



**NORFOLK ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
11<sup>TH</sup> NILA HANSARD – 31 JANUARY 2007**

**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

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR MR CHRISTIAN MLA**

MRS JACK Mr Speaker seek leave for the sitting for the Minister for Finance the Hon Neville Christian who is currently off island and does not return until this weekend

SPEAKER: Honourable Members, is leave granted? Thank you.  
Leave is granted?

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

MR BROWN Thank you Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move the following motion that this House suspends so much of Standing Orders as may be required in order to deal only with Notice No 1 as set out on the Notice Paper today. Thank you

SPEAKER Is leave granted Honourable Members. Leave is granted Mr Brown thank you

MR NOBBS Mr Speaker is there a need to set the next sitting day

SPEAKER That will be as part of the process Mr Nobbs according to the Notice Paper. Debate. No debate. I put that question

QUESTION PUT  
AGREED

Thank you. That motion is agreed to. We there for move to Notice No 1

**REQUEST THAT HIS HONOUR THE ADMINISTRATOR CALL A GENERAL ELECTION**

MR GARDNER Mr Deputy Speaker the others have been in the Legislative Assembly for a number of years and they are all very much aware of the need to move such a question during the life of the term of a Legislative Assembly. The question usually arises every two to three years. Occasionally more frequently, and on occasion this question is grounded in criticism of performance of the government. Sometimes it's only raised to comply with the statutory requirements of legislation such as the need to hold a general election and on this occasion I'm moving the motion as I see this as an opportunity. The opportunity is firstly the breathing space that's been provided to us by the Commonwealth Government with their announcement on the 20<sup>th</sup> December in relation to changing of governance models in Norfolk Island. I think at the December sitting of the House, not just myself but other Members around the table, were very clear in their minds that it was only breathing space and if we didn't perform it was



I mean when I say each day that we don't deliver puts our sustainability at risk. Sustainability obviously means we generate enough money in our community for the well-being of us all in the community and at present we import our money through the principal industry of tourism. Yes we would like to diversify but to date it is the tourist industry. The tourist industry faltered after the peak year of 2003 so at that time, after less money was imported, businesses de lined, public revenue declined but still the bills had to be paid in both the private sector and the public sectors. In that climate many have needed, to draw on financial reserves. Financial reserves in the public sector and financial reserves in the private sector. And I think it can be said and has been said, that this can be sustained for a period but it can't be sustained for a long period, not in the private sector nor in the public sector and the answer comes back to what I mentioned a moment ago, it's the return to economic growth. And I said we've turned the corner but it requires daily attention to consolidate our position, otherwise it will fall away, and constant attention to really invigorate economic growth. Quite simply we've got to reinvigorate at a rate that is better than the depletion of our reserves in both the public sector and the private sector and it's why I said that every day counts. When we are faced with these sort of challenges, some may think that the answer is to have an election. Now such thinking isn't new because it's happened before. The going gets touch, let's have an election. Get rid of a couple of members and start again. Well it wasn't the key to success on earlier occasions and it isn't the key today. But the key point about all of this, that there isn't time to start again, because the clock's ticking, the money flow has got to be revitalized. You just can't abdicate this job because the goings touch and the pressures on and you don't like some of the players and you don't approve of some of the practices. An election won't speed the process to deliver the essential things to be done. Quite the reverse will happen and the reverse is that we will lose momentum. If you decide today to go to the polls, energies will immediately be directed to the electoral process. The electoral process will take something like six weeks, two months and then another month or so for the newly elected group to hit the ground and pick up the reigns. What I'm saying is that we really can't afford at this particular point to lose two or three months. Every day lost puts our sustainability at risk. We've got to consolidate our position to move forward. We have said to, and convinced, the Australian Government that we can manage our own affairs and maintain our sustainability and let's remind everyone that, that was no mean feat. What a pity that we should contemplate a course to prove them right. For this Legislative Assembly to throw in the towel, well before the bell, to withdraw at the very time when we should advance, I've got to say that I think is misguided. Failing ourselves is one thing, though I'm not anxious to do that I've got to say, but failing the community is another much more severe stuff. Really, if we hadn't the substance to face the hard yards which are faced with at this moment, and to stay the distance and to labour to deliver, then really we shouldn't have stood for election at the first place but all that as it may, the fact remains now that we are here and that means that the responsibility is ours. Let me be blunt and say that if you can't tackle our present challenges, there's really no way you can offer yourself for re-election to fix problems that you've just walked away from. This proposal for a general election isn't timely. We do need to have one as time moves. Indeed we do, but it is not timely and I encourage Members to stick to the tasks they were elected to do. Energy and time and resources are vitally needed to consolidate and deliver promised products to the community and our survival depends on it. Let me say that again. Our survival depends upon it. Energy, time and resources shouldn't be diverted at this time and it's on that basis, Mr Deputy Speaker that I can't support this motion that's in front of us today

MR CHRISTIAN

Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, like Mr Buffet I can't support the motion that's before us today and I would just like to make a view observations. I think it's fair to say that never in the history of self Government has a group of elected representatives ever been faced with so much of Murphy's Law. We've had everything that could go wrong, go wrong and had it thrown at us. By and large we've met the challenges and I would just like to reflect a moment on the contributions that each Member that this Legislative Assembly consists of, has made. If we look at you Mr Deputy Speaker, and you are probably one of the future leaders of the community, you're

new to the game, you've acted as Deputy Speaker, you've performed well in that role and you are a person of few words. You get to the point. There's no ambiguity, it's a yes or a no, end of story. They are attributes that I think are valuable ones and have in fact been valuable to the workings of this Legislative Assembly. If we look at Mr Brown over here, Mr John Brown, there can be no doubt that in his areas of responsibility his knowledge of tourism is unequalled, there can be no doubt about that, I continually get comment from within the community that when he is in charge of the hospital, the hospital never runs better, that when he is in charge of the hospital it is run in a very cost effective manner and any excess is quickly trimmed out. If we look at the area of immigration, it is beyond doubt that he is without equal when it comes to matters of an immigration nature so Mr John Brown has made a significant contribution to the workings of this Legislative Assembly and that contribution has been of great benefit to the community. If we come around the table a bit and we look at Mrs Lorraine Boudan, Lorraine is new to the Legislative Assembly process. I'm sure she's found it a little bit daunting at times and certainly probably a little bit different to what most people outside contemplate what being an Assembly Member would be like. But Lorraine has been the conscience of this Legislative Assembly. She is probably the least battle hardened if you like, of anybody here, and the one that responds most to the requests for care from the community so she delivers if you like, the caring side of this Legislative Assembly and likewise that's an important contribution. There has to be a human side to any organisation. If we look at Vicky Jack, Vicky has a wealth of experience now in the environment and planning area. She is effective and puts in a helluva lot of work and doesn't suffer fools gladly. She also has developed a tremendous working relationship with her counterparts in the Commonwealth side, she's been very successful in obtaining significant amounts of funding from the Commonwealth for use for environmental purposes in Norfolk Island and it would be a shame to see that capability denied to the community. If we look at myself, I'm a bit like Tim Brown. I shy away from the publicity side of being an MLA. I tend to be head down, backside up beetling away doing something, I get bored very easily if I'm not doing something that's productive. Likewise, I don't like getting into long winded spiels, so if somebody requires a decision from me, it's quickly made, yes or no, black and white, end of story. I think I also bring a fair amount of benefit to the Legislative Assembly in respect of my engineering knowledge and the experience that I've gathered through the finance process from being a previous Member of this Legislative Assembly so I think I bring some skills to the Legislative Assembly that have been of benefit to the community. Now we look at Mr Nobbs on my left here. There can be no doubt that no Finance Minister in the history of Norfolk Island has ever before inherited a public purse that was in such bad shape. He struggled for the first couple of years, there's no doubt about that, and the struggles continued under my stewardship, but we are making headway. Mr Nobbs took the bit between his teeth and he ran with some unpopular decisions. If we turn back the clock a bit and cast our minds back, he had the bravery I suppose to get going with our taxation reforms. He commenced that process and I'm carrying the process on. If we look at mobile phones, it was obvious to Blind Freddy that we had to move into mobile telephony, irrespective of what previous referenda had determined because revenue from conventional telephony was failing rapidly. Mr Nobbs rose to the challenge and commenced the process and we should hopefully see our mobile phones working in the next month or so. So once again Mr Nobbs has made a tremendous contribution to this Legislative Assembly and therefore a tremendous contribution to the well being of the community. If we go further around the table and we look at Mr Sheridan, once again Tim Sheridan is a new Member to the Legislative Assembly and he brings to the Assembly significant management skills that he learnt in the Royal Australian Navy. He also brings to the Legislative Assembly significant business skills that he has acquired in managing various commercial operations here in the island and I've got to say that he has a very sharp financial mind as well. If there was anybody who could replace myself as Minister for Finance I would suggest that Tim Sheridan be the man. He's definitely got the capabilities. He also has one other extraordinary capability. I've never met anybody in all my time of being an MLA who can pick up mistakes, errors or unclear meanings in legislation. He's truly incredible there and that in itself is a valuable asset that he possesses, or the Legislative Assembly possesses in him and

therefore the community possesses, so Tim has made a significant contribution to this Legislative Assembly. And then we come around the table to Geoff Gardner, and there can be no doubt that when Geoff was Chief Minister he did a sterling job. I don't think there would be too many people in the community that would be aware of the hard work that Geoff put in when Norfolk jet went out of business. He single handedly took on the task of finding a new airline, he bought in other Members of the Legislative Assembly to assist him as required, but Geoff was the one who spent the hours down here from six in the morning until midnight at night, seven days a week, getting air services re-established to Norfolk Island so he's put in a sterling performance, a valuable asset once again, to this Legislative Assembly and this community and I don't think we should deprive ourselves of that asset at this time. Then we come around to the last Member of this Legislative Assembly and that is the current Chief Minister David Buffett. There can be no doubt that he is the elder statesman of politics in Norfolk Island. He has been elected to every Legislative Assembly that we have had, the community sees him as probably the best public speaker that we've had, he is able to connect with the community and once again, that is a valuable asset that this Legislative Assembly has and therefore the community has. Mr Deputy Speaker I've given a run down there on the contribution of each Member as I see it, and I think we've got a team that's as good as any at the moment. If we were to go to an early election, I see more risk than benefit at this stage, and I will come to those risks in a moment but one of the peculiar things in Norfolk Island if we look at it, in historical terms, if we toss ourselves out today, chances are that five or six of us will be coming back after the next election, and if we have personality problems, or things like that, they will continue. They won't go away and they never will go away so we have to learn to live with them, overcome them, work with each other and get on with the job. Now if we turn to the wider issues Geoff in his debate has said that he sees it as a time of opportunity and I see it in the other light. I see it as an opportunity fraught with risk and danger and I will just highlight some of the areas of difficulty that I see. First of we have to rebuild our economy. It has to keep going. Tourism is the principle driver there at the moment. We know we have to get back to somewhere close to 40,000 people. We've given ourselves a time frame to achieve that somewhere in the next two years. My view is that we need to actually wrap that up, and speed the process up. We don't have the two years to wait and we can't afford the three months delay in the process that having a general election at this time, would cost. Geoff has made mention that it would be nice to have an election some time towards the end of March so that the incoming Legislative Assembly can get on with the budgeting process and have their own budget in place and there are pros and cons for that. I remember when I first came into public office I wanted to serve an apprenticeship on the backbench. It was one of those years when the community decided to have a bit of a clean sweep and it think only three of the existing Members got re-elected and the Legislative Assembly ended up with six new Members. Almost all of them ended up being executives, none had any prior experience, so it was a helluva steep learning curve to go through and that's not something that we should be springing, or a possibility that we should be springing on an incoming Legislative Assembly. I think that if we take a view that people who offer themselves for Legislative Assembly generally have some knowledge of the workings down here that they should be able to come to terms with a budget hat's already in place, if you take into account that all a budget does in real terms is authorise expenditure. It doesn't tell you how much money you can earn. It just tells you how much you can spend. If you don't have it, you can't spend it no matter what number is on the budget. If we are to go to an election, at this stage I would prefer the election to be held at a given date decided by us today, sometime in July of this year and I say that because the outgoing Legislative Assembly would have the ability to pass an interim appropriation bill to guarantee supply for two or three months, and that would allow the new Legislative Assembly to come in, pick up the pieces, formulate a new budget and move forward and I've picked the July date because if we want an election, let's not just tell the Administrator to call one at the earliest convenient time, pick a date and then work backwards from that date. I say that the election should be, if there is to be one, in the new financial year, and that allow this Legislative Assembly to continue the work in the financial restructuring and so on up to the end of the financial year and that meets some of the time lines in the documents that

the Chief Minister is about to circulate to the wider Membership. Now having said that, it's not my preferred course of action, but if we are to have a change, then the change should be in an orderly process in that sort of time frame. Mr Gardner has gone on and spoken about the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer and once again I see more risk, than benefit. If we look back at previous situations where an outgoing Legislative Assembly has appointed a Chief Executive Officer and that Chief Executive Officer has taken the job with a clear set of guidelines and expectations given to her or him at the time they take the job. We have an election, either during or shortly after the appointment of the new Chief Executive Officer and the incoming Legislative Assembly has a totally different agenda. You then end up with a Chief Executive Officer at the head of the public service, the incoming Legislative Assembly and executive Government potentially at loggerheads. That is not a situation that we should pace ourselves in, therefore, it's crucial that the new Chief Executive Officer take up the position in March and have at least some period with the people that appoint them, to work with. If we look at the reform of our taxation system, once again, the opportunity that Geoff speaks about I see as fraught with risk. We have made terrific strides in the reform of our taxation system. We've spoken about it. A broad base consumption tax. I was thinking about it last night actually. It's sixteen or seventeen years from the day I first suggested a broad base consumption tax to the time that we possibly are about to implement one. We can't have another hiccup in the processes of reform if we end up with a Government or an Legislative Assembly that is not prepared to completely the implementation of something that's part finished so I see this Legislative Assembly before they leave office, they have to have the system bedded down, and has to have it working and working with as many bugs as possible ironed out. I certainly don't feel comfortable vacating the chair today or leaving unfinished business to somebody else to try and pick up the pieces and complete it. It's a totally unfair situation to place someone in. If I come to the last point, and that is, commitments that we have made to the Commonwealth. Mr Gardner is quite right, the c4 has given us some breathing space and what bought us that breathing space is an undertaking given by this Legislative Assembly that we will do certain things and there is a timeline to those certain things. They've got to be done. They cannot become political footballs. We can't have an election based on what we are going to do with the Commonwealth or what we are not going to do with the Commonwealth because the Commonwealth has demonstrated to us that they really have run out of patience. You cannot dilly dally any longer. So once again, we have made commitments to the Commonwealth and I think Norfolk Island should get on with the job of governing Norfolk Island and once again, I won't say too much more at this stage, but I cannot support the motion as it is

MRS JACK

Mr Deputy Speaker I'll just go over some of the events of the last year I guess but early last year with the announcement by Minister Lloyd that Norfolk Island's governance arrangements would be reviewed, there was a push by some within this Legislative Assembly to go to an early election. The reason for that would be that people who stood as candidates would stand basically for one of the two outcomes, that is, the maintenance of the a status quo or integration within the Australian system. I was not in favour of going to an election then, as I thought we had a team who could deliver a favourable outcome to Norfolk Island and we had been voted in by the electorate to do a job and to get on and do it. Mind you, having said that, none of us knew that governance matters would come to the fore and they were never discussed as part of any real electioneering platform. Also it's obvious that we didn't go to the polls but time moved on and a few months later for want of a better phrase, a coup d'etat almost took place and there were various reasons stated in the house as to why the participants thought the move was necessary. The main one being that a change at the top the island would have a better chance at having a better outcome for Norfolk Island and whether you agree with what happened or not, the outcome was delivered on December 20<sup>th</sup>, and was better than any of us hoped for, but those days to me were just hellish. So now we come to the present. We have a team that together with great advisors has achieved an outcome that I did not imagine possible. And as Mr Neville Christian said, we should now be consolidating and really pushing forward but here we are today discussing and early

election. I must state that there are a couple of reasons why I favour the motion. One is and I agree with Mr Gardner here, the timing of the new Chief Executive Officer. The second is somewhat from the workings within this group and I put it down to the forward dynamics of this group. In discussing my problems or my concerns with one Member, that Member suggested to me, well what about changing leaders again. And Mr Deputy Speaker that was not an option that I would consider. Because my concern is with the lack of cohesion within this Legislative Assembly. To me there is a need for all Members to pull together to work for the betterment of Norfolk Island, an ongoing united front. And it was strange but on Saturday, a Members of the community raised this very issue with me and he likened, the analogy he gave was that we were like nine separate icebergs floating around the pacific and that every now and again would come together in various formations on different issues and while it all looks good on the surface was I aware that the danger of icebergs was that two thirds of them was under water and it was what you couldn't see that was a danger to shipping and he didn't want Norfolk to be another Titanic so, that's a very sad state of perception from outside to the machinations within the Legislative Assembly and its something that was already troubling me and wanted to just mention. Mr Deputy Speaker a year after a major crossroads event we are faced with another and I believe this moment is an opportunity and not an obstacle and really, it should have been addressed in the December meeting. There have been two Governments within this one Assembly and both have maintained the push for the NSL the GST or whatever you want to call it. The community is well aware that if they want the services then there are costs associated in providing them and that depending on the levels sought, the costs will rise or fall. I do not believe that the process of the GST implementation is in danger, of being scuttled if we go to an early election. I believe that the Government will keep on operating as others have done in the past, that we wouldn't just go into a caretaker mode as has been possibly muted. Just let me say that whatever the outcome of this motion today with regards to my own portfolio, that I will continue to work in co operation with the Administration and the community and continue to give benefit to all of Norfolk Island's community. Thank you

MR CHRISTIAN

Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, whilst I disagree with some of Vicky's sentiments it's her right to express that view but what I need to bring to the Members attention is a potential flaw in Mrs Jack's thinking. Mrs Jack has said that the GST will survive a change of Government and an implementation will occur. And that may well be but there is one variable in all of that equation which could be stumbling block. Parliamentary convention in the Westminster system is that once an election has been called the executives go into caretaker mode. That basically means that you make no significant decisions. Now Mr Jack has appointed out and Mr Gardner pointed this out yesterday, that the last three or four Assembly's in Norfolk Island have not taken that view and the executives have continued to make significant decisions up until the day they were replaced. That's fine if you don't have to call on the Commonwealth for anything. But the Commonwealth of Australia certainly abides by the principle that once you call an election you go into caretaker mode. And no significant decisions are taken so the risk that we run here, is that when I bring the GST legislation to the House for consideration by this House on the 14<sup>th</sup> February this year, and we have a subsequent meeting and pass that legislation or do away with it, whatever, but assuming that we did pass it, which is completely legitimate I might add, we then need the Commonwealth to assent to it and the Commonwealth may well withhold that assent because they are going to wait until after the next election before they make any significant decisions so we could be put into the wilderness, not only by our own making, but also because of parliamentary convention within the Australian sphere and that again, is something that we can't tolerate, and nor should we be running the risk of that occurring. Thank you

MR NOBBS

Mr Deputy Speaker I would just like to comment on what Mr Christian just said in his last speech there. In the first one I thank him for his kind words and all that, but that's the way it goes. On this point about the Commonwealth's needing to seek assent on the NSL I thought that the proposed legislation would be done by the same method as was done with the NSL and that was to provide that the funds for

that would be utilised for various things within the Administration which the Norfolk Island Government had control of at the time and I would have thought that that would be the way that we would be dealing with this sort of legislation if it was felt that the Commonwealth may not assent to the cause so I don't think that really is a problem. However, I'll just get on to what I wish to say anyhow. I've always support calls for an election. I'm not afeared, and have never been afeared of going to the community on an election issue. I've done that as a back bencher and also I support the motion by the Speaker and it makes me wonder a bit on the issues, because I've always felt that our average is I think about two years and three months for an Assembly's life and that's about what we are at, at the present time. We from time to time we've hobbled for the three years, I think maybe once or twice in the time that I've been here, but the last six months have been really a hobbled horse and not a lot has happened in that period. I don't say it will happen in this period but historically I'm just saying that. I was wondering if we should not look at a fixed term election of two years and I would have thought that March would be an ideal opportunity and I've said this in the house before and I'll say it again, sorry about that, but March would be a good time to go to the election. It allows the incoming Legislative Assembly three and a half months to set up a budget and they would have two years of budget development and Administration virtually before the next election. I still believe that would probably be the way to go, and if there are difficulties within that two year period there would be the opportunity then to call from either the community or in a motion from the Legislative Assembly to call for a further election. I don't agree that we can't afford to lose two to three months. Mr Christian has said that July would be the time to set the date, the Speaker has said we've got about six months to go which would be about July anyhow, so I mean we're going to lose two or three months somewhere along the line, and will it make a difference at either time. I don't think it will make any difference at all. I would suggest to you now, that we have real difficulties with our economy, it continues to be based on tourism that we've operated under in the past, I think there's a time that we must look at reinventing, has been the word used by some, reinventing tourism on the island here, and bring it out of what we've been doing for some considerable time, I think there's a need to look very strongly at expanding the economic activity on, as I said before, and I said at the last meeting, that it's most important that we look at the area around us, and that's the sea. I don't agree with a huge port infrastructure here of millions and millions of dollars. I think we can start off very slowly, quietly and put in facilities which would service little industries and then expand that if that is necessary. Those are my views on it. If you've been confused a bit with what the Minister for Finance has said about a harbour facility and a fairly large facility to be put in place. My views are that we don't go to that extent but I won't get into that here because that's not what we are here for. As far as the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer is concerned, I understand from the discussions that we had that the initial three months of the Chief Executive Officer would be the development of a plan proposal and therefore that plan, if it was July the election, that plan if that person is, as I understand it, and I'm not too sure whether any contracts have been signed or what's been going on, but I understand that March is the date. I don't know what time in March but anyhow, that three months would put it well into June so we'd have a plan developed and then a new Legislative Assembly coming in, I think it could be quite catastrophic. I had suggested at the present time, although I haven't seen the figures since those for November, I would suggest that there is a possibility, I get the feeling that our position is in fact worse than it was twelve months ago, before the Commonwealth actually came in. I don't think it's uncontrollable, don't get me wrong. If it is, or even if it is equal to what it was this time last year, but I think that any incoming Legislative Assembly will need to look and need to be well aware of the facts that things are still not going that good and that we need to look at the financial situation of the island as the primary, and I say primary, we can talk about healthcare and all those sorts of things and duu guud f' Norfolk and all the things that go on at an election but the primary focus will have to be on the financial aspects of the island's economy and also the Administration itself. The retention of jobs is most important, and therefore possibly a need for a review of Immigration, that's a retention of jobs for local people on the island here and also the need as I said, for some review of the immigration arrangements. Like the Commonwealth issue, I was under the

impression that the Department of Territories or DOPTARS or whatever they call themselves, and their Minister were the prime drivers of the programme to I forget what the word they used now, but to bring Norfolk Island into the Commonwealth of Australia's net, normalize, that's the word, normalize, I just forgot, to normalize Norfolk Island. Well I'm pleased I'm abnormal I can tell you because you have things here which a large percentage of the population of Australia would dearly love to have. We have got our problems and we always probably will, we've had them for years, I mean this financial problem as I go back as a kid, it was on then, and it's been on for a while and we have to learn to live within our means and be prepared to make some changes. That's what we have to do and I think the incoming Legislative Assembly will have the opportunity to do precisely that. The commitments to the Commonwealth I don't

know what commitments we've made because I read in the paper the other day that we were going to become like Canberra or the Act and I think that as part of the ten point plan, but that ten point plan is a complete and utter fallback arrangement and it's not really what we were looking for. The outcome was, as Mrs Jack said, was one which was good for the island, I think it's something that we have to live up to, I think we've got the capabilities of doing it, and without boring you too far on this Commonwealth business, I was very pleased to hear of the support that the island received within the Cabinet which apparently led to the decision that was taken but that doesn't mean that you can rest on your laurels and I think that we need to anew and reinvigorated Legislative Assembly if you like it that way, to push this issue further. I've had grave doubts in the operation of the Government at the present time. In fact, for the last two months I have had a feeling that things are not going the way it should be and that I should not be here. Now a lot of people would say, yes, well good job, and that's fine, but I would find it difficult to continue the way that things are going. There are people complaining to me at length and I respect their views about what's happening down here, the mushroom syndrome, the whole lot, looking after themselves, all these issues which are being brought out and I believe that it's an opportunity now for the community to say we've got a space now, the Commonwealth we believe will give us a go and I believe they will although there will be some pressure from DoTARS as has happened every year since I've been in this Legislative Assembly and I believe it's an opportunity for the community to say now, who they want in the Legislative Assembly and how they want the island run. But it's paramount on all those who are standing to put up a reasonable policy. It's no good saying I'm going to duu guud f' Norfolk and all this sort of stuff. They need to put up policies and I think they need to be accountable to them and I support the motion, I don't think there's anything to fear from it. I don't think there'll be any problems with the actual timing of it, and let the people have their say. Thank you

MR CHRISTIAN

Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. Mr Nobbs in his contribution to the debate there was a little bit critical of my vision for a port. I thought that whilst it wasn't relevant to the subject before us, I needed to respond to defend my integrity. Mr Deputy Speaker Mr Nobbs went on to say that we had to boost our economy. Look for alternative industries. Bring more money into the island. Well the vision that I had outlined with my port statement was designed to do that, and I'll give you some examples. If we look at what makes the economy in Norfolk Island tick, we have a couple of jetties at the moment which enables us to bring goods to the island and we have an airport which allows us to bring visitors to the island using jet aircraft. In Mr Nobbs' vision for the future he is saying that we need a small facility. Well lets look at small in its true context. We have small jetties now. Which are totally unsuitable and if they hadn't been built by the royal Engineers of the British Military a couple of hundred years ago, we wouldn't have anything. Let's look at the airport. If it wasn't for the second world war we wouldn't have an airport and we probably wouldn't have any tourism industry and if Mr Nobbs wanted a small airport, like he wanted a small port, we would end up with ten seat aircraft, flying into grass airstrips and we would have no economy. The port that I envisage is one that handles typical vessels that ply the Pacific today and I'll give you one example of the benefits that see in that. One particular shipping line that traverses the Pacific, ends up at the end of its journey in American Samoa. It does a milk run basically along a number of small Pacific Island nations. Because the bulk of the cargo they carry

is food, frozen food, they end up at each port, having to lift empty freezer containers, or reefer containers is the industry word, back on board, proceed to the next port, drop them off, unload the empty ones, unload the cargo for that destination, put the empty ones back on board and proceed for the next port and so on. So the shipping company got smart because they got sick of carrying empty containers and getting no revenue from it, so what they did in each one of these little Pacific island nations is encourage the locals to catch fish, skipjack tuna mainly. So they now are at a stage where each month, when the ship does its rounds, it carries seventeen containers of skipjack tuna, to the cannery in American Samoa so if you assume that there are twenty tonnes of fish in each container there's something like 340 tonnes of fish every five weeks being delivered to the cannery in American Samoa and you think, well what's the magic in American Samoa. Well by the cannery in American Samoa buying the product, it gains that fish automatic right of entry into mainland USA tariff free, which is the largest consumer of tuna in the world and they like canned tuna, not the Japanese style tuna. If we looked at that situation in Norfolk Island where we could develop a small fishing fleet and we could send that 340 kilos of fish per month to the cannery in American Samoa using the ships that are passing us every day of the week, we might be able to put at \$1 per kilo or whatever, a minimum of \$340,000 per month into Norfolk Island. Now you tell me is it sensible to throw away the potential of one industry delivering in gross terms, \$4m per year into Norfolk Island. Anybody who doesn't support that sort of visionary outlook is stupid and that's why I thought I had to defend my integrity. If you want to look at potential alternative industries, it's no secret that the Pacific region that we sit in will be the next major oil field in the world. Norfolk Island can have a port facility and be part of the support for that industry if it wants to. If it chooses not to, well then it shouldn't crybaby in twenty or thirty or forty or fifty years time and say, Jesus, it would have been good if we had it. So we need to think big, and we need to look ahead. Not one or two years ahead as Mr Nobbs is saying, a two year term, I couldn't think of anything more ridiculous. Nothing would happen. You need at least a four year term if you are going to a fixed term and that's similar to what the government's have in New South Wales but you have to look at the big picture and you have to look at the future because if you continue to look inwards at yourself and being full of self criticism we will go nowhere. Mr Nobbs has justified today that we should have a general election because people have been complaining to him. Well I've had people complain to me that he can't string two sentences together. Do I come down here and call for a general election because Mr Nobbs isn't the best public speaker in the Legislative Assembly. Of course I don't accommodate him and I work with him and that's what we should all be doing

**MRS BOUDAN** Mr Deputy Speaker in giving full consideration to an incoming new Legislative Assembly I believe that this side of the current financial year would be a better time than towards October where budget timing is concerned. We have the new NSL in place and we have a new Chief Executive Officer coming in and it's been a tough turbulent time and I know that each one of us has contributed to the best of our ability. There's a lot to take into consideration and I keep returning to my reason of giving full consideration to a new Legislative Assembly and believe that the timing is in fact right. A new three year term would be advantageous even to this Legislative Assembly. I don't believe we would be throwing in the towel at all by supporting this motion. Thank you

**MR SHERIDAN** Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker it's been quite interesting listening to the last speakers down here this morning but listening to them all, they all seem to have a common thread amongst them. They seem to be hung on the timing, financial position, the ability to complete tasks that have been commenced and personalities. If I could just touch on those for a couple of minutes. Timing, when is a good time to go to an election. I don't suppose any time is really. One month, to the next month, to the next month. We can put up an argument for either case. It's too early, it's before budget time, or we've gone over budget time, do we leave a new Legislative Assembly with what we've brought in so timing to me is irrelevant. Just talking on the financial side, advising the timing, when we are talking about budgets, the budget in the main is done by the officers of the Administration. So whether we have it in March, April,

July or September or October the budgetary process will very nearly be the same, no matter what month, it's just we're the people at the end of the day who sign off on it. Again finances. Over the past couple of years of this Legislative Assembly our income has reduced and of course that's been in the main, due to a shrinking economy. We've tried very hard to accommodate that, and we've tried very hard to fix it, but it has been shrinking and if you look at our total finances for the last couple of years I think it's shrunk by a couple of million dollars over that period. Again, our expenditure. Instead of our expenditure shrinking with our income, it's actually been going up over the last couple of years, and this is where I see one of our main jobs on this Assembly's is to put a stay on expenditure. We have tried very hard in the last twelve months, I think in the last financial year, we did save approximately just under a million dollars in salaries, overtime, we brought in the spread of hours and we made a huge saving there, but in the main our savings have been in not spending monies on capital works. We've cut out all capital expenditure in the main. There's a few things that have gone ahead but in the main we've tried to balance the books by not investing in our future economy in Norfolk Island, in our infrastructure. So I see that as a huge problem and I believe that we need a change to get new minds down here. I think somebody was talking about reinvigorating the community. It's been argued that we need to stay here so that we can finish the job. We've had over two years now trying to reinvigorate the community. I see that by having a new election, new faces, that in itself may reinvigorate the community. It may very well do that. New faces, new ideas, trying to get the economy going. The ability to complete the tasks commenced, I suppose the main one would be our new taxation system that we've attempted to get in. I know that Ronnie started it when he was there, it was talked about eighteen months ago, two years ago. We've progressed it, we've had a trial period and it was due to commence on the first of January. Unfortunately things didn't happen and now it's back to the first of March. Whether we meet the first of March deadline is yet to be seen but I see this as a criticism of this Legislative Assembly that we have not met our deadlines and in trying to reinvigorate the community, in trying to get our economy back up to scratch, we have to meet these deadlines and we haven't been able to meet them. We budget for these deadlines to be met and of course they go right by a month, six months, a year and of course we find ourselves in a big hole which leaves me with personalities of the Members down here. There is a vast and different array of personalities down here and of course that's what you need to have a serious debate within a quorum like this, but I see that the personalities that have come to the fore to such a degree now that the abilities of this forum to work collectively together for the benefit of Norfolk Island have gone past the point where we can work together professionally and come to a good outcome. I believe that the personalities here are now, and mine might not be one of them, I will put that on record here that I never supported this Government and I said that eight months ago. I never supported it so I might be one of the biggest rocks in the cake you might say but I believe that the personalities have come to the fore now that for us to keep on trying to work together for another six months, I think we are just going to drag ourselves down deeper and deeper and deeper and we won't achieve anything so with those few words, I will support the motion today

MR CHRISTIAN

Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker I think I just have to respond to some of Mr Sheridan's comment there. He has said that we haven't met the deadlines that we have set ourselves and that's probably a criticism and maybe a fair one, but it had no actual bearing on any outcomes. What was always in place was that the NSL would be reviewed in February of this year and that if we decided not to proceed with the NSL in any form it would die at the end of this financial year so the taxation system was still in place, and still running and due for review in February. What I had tried to do was to bring forward the review period so that we could implement a tax, be it the NSL or the GST at a higher rate and therefore accelerate the money coming in to the public purse, but with Christmas and things like that intervening it was not possible to get the drafting done, however the existing taxing measures were still in place and still operating as they were meant to be and the review is not due until February of this year so for Mr Sheridan to sit there and say that we haven't met our deadlines I really don't know what planet he's on. Mr Sheridan has also continually made mention of this coup.



MR BROWN

Well it would be helpful, because in Mr Nobbs case he's often said that he won't be standing again, and if Mr Nobbs simply wants to have a simple way to move away from the Legislative Assembly any Member has the ability to resign. That causes a bi election for the seat or seats of whatever number have resigned and change can occur in that fashion, so if that's what a particular member is after, then why don't we look at doing that. If what a particular member is after is to cause change in the composition of the executive, I've been sacked plenty of times before and I would have no difficulty in being sacked again, so if I'm your problem, move your motion. That's the way you should go about it. If the Chief Minister is your problem - I've got plenty of problems with the Chief Minister - if he's your problem, move your motion. Sack him. But don't just take a view that because things are a bit tough, you'll spit your dummies and try to have a new election in the hopes that a few people won't be re elected. I think there is a need for a re arrangement at least. Some of the ministerial responsibilities. The Chief Minister is well aware that in my view some areas are not performing properly. The Chief Minister is well aware of my view that there has to be surgery within the Public Service. A bit of surgery might save the rest of the Public Service but if we are not prepared to carry out that surgery then we are at real risk that gangrene will set in and the whole of the Public Service will die as a result. The Chief Minister has not been prepared to accept that and that's one of the difficulties I have with him. We've got real difficulties with the airline. We don't know whether it's making a profit or a loss. There's an air services committee which rarely seems to have the opportunity to meet. The air services committee makes decisions but the decisions don't get implemented. I give you as an example a decision to continue Friday flights through December. Which was ignored. Now all those things are problems but they are problems which the Legislative Assembly should be sorting out by shifting that area of executive responsibility. That is a lot more appropriate then seeking to remove the whole of the Legislative Assembly because we are not prepared to hold one or more executives accountable. But at the same time let's not kid ourselves. It's been said that we've turned a corner. I expect that January if you walk in and talk to virtually any shopkeeper in the main street, will have been the worst year that they've experienced for many many years. I expect that most people in the accommodation industry will tell you something similar. We are nowhere near returning to a vibrant economy. We don't have the level of economic growth that we need but it's possible that we are only being held back by the failures in the airline area. Sure, perhaps at our next meeting we will vote on a new broad based revenue arrangement. It's not clear that that, will be passed by the Legislative Assembly and it's certainly not something that's been started in the last six months or so, in fact, if we look at the question of what have we done to reinvigorate the economy, we haven't done very much at all. The initiatives that are slowly filtering through in many cases started well before the present Buffett Government. It is true that every day that we don't deliver in a number of areas, we are putting sustainability at risk, but one of those areas is in ensuring that we give to the community value for the taxation dollars that they are paying and I've consistently said that I don't propose to support the increased GST if we are not at the same time delivering to the community on our undertaking to sort things out and one of those particular undertakings was in relation to reform of the public service. That has simply been shelved and shelving it is not good enough. We've been told about a lack of cohesion. Cohesion is something that exists only within dictatorships. What a load of rubbish we'd be talking if we complained that the leader of the labour party and Mr Howard were not cohesive. Parliament isn't designed that way. Parliament is designed for differing points of view which sometimes can be radically opposed. We've heard of total lack of understanding of the caretaker convention. I'm stunned that an executive Member doesn't understand what the conventions of Government area. How can an executive carry out his or her tasks without understanding the very foundations that support the system of Government. The caretaker convention is a very simple one. Once an election has been called, the Government doesn't undertake new initiatives. Now you will get occasions where you will get an emergency and how that is handled in other cases which have political parties, is the Minister and shadow Minister or the leaders of the opposing parties will meet. They will acknowledge the caretaker convention and they will say, on this occasion we've got to do something, can we all reach an agreement as to what it



matter is going. If Members are to be of a mind that we can better manage the situation, by some adjustment in portfolio arrangements as Mr Brown has said, I would welcome that to be clearly said if that has a bearing upon timing. I would be interested if Members have a view. Maybe that doesn't change anything. I can understand that if that be the case. But I have a view that it is not the best timing for the community and therefore if some of the difficulties can be addressed, that in fact will not present us with that timing difficulty, I think they are worth being explored

MR BROWN Mr Speaker I'm quite happy to throw my hat into the ring and if Members are wishing to select a new executive I'm quite happy for that in terms of myself

MR CHRISTIAN Thank you Mr Speaker, likewise I'm prepared to do the same

MR NOBBS Mr Speaker I move that the question be put

SPEAKER I am required to put that question Honourable Members

MR CHRISTIAN Thank you Mr Speaker, I believe I had my hand up before the call

SPEAKER Mr Nobbs have you any difficulty in allowing Mr Christian's participation in debate before I put the question

MR NOBBS Mr Speaker I've never had a difficulty with a Members participation

MR CHRISTIAN Thank you Mr Speaker, I wonder if I could seek leave to move an amendment to the motion

SPEAKER Leave is granted Mr Christian

MR CHRISTIAN Thank you Mr Speaker, I wonder if I could move the following amendment to the motion that the words "on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> of the seventh oh seven" be added to the end of the motion

SPEAKER Thank you. Any debate? Honourable Members I put that question

#### QUESTION PUT

Madam Clerk would you please call the House

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

SPEAKER The result of voting Honourable Members, the Ayes three the Noes five and one abstention, the noes have it

Mr Nobbs we return to your motion that the question be put

QUESTION PUT  
 AGREED  
 MR T BROWN                      NO

Would you like the House called Mr Brown

MR T BROWN                                      Thank you Mr Speaker I'll be fine for the moment

SPEAKER                                      We now return to the substantive motion Honourable Members on the question before us which reads that the Administrator be requested to determine in accordance with section 35 of the Norfolk Island Act 1979 a date for a general election at the earliest possible opportunity. I put that question

MR CHRISTIAN                                      Thank you Mr Speaker, before we proceed could I seek words of clarification from you. The debate has been fairly wide ranging today and one of the issues covered is the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer and I wonder if it is appropriate that Mrs Boudan participate in debate as she is a public servant

SPEAKER                                      I think the debate has been wide ranging Mr Christian over a host of issues dealing with port requirements, port facilities of which I am sure you yourself would have an interest in the development of, and I think that many of the matters that are being discussed today would be of interest or could possible raise potential conflict amongst members. To return to the motion Honourable Members, the motion is that the Administrator be requested to determine in accordance with section 35 of the Norfolk Island Act 1979 a date for a general election at the earliest possible opportunity. I put that question

QUESTION PUT

Madam Clerk would you please call the House

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

SPEAKER                                      The result of voting Honourable Members, the Ayes five the Noes four, the noes have it. Thank you. The motion is carried

#### **FIXING OF THE NEXT SITTING DATE**

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

MRS JACK                                      Mr Speaker I move that the House at its rising adjourn until Wednesday 14 February 2007, at 10.00 am.

SPEAKER  
question is that the Motion be agreed to.

Thank you Mrs Jack. Is there any debate. The

QUESTION PUT  
AGREED

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

**ADJOURNMENT**

MR SHERIDAN  
do now adjourn

Thank you Mr Speaker I move that the House

SPEAKER  
participation in adjournment debate Honourable Members. There being no debate I put  
the question that the House do now adjourn

Thank you Mr Sheridan. Is there any

QUESTION PUT  
AGREED

Therefore Honourable Members this House stands adjourned until Wednesday 14  
February 2007, at 10.00 am

