



THE GOVERNMENT OF NORFOLK ISLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

Commonwealth Minister's visit

The Chief Minister of Norfolk Island, Hon Geoff Gardner MLA, said today that he was grateful to the Commonwealth Minister for Territories, Local Government and Roads (Hon Jim Lloyd MP) for travelling to Norfolk Island to announce the decisions of Federal Cabinet about the future of Norfolk Island.

"We had a number of frank and open discussions during the week," Mr Gardner said. "I have assured Minister Lloyd that the Norfolk Island Government and Administration will cooperate fully in the process suggested by the Commonwealth to gather information and consult with our community about the implementation of the far-reaching changes proposed".

Mr Gardner said that he was disappointed that the Commonwealth was unable to provide any detail about the timing or particulars of how the decisions would be implemented. "Minister Lloyd assured all Members of the Assembly that Federal Cabinet had made only decisions in principle for changes to the governance model", Mr Gardner said. "Minister Lloyd advised all Assembly Members that the cabinet decision was confidential and non-negotiable, but that no other detailed plans had been made. Minister Lloyd also reaffirmed that the Commonwealth would now commence a programme of detailed consultation with a view to developing a complete package by late 2006".

The Chief Minister said that once the full details of the new Commonwealth taxes and services were made clear, the Norfolk Island Government expected that there would be a referendum to allow the community to express its views on whether it supported the changes. "The Norfolk Island Government commits itself to accepting the will of the community on whether these substantial new taxes and programs are supported. I would expect the Commonwealth to also respect the will of Norfolk Islanders, expressed through a democratic referendum".

Minister Lloyd indicated that government to government consultations are expected to begin in the first week of March.

Geoff Gardner
Chief Minister

24th February 2006