



## From the desk of the Chief Minister

What a year we have seen so far in 2009 – and we are not yet to the end of May! Many great things have happened, with Norfolk Island once more making incredible strides in sport, the arts, academic achievements and business innovation. It has also been a year marked with crises and challenges – the swine ‘flu outbreak, global financial crisis and heartbreaking floods and fires in many parts of the world, including most of Eastern Australia. Just this week, there have been near record falls of rain in parts of Queensland and New South Wales, resulting in flash floods, loss of life and much injury and trauma. Our hearts go out to all affected, and as we always do, Norfolk Islanders stand ready to help all those affected in any way we can.

### **Victorian bushfires**

You might remember that in February we contacted the Premier of Victoria (Hon John Brumby MP) with an offer of volunteer assistance in rebuilding the areas devastated by bushfires, and some local people offered to go to those parts if their services were needed. Of course, the Norfolk Island community also rallied magnificently to send many thousands of dollars and other practical items to victims.

I recently had a response from Premier Brumby to our offers of sympathy and help as follows:

*Dear Chief Minister*

*On behalf of the Government and people of Victoria I would like to convey my sincere thanks for your letter of 9 February expressing your condolences for the devastation and loss of life caused by the Victorian bushfire crisis.*

*The Government is doing its utmost to meet the needs of those affected. A wide range of financial, accommodation, personal, medical, psychological and other support has been made available, and every effort will be made to assist communities to recover.*

*In this difficult time I have been comforted by the outpouring of generosity and support that has followed such a terrible disaster. The challenge of rebuilding is enormous – but I know that by working together we will succeed and we will rebuild.*

*I have referred your offer of help to the Department for Planning and Community Development, who are coordinating offers of assistance.*

*In the coming weeks and months I am sure that the extent of the help needed to rebuild will become clearer, but for now let me once again express my heartfelt thanks for your condolences. Your letter will be retained as part of the Official Condolence Books to remember the victims of this devastating tragedy.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Hon John Brumby MP  
Premier of Victoria.*

Thank you to everyone who offered assistance or who made donations. I will let the community know if the offers we have made for rebuilding help are called upon by our Victorian friends.

### **Building on our positive relationship with Australia**

This week, I had another positive teleconference with the Commonwealth Minister for Home Affairs (Hon Bob Debus MP) about governance and the future of our relationship with Australia. I expect to be having further discussions with Mr Debus while I am in Sydney next week, and hope that after that we will be able to provide some concrete details to the community about the transparency and accountability programmes where the Norfolk Island Government has completed its commitments and where further Commonwealth action is now awaited. We have also jointly undertaken to move to a new phase of discussions on the long-term constitutional and financial relationship between Norfolk Island and the Commonwealth, with a view to resolving ambiguities and in particular making sure that both sides are clear on their roles and responsibilities in a way which will mean that concerns about “governance” discussions are not a constant cause of disruption to the stability of Norfolk Island.

At the Assembly sitting this week, I made a statement about our applications to the Commonwealth for stimulus funding (to counteract the negative effects of the global recession) and our submissions for infrastructure funding under the Australian Government’s Nation Building Funds programmes. My full statement is printed in *The Norfolk Islander*, and sets out the basis on which we are seeking a new and stable relationship with the Commonwealth which recognises the extent to which Norfolk Island, from its own resources, provides a wide range of high standard community and public services. We are now preparing our presentation on this subject to assist the Joint Standing Committee’s inquiry into governance in Indian Ocean Territories. Members of the JSC will be here in a few weeks to share in Bounty Day celebrations, and will talk to us after that about how we administer and provide services and programs in our remote community in a cost effective, efficient and progressive way.

### **Norfolk Song Competition**

Don’t forget – you still have a week to write the all-time greatest Norfolk Island song! As part of the Year of the Norfolk Language, we have revived the Norfolk Song Competition. Entries are open now and close on 29<sup>th</sup> May, under the guidance of a small and dedicated group of music enthusiasts who have worked hard to set up the conditions of entry and to attract some great prizes. There are 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.

We are looking for songs which reflect the heart and soul of Norfolk Island and its people through lyrics promoting culture, way of life, family, nature and places, in modern, old or contemporary music styles. In particular, the organisers are encouraging entrants to compose lyrics in the Norfolk language. Winners will be announced on Anniversary Day, 8<sup>th</sup> June. You can find the full terms and conditions of the Norfolk Song Competition on [www.gov.nf](http://www.gov.nf) - look for the flashing yellow and blue logo!

I will be off-island next week to attend an international Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference in Sydney, at which many countries will be represented. One of the key topics for discussion concerns free trade, which is an area of interest for Norfolk Island. During the conference, I have been invited to chair a major discussion session. I know that I leave the Island in good hands and look forward to seeing everyone on my return.

André Nobbs  
**Chief Minister**

**22 May 2009**