



## THE GOVERNMENT OF NORFOLK ISLAND

### MEDIA RELEASE

## **Norfolk Island submission welcomed by Joint Standing Committee**

Chief Minister André Nobbs today thanked the members of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories (JSC) who took the time to visit Norfolk Island for several days during the past week. Five members of the JSC attended Anniversary Day events and later in the week met with Members of the Assembly to discuss the Committee's current inquiry into the changing economic environment in the Indian Ocean Territories of Cocos and Christmas Islands.

The Norfolk Island Government provided a detailed written briefing to the JSC to assist its consideration of issues affecting small and remote island communities. The briefing included information on the types of sustainable and self-supporting Norfolk Island governance and economic structures which had enabled the Island to enjoy 30 years of stable self-government. It also highlighted the unique public policy mix of low taxes, moderate bureaucratic and regulatory controls and relatively low wage costs.

The JSC was also provided with details of some of the many public services and programmes delivered in Norfolk Island and how these have been tailored to meet the special circumstances of the community through extensive consultation over many years.

The briefing made clear that the Norfolk Island Government respected the role of the Committee in making independent determinations on its current inquiry into the Indian Ocean Territories. But it suggested that the JSC might wish to consider some issues arising from Norfolk Island's experience, such as:

- The role of low taxes in encouraging economic development and community prosperity through rewarding investment and initiative;
- Self-determination and greater autonomy as factors in developing cost-effective locally appropriate structures, procedures and programmes which address needs as articulated by members of small, remote communities;
- Elaboration of methods for consultation and cooperation between local and federal authorities to ensure that standards of service delivery and programme outcomes are recognised as equivalent (but not necessarily identical) to nationally established levels;

- Flexible immigration and population measures to encourage high levels of employment and to facilitate free market labour flows;
- How to create and support programmes which encourage skill development and educational achievement within the local community;
- Achieving equivalence and equity in service delivery outcomes without imposing high levels of costly bureaucratic or legislative red tape;
- Measures to share expertise and resources while maintaining high levels of local autonomy; and
- Mutual development of democratic self-determination mechanisms to allow maximum involvement of citizens while ensuring that human and civil rights are protected.

The Chief Minister said that one of the best outcomes of the discussions on the briefing paper with JSC members was the recognition of the value of continuity and clear communications and outcomes. He said that the Chair of the JSC, Senator Kate Lundy, had welcomed the Norfolk Island briefing and the open and frank discussions held with MLAs on Tuesday. Senator Lundy had said that the briefing would help to inform members of the JSC as they continued their inquiry, including a visit to the Indian Ocean Territories later in the year.

Mr Nobbs said that it had particularly helpful that members of the JSC had been in Norfolk Island during the changeover of Commonwealth responsibility for Home Affairs from The Hon Bob Debus MP to the Hon Brendan O'Connor MP. They had been able to open up lines of communication and Senator Lundy had offered to facilitate discussions and business dealings with the new Minister.

"I would like to pay tribute to Bob Debus for the huge effort he put into assisting Norfolk Island with new administrative review and accountability measures and to wish him well for the future", Mr Nobbs said. "I look forward to working with the new Minister to build on the sound mutual relationship with the Commonwealth. I have already written to Minister O'Connor proposing that we meet soon, and also inviting him to visit Norfolk Island during this 30<sup>th</sup> year of self-government".

Mr Nobbs said that the visit by JSC members had been cordial and effective. All of the Committee members had been impressed by Bounty Day events and had enjoyed the chance to observe some of the important aspects of Norfolk Island culture. The Chief Minister said that he believed that the relationship between Norfolk Island and the JSC was now one of cooperation and mutual support, and thanked the Committee members for their contribution to achieving this good relationship.

André Nobbs  
**Chief Minister**

12 June 2009