out more often, we can sit down and talk to him and say how can we make your industry more viable. Now they are things that I think Mr Christian is quite capable of doing. Mr Christian is a person who has worked in the commercial sector for the whole of his working life and I think that we need the balance that a person of that experience can bring to the task and I certainly am quite happy to support him

SPEAKER  
I put the question

Any further debate Honourable Members. Then

#### QUESTION

Could the Clerk please call the House

MR BUFFETT	AYE
MR GARDNER	AYE
MR SHERIDAN	NO
MR NOBBS	NO
MR CHRISTIAN	AYE
MRS JACK	AYE
MR T BROWN	AYE
MRS BOUDAN	NO
MR BROWN	AYE

The result of voting Honourable Members, the Ayes six Noes three, the ayes have it, the motion is agreed to

#### **APPOINTMENT TO EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES**

MR T BROWN Thank you Mr Speaker I move that John Terence Brown be chosen as Minister for Community Services and that His Honour the Administrator be advised accordingly

MRS BOUDAN Mr Speaker I have difficulty with this in that we have previously removed Mr Brown, Mr John Brown from ministerial and on that may I suggest an amendment that as Neville Christian has indicated his willingness to take on a portfolio that he be invited to take that one up

SPEAKER Mrs Boudan maybe I could suggest that Mr Neville Christian has been allocated a portfolio as the Minister for Finance as a result of the previous motion

MRS BOUDAN Oh he has too. I beg your pardon

MRS JACK Mr Speaker Mr Brown did have a topsy turvy entry into this Legislative Assembly and I've had various people within the community concerned of this motion moving forward. I went and spoke to other Members. I must admit that I did not talk to Mr Tim Brown, I apologise there, regarding their availability or desire to take up a Ministry owing to the concern showed by Members of the community,

and all other Members declined on various basis so through lack of others willing to put their hand up and to take a position I will support Mr Brown. Thank you

MR BUFFETT Mr Speaker Mr Brown has undoubted skills. He's displayed them not only in this place but in other areas. When I made an opening statement about this situation and pointed to the diversity of views that relate to all of us, and without a doubt myself and Mr Brown are involved in that diversity of views, but what the overall aim is, is to include those who have diversity of views and skills so that their skills may be used for the benefit of the Norfolk Island community in the way that we must travel and I commend Mr Brown in that context and I have had discussions with him in a number of areas. It has been mentioned that he has been taken to task in his portfolio but it has also been mentioned that Ministers are in that position from time to time without a doubt. Mr Brown has moved through that and is offering in this case which I support, to work for the community so that his skills can be utilised and I commend his action in that and support this motion

MR T BROWN Thank you Mr Speaker my recollection may be a bit hazy but I believe the Privileges committee originally advised that a three month suspension for Mr Brown originally would have been appropriate penalty. He was dismissed at that time because it was considered that a three month absence of a Members was just too long. You could say that he has now served his three month suspension, because it is indeed three months since that happened and I suppose it is time to move on. I'll be supporting his appointment and especially considering that I was the moved who moved it I suppose. Thank you Mr Speaker

MR SHERIDAN Mr Speaker I had a couple of pages here to read out but at this point in time words just fail me. I won't be supporting this motion at all. Thank you

MR NOBBS Mr Speaker I won't be supporting the proposal whether it's for three months or six months or whatever it is, that we did vote the Minister out and that was the story so I have difficulty with Mr Brown's nomination because of a number of issues of course and I think we'll see them come out again and I will be very interested to see how it goes

SPEAKER Thank you Mr Nobbs. The question before us is that the motion be agreed and I put that question to you

#### QUESTION PUT

Could the Clerk please call the House

MR BUFFETT	AYE
MR GARDNER	AYE
MR SHERIDAN	NO
MR NOBBS	NO
MR CHRISTIAN	AYE
MRS JACK	AYE
MR T BROWN	NO
MRS BOUDAN	AYE
MR BROWN	AYE

SPEAKER The result of voting Honourable Members, the Ayes six the Noes three, the motion is agreed to. Congratulations Mr Brown and previously for the previous motion Mr Christian, congratulations on your appointment

**FIXING OF THE NEXT SITTING DATE**

That concludes the Notices of our paper today that we've had a special meeting for so I look now to Mrs Boudan for a motion in terms of our next sitting day

MRS BOUDAN Mr Speaker I move that the House at its rising adjourn until Wednesday 21 June 2006, at 10.00 am.

SPEAKER Thank you Mrs Boudan. Is there any debate.

MR BUFFETT If I may say something which means that it is the conclusion of this sitting. May I just say this, that the resolutions that we have made do erect a structure for moving forward with vigour and I do understand informally that there is an availability of the Administrator to respond to our recommendations tomorrow so there is the prospect that those may be tidied within that context. But I really want to foreshadow next Monday to make some announcements about how information may flow from here..

MR SHERIDAN Mr Speaker point of order. We are debating the next sitting or are we going into adjournment debate

SPEAKER Thank you Mr Sheridan. Mr Buffett, I would have thought this was probably more appropriate in adjournment debate. Do you propose in this context of this debate...

MR BUFFETT Mr Speaker I'm very happy to pause in what I'm saying Mr Speaker and allow that motion that is in front of us to quite properly be settled and I might take the opportunity in the adjournment debate

SPEAKER Thank you Mr Buffett. Is there any debate on the question that the House at its rising adjourn until Wednesday 21 June 2006, at 10.00 am. There being no debate I put the question is that the Motion be agreed to.

QUESTION PUT  
AGREED

The motion is agreed, we've fixed our next sitting day

**ADJOURNMENT**

MR SHERIDAN Thank you Mr Speaker I move that the House do now adjourn

SPEAKER Thank you Mr Sheridan. Is there any debate

MR BUFFETT Thank you Mr Speaker my apologies for interrupting. Maybe it was an inappropriate time earlier but I really wanted to foreshadow next Monday we would hope to make some announcements about how information flow both from the Legislative Assembly into the community on a range of issues but particularly about how things may progress with dialogue with the Commonwealth. At this stage a meeting with minister Jim Lloyd is proposed but not finalised for Friday of next week, that is the 9<sup>th</sup> June here in the island and detail may be available on how our information is to be conveyed to the Canberra scene and associated areas. Also for consideration and for conveying to the community we would want to speedily let people know about resourcing the support and presentation of our cause in a number of areas because these are presently being marshalled. They've been alluded to from time to time but the aim will be to try and marshal them in a concrete way and to advise the community as to how they stand from time to time and when that is collated, myself and

others will be able to talk to the community about it. I'm only mentioning this at this earlier stage to seek some communication flow in the context that we have earlier set up a structure for.

MR NOBBS

Mr Speaker I'm a bit stunned at this because its only a couple of weeks ago that Mr Buffett requested the Chief Minister to contact Mr Lloyd and suggest that he not attend Bounty Day which occurred, and now we're meeting him. This is quite a different context than the previous request that came from Mr Buffett to the Chief Minister and I was there at the time and I just can't believe it but anyhow..

MR CHRISTIAN

Thank you Mr Speaker, after attending to formalities this afternoon and bearing in mind that the next formal sitting of the House is still some weeks away I thought it important to inform the community about the way forward as I see it. I speak in the context of what the Chief Minister had said earlier today, or the Chief Minister in waiting because we haven't been sworn in yet, when he explained that his Government was an alliance of different factions if you like. With regard to dialogue between the Norfolk Island and Commonwealth Governments I offer the following. Discussion at officer level commenced some time ago and are ongoing. Ministers and MLA's are frequently in contact with Minister Lloyd's support staff. Professional lobbyists have been engaged in Australia to help Norfolk Island present its case and report back to the Norfolk Island Government any developments from within Canberra. The lobbyist that we have selected has access to all levels of Government, that is Commonwealth Government, including Cabinet Ministers. On the subject of Norfolk Island's financial sustainability I offer the following. The Norfolk Island Government is negotiating to obtain the services of a reputable firm of economists to prepare a report that is credible from a Commonwealth Government perspective. The purpose of this report will be to assess all of the information generated from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Commonwealth Grants Commission Reports and to identifying areas in which we are sustainable along with areas in which we are not sustainable and to make recommendations as to how we can fix any identified problem areas including the role which the Commonwealth should play in implementing any such fix. On the subject of rebuilding our tourism economy I offer the following comments. The Ozjet operation will be the backbone of our economy for at least the next twelve months. The airline operation has the ability to provide additional capacity if we can generate demand. To this end we must embark on a robust and productive marketing campaign to promote Norfolk Island. Representation to the Commonwealth Government by Mr John Brown should bear fruit with the Commonwealth indicating that they will make a substantial contribution to the marketing pool. If everything goes according to plan with contributions from the Norfolk Island and Commonwealth Governments along with a contribution from the airline service we should be able to muster approximately \$1.7m to promote Norfolk Island during 2006/07 financial year. I will also comment on 2006/07 revenue fund budget that was introduced to the House at our last sitting. Mr Speaker although the budget as presented is a balanced budget I believe the income projections could be overly optimistic. I say that because income from the NSL and Business Transaction Levy is projected to be in the vicinity of \$1.4m. this is a big ask for a tax with no historical background and one that is yet to be implemented. The NSL was designed to be reviewed in February next year and a final taxation rate set, however the income from the taxes and levies that the NSL was supposed to replace are still included in the proposed budget for the full financial year. Glitches are already starting to develop as businesses come to terms with the implementing of the NSL and a July 1 commencement may have to be pushed back and other options considered to fill the income void. The cost of salaries in the proposed revenue fund budget is another area of concern for me. In the 2005/06 financial year we will spend \$5,651,500 on wages and this figure includes savings from the implementation of spread of hours, and a reduction of overtime payments. Those savings total about \$250,000 but in my view they are not structural savings, but savings of payments that should never have been made in the first place. In the 2006/07 financial year we are proposing to spend \$5,678,900 on

salaries and wages. In an environment where our reserves are totally exhausted and every indication is that our traditional income producers such as customs duty etc will continue to decline, along with the problems that I have foreshadowed with the NSL, it is blatantly obvious that we cannot afford a wages and salary bill of this magnitude. It would be my intention to implement measures immediately that will yield savings of between \$400,000/500,000 on what the budget proposes to spend in the 2006/07 financial year. There are many options that can be employed to bring about the necessary outcome and some of these options are: firstly contracted employees who are not essential employees should be released from their employment contracts. Secondly, employees who retire should not be replaced, and thirdly leave without pay for non essential staff should be encouraged. Fourthly, temporary across the board reductions in working hours should be implemented. The foregoing list of options is not an exhaustive list but indicative of the sorts of things that I feel must be done. In closing might I just say that Minister Lloyd and his support staff will be on the island for Bounty Day. It is my intention to engage in dialogue with them before and after Bounty Day and to visit Canberra as part of a Norfolk Island Government delegation to promote Norfolk Island's cause sometime towards the end of June. It is also my intention to meet with Members of the Joint Standing Committee when they visit Norfolk Island later in this year. Thank you

SPEAKER Thank you Mr Christian. Is there any debate  
Honourable Members. There being no further debate I put the question that the House  
do now adjourn

QUESTION PUT  
AGREED

Therefore Honourable Members this House stands adjourned until Wednesday 21 June  
2006, at 10.00 am

