

MYTHBUSTERS

A new feature in *The Norfolk Islander*

Jonno and André had a bit of a yak earlier this week. The topic turned to the huge number of myths which circulate around the Norfolk Island *dem tull* network, and how they could be answered. When it came to making a list, there were an awful lot. So, they decided that when required a Norfolk Island version of **MYTHBUSTERS** in the newspaper that everyone reads might do the trick. Here are the first few myths and Andre's comments:

The new fire engines are damaging the airport tarmac

The short answer is that this is plain wrong. The fully-loaded fire tenders weigh about 30 tonnes, while the landing weight of our RPT planes is more than double that. There has been no damage to the tarmac from the fire tenders, other than a few tyre rubber marks on the painted surfaces, which also come from the aircraft wheels. **This myth: busted!**

We don't need the capital works at the airport – they are just a waste of money

We can't afford not to complete the airport upgrade work, including Runway End Safety Areas and the new Fire and Emergency Services Station. The airport is the key public asset which supports our vital tourism industry. If its safety standards are not up to required international standards, we could lose almost all of that industry and the income which it brings to our community. We have decided to continue with those works, even if they create a short-term deficit, in just the same way as the Commonwealth and state governments are pushing ahead with infrastructure projects to keep people employed and boost private sector spending. **This myth: busted!**

We need at least two airlines operating to and from Australia to boost tourism

History has proven that when there are two airlines coming in from Australia, both finish up losing money. This happened in 2005, when one private sector operator pulled out of the market, and the other went into liquidation, with disastrous effects on the tourism industry. The situation was stabilised when the Norfolk Island Government stepped in to fund air services, but it took a lengthy period to rebuild industry confidence. Suggestions of a second airline in the current period of global collapse in tourism are just impractical, and would undermine the excellent work done to ensure tourist confidence and schedule integrity. As they always say in the industry: the way to make a small fortune in tourism is to start with a big fortune and run an airline. **This myth: busted!**

If Australia removes self-government and takes over, everyone will get more benefits and higher wages

I could write volumes on this one, Jonno, but will restrict myself to just a few comments. Unfortunately some people in the community have been misled by those with a vested interest in giving up our self-government and handing control to Canberra. You only have to look at Australia's other external territories and its remote areas to realise that we are so much better off than they are in terms of services and good community outcomes. When Australia directly administered Norfolk Island for some 65 years, the streets were not paved with gold and citizens were not all on fabulous wages – nor are they now in Christmas Island, Jervis Bay or Maningrida. Just last week in *The Norfolk Islander*, the local sub-branch of the Australian Labor Party called for the Commonwealth to “impose its will” on Norfolk Island if it extended any stimulus package funding in the current global financial crisis, saying that “Norfolk Labor urges this approach”. This is a distressing cop-out by a group which claims to represent Norfolk Islanders but has failed to put forward any positive suggestions. We are thinking of banding together to buy them a radio and a TV so that they might realise that Norfolk Island is in fact part of the real world, and that the current global financial crisis hasn't just caused a drop in government revenues and consequent deficits in the Labor states but here as well. **This myth: busted!**

Got a myth you want to put to the Mythbusters? Email it to news@islander.nf