



From the desk of the Chief Minister

The past week has brought us a wide range of weather conditions with welcome showers punctuated by brilliant sunshine and bursts of strong winds. As they say about Melbourne (or was it Wellington or London?), if you don't like the weather, just wait for half an hour and it will change. We've also had a week of great variety in the affairs of government, so I'll try to give you an update on a few things that are happening.

The World of Norfolk. Small place. No small wonder.

Last week's inaugural Norfolk Island Tourism Exchange was a great success – my congratulations to all who helped to organise this worthwhile exercise, which brought together our tourism wholesalers with many of the local suppliers of accommodation, tours, services, and goods. I'm sure that many business deals were finalised and a great number of useful networking contacts established. During the week, the tourism branding committee and their professional consultant presented to the industry and the public the new Norfolk Island brand, which is encapsulated in the slogan: The World of Norfolk. Small place. No small wonder. When you think about it, we do have a world of unique sights, sounds and experiences here – for everyone who visits and for all of us who live in Norfolk Island. The new brand is an illustration of thinking beyond the square to encapsulate the idea of a very large range of opportunities within a small geographic area that is accessible and comprehensible to those seeking adventure tours, unique cultural experiences, great shopping or even just a good restful holiday. Norfolk Tourism continues to make great progress with implementing its 5-year strategic plan and there are some positive signs in forward bookings that we will be able to ride out the global financial crisis and head into a recovery in the not-too-distant future.

Moving forward on immigration and population policies

Thanks to everyone who has taken the time to submit comments on the discussion paper suggesting substantial modernisation and categorisation of the immigration permit system. I have received quite a number of thoughtful submissions, and I guess that given the strong opinions in our community it is no surprise that they covered a wide range of views. Overall, most people welcomed the chance to comment and the feedback included a number of really good suggestions. The Immigration Working Party has met to consider all of the ideas put forward and to modify the discussion paper. I hope to be able to arrange for the Working Party to join me on Radio Norfolk next Wednesday to allow talkback discussion on issues such as the ideal population level for Norfolk Island, how we might best target our immigration programme and what changes we should make to the permit system. After that, we will finalise the proposals which I will in due course put to the Legislative Assembly.

Sharing the knowledge on administering external territories

This week I heard back from Senator Kate Lundy MP, the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories (JSC), in relation to our offer to assist with the Committee's inquiry into the changing economic environment in the Indian Ocean Territories of Christmas and Cocos Islands. The JSC has been asked by Hon Bob Debus MP, Minister for Home Affairs to inquire into issues in those territories including communication services (such as broadband internet, digital television and mobile telephony); transport services and costs including passenger and freight transport; the operation of businesses in the region; the cost and availability of housing; and the impact of climate change. Senator Lundy has now asked us to meet with the JSC when it visits Norfolk Island in early June to share Norfolk Island's experience in designing and delivering cost effective governance and community services in a remote island community. I have written

back to Senator Lundy confirming that we will be happy to meet with the JSC when they are here in June.

Progress on establishing an ombudsman service

On Wednesday, I tabled in the Legislative Assembly an exposure draft of the Ombudsman Bill, seeking comment from Members and the wider community. Now that the Administration complaints system is up and running, the Commonwealth Ombudsman has written to offer assistance in training Admin staff on the principles of good public administration and service delivery issues including complaint handling. Admin will take up these offers. The Ombudsman also offered comments on our draft Ombudsman Bill and provided indicative costings of providing ombudsman complaint services for Norfolk Island. I have written back to the Commonwealth Ombudsman advising that the information he has provided will be considered during the ongoing discussions with Minister Debus.

Life on the ocean blue

It has been great to have visits in the last couple of weeks from HMAS *Launceston* and “our” very own RAN vessel HMAS *Sirius*. Both have seen some of the vagaries of island weather, which unfortunately limited the number of the ship’s company of the *Sirius* who were able to take part in the ceremonies last Saturday to exercise their freedom of entry to Norfolk Island and to commemorate the loss of the original HMS *Sirius* just on 218 years ago. We are always pleased to host members of the Australian armed services. In fact, as an Air Force man, I was particularly delighted to see the two RAAF F/A 18 Hornet jets which made a brief refuelling stop here on Monday. Norfolk Island continues to be rightfully proud of its strong tradition of support for the armed services in both war and peacetime.

In my next column, I expect to be able to provide another update on the governance discussions with the Commonwealth. In the meantime, I hope that you will be able to join me for the radio talkback on population and immigration next week. I expect that session to commence around 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday – keep an ear out to Radio Norfolk for confirmation of details.

André Nobbs
Chief Minister

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