

NORFOLK



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THE GOVERNMENT OF NORFOLK ISLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

Internet document on KAVHA has no official status: Minister

Norfolk Island Minister for the Environment, Education and Social Welfare, The Hon Stephanie V Jack MLA, said today that information in a document from the Internet which has been widely circulated has no official status and should not be a cause for concern to members of the community.

Mrs Jack said that she had checked on the source and content of the document. She had discussed the issue with representatives of the comment and with Ms Jean Rice, whose name was mentioned in connection with the item.

“I wish to make it completely clear that the document has no official or unofficial status from either the Norfolk Island Government or the Australian Government and its contents are not endorsed by either government”, Mrs Jack said. “It consists of a student exercise associated with a conference held in Japan by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and has no direct relevance to the management or future of KAVHA”.

The Minister said that there were a number of important points which should be noted about the document:

- Much of it is inaccurate - for example it does not appear to understand world heritage criteria;
- Community activities in KAVHA today will not be affected by the World Heritage nomination and will continue should the site is listed on the World Heritage List;
- The recent National Heritage listing of KAVHA recognises the critical importance of the Pitcairn settlement and the importance of Pitcairn traditions and community activities continuing;
- The Conservation Management Plan public consultation and comment period is transparent and all Norfolk Islanders will have the chance to see how KAVHA will be managed and to comment on the management;
- There will be no changes to the boundary of KAVHA and there will be no new boundaries or a buffer zone;
- These issues are all covered in the Conservation Management Plan that is currently being finalised.

Mrs Jack said that she had received a detailed explanation about the nature of the Internet document from Ms Jean Rice, who said that she had attended a UNITAR workshop in Japan earlier this year. Ms Rice’s response was as follows:

“I was lucky to be selected to attend this training workshop and found it to be an invaluable learning experience. I hope one day to be able to share some of the ideas and information in the lectures, and a wonderful film called The Mushroom Club, with people on Norfolk, perhaps a talk or a discussion group.

In summary:

I attended a training workshop at UNITAR Hiroshima as a conservation specialist with about 30 other specialists from all over Asia and the Pacific. One of the course sessions was “a student group practical exercise”. One of the groups was allocated KAVHA as the topic. Each person’s case study, prepared before the workshop, and each groups’ work is on the UNITAR Hiroshima web site. These are student projects or submissions with no official standing and are on the site only as a record of the course.

In more detail:

UNITAR is the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and it has a Hiroshima Office for Asia and the Pacific. One of the continuing training themes of that office is management and conservation of world heritage sites. The focus of training they provide under this program is the “*evaluation and/or interpretation of the values of particular sites or assets (what should be conserved); formulation of long-term management plans to protect and promote these values and the procedure and process of creation of a nomination dossier for world heritage inscription - a management plan or periodical report*” (UNITAR quote). The 2007 session focused on the management of world heritage sites over time in order to maintain their values and significance. Many of the participants were involved with potential world heritage sites in their work.

The workshop was one week long and included lectures and two field trips and the program is on the UNITAR website. There was a student practical exercise which was case study analysis conducted by students working in teams. Five teams were formed, each assisted by a resource person. Teams were given approximately one day to formulate a world heritage nomination document of a given real (existing) site and to present it in plenary. The object was for participants to learn about the issues and process involved and to learn to work cooperatively. Teams were required to prepare a Power Point presentation lasting 20 minutes and a one page explanatory paper. The Power Point presentations are on the UNITAR website.

KAVHA was one of the sites selected as a case study for the course and I was selected as data provider (one day prior). My role was limited to providing data about KAVHA to the other students. I had my laptop with me and some printed material and gave the group copies of information I had with me including a Power Point template. I also acted as “scribe” and helped with secretarial assistance to the group. The rules were that I could answer questions from others in the group, ie provide data, but could not write material or to tell them what I thought, etc. unless in answer to their questions. The material in the final presentation is the work of others in the group and there are several things that I do not agree with but my role in the group was only to provide data and not to comment on the conclusions. The content is the views of the other students over a one-day workshop with limited information about the topic and many of whom had never been involved in such work before. The structure was also that, at the verbal presentation, everyone in the group (except me) had to speak. I was allowed to answer questions after the group presentation.

Concern has been expressed on Norfolk about the content of this presentation. It should be stressed that this is a one-day student training exercise and has no official status or standing. In particular the buffer zone which the presentation suggested included part of KAVHA as well as part of the reef. Students in the group thought that the reef was important, particularly those from Samoa, the Maldives and PNG however this was a view of the students and has no other implications. The presentation also had to include a statement about what WH criteria the students thought were relevant. Their conclusion is different from that which has been arrived at through the real process but note that this is a student one-day project. It was also a requirement of the training session to develop key indicators for monitoring. The indicators developed by students were ideas for how the condition of the area and the implementation of policies could be monitored as required for management. Again these are student ideas but are quite interesting. For instance the continuation of Bounty Day was seen by the students as of prime importance in conserving cultural traditions so if it did not continue or numbers declined this would be an indicator of decline in heritage values”.

Mrs Jack said that it was unfortunate that the material on the website had caused unnecessary concern to members of the community. She said that the Norfolk Island and Australian Governments would continue to work cooperatively on the steps necessary to have KAVHA considered for World Heritage listing and would ensure that there was ongoing and detailed consultation with the community.

Stephanie V Jack

Minister for the Environment, Education and Social Welfare

12th October 2007