



## From the desk of the Chief Minister

By the time you read this, we will all be in the midst of Easter weekend. I hope that you will have the opportunity to share enjoyable times with family and friends over this much-anticipated holiday period. Everyone at the school should be congratulated on another great Easter Carnival, and I know that many churches and community groups also have special Easter events planned. I guess that as well most of us are looking forward to our annual Easter egg chocolate fix! Here at the Assembly, there is always plenty happening, so I'll try to bring you up to date with a few recent issues.

### Going for a song

As part of the Year of the Norfolk Language, we have revived the Norfolk Song Competition. I'm very grateful to a small group of music enthusiasts who have worked hard to set up the conditions of entry and to attract some worthwhile prizes. It's particularly good to see categories for primary and secondary students, as well as for under 30's and over 30's, each with good cash prizes. As well, those who win first or second places in each of the four age categories will have the opportunity to have their song professionally produced, and will be given multiple CDs of the winning song. The organisers called for entries last week from people living in Norfolk Island who are willing to create and compose a song or songs to reflect the heart and soul of Norfolk Island and its people. Lyrics promoting culture, way of life, family, nature and places can be composed in modern, old or contemporary music styles. Entrants are encouraged to compose lyrics in the Norfolk language. Entries are open now and close on 29<sup>th</sup> May. Winners will be announced on Anniversary Day, 8<sup>th</sup> June. Full terms and conditions of the Norfolk Song Competition can be accessed at [www.gov.nf](http://www.gov.nf) So why not give it a go? Get writing now – your song may become a local hit and may also be a way of selling the many delights of Norfolk Island to a much wider audience.

### Norfolk Island budget and public finances

Some people say that the Global Financial Crisis means that we (including Norfolk Island) are headed for a long and deep economic recession, while others feel that some "green shoots" are already appearing and that recovery is not far away. In truth, the economic downturn is serious and ongoing, and it seems that even the experts cannot agree exactly how to deal with it or how long it might last. In these volatile economic times, the Norfolk Island Government does not want to put forward either too optimistic or too pessimistic a forecast for the immediate future. We have already conducted a rigorous review of all income and expenditure for the current financial year. This week, we commenced a series of detailed meetings with all functional areas as part of the planning of the budget for 2009/10.

To be prudent, we are working on the assumption that it will take time for global and regional economies to rebuild, and that we are likely to face ongoing challenges in attempting to attract more high yield tourists to Norfolk Island in the short term. But we are continuing energetically with the active promotion of Norfolk Island to an ever-widening spectrum of potential visitors, as well as consolidating on the work already done to implement the five-year tourism strategy. This has included the development of new and innovative marketing to new groups while at the same time protecting our traditional markets, encouraging higher service standards across the industry, new performance-based marketing arrangements with wholesalers and a totally new brand for the world of Norfolk Island. We have established ourselves in the cruise ship calendar, and the positive benefits will begin to flow in 2010. Norfolk Tourism is now moving to establish an accreditation scheme, and it has already commissioned a report on retailing, the recommendations of which will be implemented over coming months.

In the process of framing the 2009/10 budget, we are reviewing in great detail all of the options available to ensure ongoing sustainability and to encourage economic growth and prosperity. This includes consideration of all current revenues and expenditures, including possible adjustments to services, taxes, fees and charges. We are working through a complete review of all public business activities and of all assets. We have prepared a series of submissions for Commonwealth funding of infrastructure and environment projects for which Norfolk Island is eligible to apply. Some of these have already been submitted, while others are close to finalisation. Overall, they relate to improving and protecting our environment and to strengthening our public infrastructure in areas including cost-effective renewable energy production, high speed broadband access and transport services. If some or all of these projects qualify for funding, they will help to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and optimally lower the cost of living in Norfolk Island.

We are tackling next year's budget in the knowledge that we face very challenging global and regional economic conditions and will have to take some tough decisions to ensure that Norfolk Island continues to remain in a sound and sustainable financial position. Of course, this is exactly the situation facing our federal and state counterparts and we are examining how they are tackling the task as part of our own budget considerations.

### **Immigration, population and economic growth**

I am still receiving submissions on how we can best modernise our immigration procedures so that they facilitate manageable population growth and encourage employment creation and skill development through well targeted investment. Of course, those goals have to be balanced against our commitment to protect and enhance the Norfolk Island culture, community and way of life which we all value so highly. The radio talkback programme brought forward some more bright ideas and I met with the Chamber of Commerce on Thursday to discuss their suggestions. We are now in a position to evaluate all of the written and oral submissions on the original discussion paper. The Immigration Working Group is now revising the options paper and I expect to be able to take a simplified and revised policy recommendation document to my Legislative Assembly colleagues within the next two months.

Happy Easter!

André Nobbs  
**Chief Minister**

9 April 2009