



THE GOVERNMENT OF NORFOLK ISLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

News from the Chief Minister

Chief Minister Andre Nobbs was interviewed by George Smith on Radio Norfolk on Wednesday 24th November, and gave a detailed summary of recent achievements and forthcoming events.

Pitcairn visitors

The Chief Minister introduced Jay Warren, the Mayor of Pitcairn Island, and Leslie Jaques, Commissioner for Pitcairn Islands, who have been visiting Norfolk Island for a few days. The Pitcairn visitors gave details of plans by the British Government to extend a greater degree of self-determination to Pitcairn through allowing islanders greater involvement in decision-making and the administration of key programmes related to health, education and welfare.

“One of the reasons we are here is to try to bring Norfolk and Pitcairn closer together”, Mr Warren said. The Chief Minister replied that it had been a pleasure to have Jay and Leslie in Norfolk Island. “This is an historic start to an effortless combination of our skills and our heritage and will definitely be beneficial. We are looking forward to assisting the new arrangements in Pitcairn, as we will both grow from this”.

Open day and radio forum

Mr Nobbs announced that he was organising another open day for members of the public to meet informally with representatives of the Norfolk Island Government and the Legislative Assembly at Rawson Hall on Saturday 17th November. He said that there was a wide range of issues that people might want to discuss with their elected representatives. This included the strategic plan, which he expected to table at the November sitting of the Assembly, the tourism strategy, review of the Norfolk Plan, the new fuel arrangements, operation of the GST and possible changes to immigration, among other matters. The open day was part of the Government’s commitment to greater transparency and indicated its willingness to listen to what the community wanted to say.

“We have a sitting of the House on 14th November, so on the following day we will again be on Radio Norfolk to field questions and to be as available and open as we possibly can to let people know what we are doing. The open day will give another opportunity for people to raise issues. As before, we will have plenty of time for discussion and will also have butcher’s paper so that people can write down things they are concerned about”.

Promotion of Norfolk Island

The Chief Minister said that during this week there was a major promotion of Sydney taking place in Sydney. Administration CEO Rhonda Wheatley is attending the Congress of Certified Practising Accountants, along with 2,500 other professionals. Norfolk Island was also being

represented by Minister for Commerce and Industry Chris Magri and two of the tourism ambassadors.

“What we are proposing is not only to promote Norfolk Island in the tourism sense, but we have also prepared presentations to promote some of Norfolk’s opportunities for their type of business”, Mr Nobbs said. He indicated that the promotion included an audio-visual presentation and a handout setting out the opportunities and benefits for individuals and businesses in relocating to Norfolk Island. This material on the theme of “Norfolk Island – Open for Business” detailed issues such as lifestyle benefits, lower taxes, reduced regulation, less complex employment arrangements and the availability of high-technology services. Those conducting the promotion were also providing information on tourist attractions and a new full colour pamphlet setting out immigration requirements and procedures.

“This type of promotion is one of the ways in which we are seeking to broaden our appeal to a wider market for both the tourism and business investment”, the Chief Minister said. “One of our key goals is to increase prosperity in Norfolk Island through diversification of these sectors, so we will carefully evaluate the results and undertake more promotions of this sort in coming months”.

Immigration

The Chief Minister said that he recently met again with the Immigration Committee and Administration officers and discussed issues arising from discussion papers produced earlier in 2007. He intended to complete the review of immigration legislation, policies and procedures within a month. One intention was to provide more detailed and user-friendly information to people at the front door who were considering immigration possibilities for Norfolk Island. Mr Nobbs commended Immigration Committee members who had worked hard on these tasks, including consideration of other jurisdictions such as Canada, which have points systems for evaluating applicants for immigration.

Strategic planning

Mr Nobbs said that in May he had made public a strategic plan framework, comprising the agenda of the 12th Assembly and a list of the key action areas arising from each Minister’s responsibilities. He wished to reiterate what he had said at the time:

“This document gives a clear indication of this government’s intentions, at the same time addresses the changes Norfolk Island is currently going through. These include: implementation and monitoring of the GST and procedural/efficiency monitoring and change in the public service and government, as part of the CEO’s and government audits. Many of the items listed in the framework are well underway, however as I also said in the House, this was more a document of action rather than presentation of jargon”.

The Chief Minister said that the strategic plan was well on the way to finalisation. He intended that the framework would not just be another list wrapped in rhetoric, but would identify all key aims and objectives and attach ownership to each step of the way. This would ensure that the plan would not just reflect good intentions, but that each area of the public sector would take ownership of the areas of the plan relevant to their functions. Currently, the ownership and timelines are being established through the Chief Executive Officer, who is discussing the plan in detail with all functional areas.

“When we put this document out there, you won’t just see that it is a case that we would like to enhance prosperity, you will see the steps that are involved and why we want to move to those outcomes” Mr Nobbs said. “This is the document that I will table in the House in November”.

Visits to Scotland and Isle of Man

The Chief Minister said that he would be departing Norfolk Island on Friday 26th October to attend the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland. The CPA is underwriting the cost of the trip, and have asked the Chief Minister to chair one of the sessions for all delegates. This is believed to be the first time that Norfolk Island has been recognised in this way.

Mr Nobbs will chair a seminar discussion on “The Parliament, the Executive and the Public Service”. He said that he would take the opportunity to inform delegates about Norfolk Island’s unique attractions and the similarities and differences between public institutions here and in other parts of the Commonwealth. This would include the operation of the separation of powers, the availability of citizen-initiated referendums and the degree of involvement in business enterprises. The Chief Minister said that the value of the linkages and benefits that Norfolk Island could gain from this CPA involvement was too great to be quantified.

Following the CPA meeting, the Chief Minister will spend two days in the Isle of Man as guest of the President, Chief Minister and the Minister for Tourism and Leisure. “We are exploring the possibilities of twinning with the Isle of Man”, Mr Nobbs said. “Of course we have historical connections, but there are also much more contemporary issues of interest. The Isle of Man has recently celebrated 1,000 years of parliamentary democracy, and is in the process of making some constitutional changes to ensure it has greater autonomy from Great Britain”.

Mr Nobbs said that the Isle of Man had previously depended heavily on tourism and primary production, but had now developed a thriving financial services sector, a port and a film industry. He was looking forward to discussing with local political and business leaders the strategies they had followed to achieve these significant economic changes.

André Nobbs
Chief Minister

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