



THE GOVERNMENT OF NORFOLK ISLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

Cruise ship planning well advanced

Acting Norfolk Island Chief Minister Chris Magri said today that detailed planning was well underway for the cruise ship visits scheduled to begin in Norfolk Island from March 2010. He released for the information of the community the contents of a briefing he received in response to questions raised about local organisation and management of cruise ship tourism.

Mr Magri said that the Norfolk Island Government (NIG) recognises that cruise ship visits offer significant potential benefits for the island. "We are also aware, however, that without careful management the potential for negative impacts also exist," Mr Magri said. "The government aims to maximise opportunities for economic growth and sustainability and minimise social disruption and environmental impact".

After being approached by Carnival Cruises (operating as P&O Cruises), the proposed visits were assessed as being a tourism activity and accordingly the NIG directed Norfolk Island Tourism (NIT) to take the role of lead agency to manage all on-shore elements of the visits.

"A great deal of work has been undertaken, and I commend in particular Ms Rhonda Griffiths, the Development Manager of Norfolk Island Tourism, who is leading and coordinating the many tasks involved," Mr Magri said.

The first step for NIT was the development of a Cruise Ships Working Group (CSWG), representing all aspects of the community, to take the leadership role for the process. The CSWG comprises several groups: CSWG (Management and Administration); CSWG (Tours and Transport); CSWG (Burnt Pine Experiences); CSWG (Kingston Experiences); and the CSWG (Sustainability). The different working groups consist of more than 25 persons representing the following areas of employment and expertise: NI Government, Administration and Tourism sectors, Retail and Chamber of Commerce operators, Food and Beverage operators, Tour Operators, Arts, Culture, Heritage, and Environment specialists.

The objectives of the CSWG are to:

- Maximise opportunities for revenue generation for the island from the visits;
- Develop existing and new visitor attractions in line with efforts to improve tourism products;
- Develop and implement appropriate promotional programs that effectively convert cruise passengers to return visitors;
- Minimise social disruption and / or environmental impact; and

- Ensure economic, social and environmental sustainability of the island.

The CSWG will:

- Ensure involvement, equity and fair dealings across all operators;
- Encourage experiences founded on integrity, authenticity and uniqueness;
- Cooperate with the range of stakeholders across all sectors of the island; and
- Ensure that operations are timely, transparent, efficient and effective.

The CSWG is currently working on an integrated Work Plan to ensure success. At the same time, the CSWG is working on a comprehensive Risk Management Plan to address the risks associated with visits as a whole. Minister Magri said that he would make the Plans public on completion. He also provided answers to some questions on cruise ship tourism raised within the community.

- **The probabilities, based on historical and scientific data, of a cruise ship being unable to discharge passengers due to unfavourable weather and the financial and economic consequences arising from such inability.**

Mr Michael Drake, Marine Operations Manager of P&O Cruises, visited Norfolk Island in 2008 to review our facilities, weather and sea conditions. During Mr Drake's visit the Norfolk Guardian was in port however the sea conditions were unfavourable for unloading. Having witnessed our facilities and generally rough sea conditions, Mr Drake assured us that such conditions on that day would have little impact on their tenders. Please note that many ports in the Pacific are 'tender ports' and P&O crew are experienced in varying sea, wind and weather conditions in the region.

With regard to the financial and economic consequences arising from the ship being unable to bring their passengers ashore, the consequences form the basis of the CSWG philosophy. In preparing the island and stakeholders for visits, the CSWG is advising operators to only slightly vary those services that they currently offer. With this approach and careful planning, the financial and economic consequences should be little different to current aircraft and weather delays/cancellations.

A further approach to mitigate the risks of unfavourable weather conditions is being addressed by the CSWG (Sustainability). One of the major roles of this Working Group is to ensure the *sustainability* of the cruise ship visits. This group is tasked to look at options with regard to infrastructure development in either/both piers, harbour access and a possible third landing area.

P&O's policy is that for any port where the tenders have not been able to transfer passengers, P&O compensates their passengers 10% of the voyage costs. Naturally, this means that Carnival Cruises make every attempt to land their passengers.

- **The risks associated with ship-to-shore movements**

The ships will take two nights to sail to Norfolk from Auckland and Sydney. With weather forecasts and other prediction capabilities, the CSWG will have an indication, at least two days prior to arrival, at which pier unloading will be able to take place. Given that the

prevailing winds are from the south east, it is assumed that Cascade will be the most likely port of operation. The ships will arrive at approximately 7-8am.

For maritime safety reasons, the Administration launch will be dispatched as each ship is arriving; it will transport the customs, quarantine and immigration officials to the ship and back to shore; it will also remain in the water in order to guide tender operators as well as being on stand-by for any incidents. Passengers will be brought ashore via the cruise vessel tenders. These tenders will carry approximately 80 passengers per transfer. An alternate procedure for safe arrival of the tenders currently being discussed by NIG and Carnival Cruises is training NI boatmen in P&O operations procedures and manning the tenders themselves in the event of high seas.

The CSWG has been advised that all Carnival Cruises passengers are covered by the company's insurance while on board ship. Once on the Island, a passenger's travel insurance is the overarching insurance protection and P&O booking documentation **strongly** advises passengers to be insured.

The Public Liability Insurance (PLI) cover carried by the Administration of NI in relation to any visitor/person on the Island is current and applicable to protect the Government and community of NI. However, the CSWG will implement a system of recording all accidents, incidents and near misses with the objective of continuously improving health and safety features of NI.

In the unlikely event that passengers become stuck ashore because of bad weather, the CSWG will develop emergency strategies to feed, accommodate and entertain stranded passengers. Any costs associated with implementing this emergency strategy will be borne by Carnival Cruises.

- **Any environmental risks (at the landing place or throughout the island) and the measures taken to ameliorate any consequences, particularly from inadequate public toilet facilities and ship discharges to water and air;**

The NIG recognises it is essential that socio-economic, cultural and environmental features must be continually considered, protected and monitored in developing the industry for cruise ship visits. While the CSWG (Sustainability) has been established, environmental risks and protection are shared issues for all CSWGs.

The objectives of CSWG (Sustainability) are:

- a) Economic sustainability or quantitative economic growth. NI must be able to afford what it has to provide now and in the future. To achieve this, NI needs to sustain cruise ship services; protect current and diversify income sources; improve community infrastructure and living conditions.
- b) Ecological sustainability and the contribution of visitors to the promotion, preservation and protection of ecosystems on the Island.
- c) Social and cultural sustainability encouraging the revitalisation of skills, professionalism and fostering new forms of expressions; raising the profile of culture in community life contributing to a stronger Norfolk identity.

Following is a sample of the coordinated actions by the CSWGs:

The CSWG (M&A) is reviewing the toilet facilities across the island. With public toilets in town being situated at Rawson Hall, behind Cameralines and in Foodland only, the CSWG (Burnt Pine Experiences) has identified that permanent toilet facilities at the Village/RSL end of town are essential. With regard to other toilet facilities across the island, the CSWG has identified that although the number of toilets across the island is sufficient, that the gravity-feed refill system is slow. The impact of increased use of these facilities will be monitored with a view to installing solar pumps for improved cistern refills.

In addition to the built facilities, it appears likely that a number of portaloos will be required to meet the demand. Given that this issue has been raised in relation to other events and activities on the island, and that the Public Works Departments (PWD) and NIT have already begun investigating the best solution, the PWD and NIT will continue to determine the best source, product and price of portaloos. Considering that these portaloos will be used by other bodies when not in use during the visits, a hireage/storage charge will be applied to upkeep/replace facilities over time. Given the objective of environmental sustainability, any portaloos purchased will be environmentally friendly.

The CSWG (M&A) has agreed that, with the indicated two days warning prior to arrival of where unloading will take place, extra rubbish bins will be installed at the pier and throughout town. The toilet facilities throughout the pier area and town will be cleaned and stocked with holding tanks cleared well in advance and water supplies on stand-by throughout the day of the visits. The CSWG will liaise with the Public Works Department to ensure that this work is carried out.

The CSWG (Burnt Pine Experiences) has been presented a range of high quality biodegradable cutlery and crockery. At a recent CSWG meeting with Food and Beverage operators throughout town, owners and operators unanimously endorsed the use of these products for serving their food. In addition to the environmental benefits, an already indirect benefit of the cruise ship industry is the community member importing the crockery and cutlery for sale to the food and dining operators.

While it is necessary some actions be taken, environmental protection sometimes means action is NOT taken. An example of this is in the promotion of Norfolk Island to the cruise passengers. Norfolk Island will NOT be promoting itself as a swimming or snorkelling destination. Instead there are a range of other opportunities on Norfolk. The reason for this is to protect our reefs and swimming areas from potentially hundreds of passengers that would eventually destroy this fragile eco-system.

- **The risks associated with a commercial sector being unable (or even unwilling) to provide adequate ground transport, food or other facilities**

While cruise ships offer shopping experiences on board, reports suggest that a majority of passengers want to shop at visiting destinations. The CSWG (Burnt Pine Experiences) recognises that the shopping precinct needs to be involved, driven and pre-advised on spending patterns etc. of passengers.

The NI Government has approved the application of a 30% discount on Liquor Bond purchases to cruise passengers as per passengers coming to Norfolk by air with a valid air ticket.

The CSWG (Burnt Pine Experiences) is currently working on incentives to entice passengers to get off the ship, i.e. winning trips for 2 back to Norfolk; developing a map of the precinct showing toilets/foods outlets and special offers etc. Other initiatives include staging events in Burnt Pine to create colour/movement/sound and 'entice' passengers throughout the area. This CSWG is also working with NIT and Retailers to develop and use the NIT website to promote shopping products and benefits.

The ground transport issue is being addressed by the CSWG (Tours and Transport). A comprehensive transport plan has been developed, using the 20 available buses on the Island, which moves passengers from the port to the 'hub' and implements a shuttle system that moves passengers to other sites. All forms of transportation will satisfy registration standards. Regular checks will be made to ensure that all forms of transportation are well maintained and do not compromise the safety of users.

- **The risks to public infrastructure associated with unusual and heavy traffic**

The NIG recognises that in order for Norfolk Island to fund, build and/or maintain infrastructure for the NI community as well as safety and enjoyment of visitors, a system of port charges and passenger head fees will be established. The fees will consider both costs and improvements to the community infrastructure. The CSWG (Management and Administration) is liaising with the NIG in developing the system.

- **Given the experiences elsewhere the risks to local social and cultural fabric arising from a huge influx of visitors**

Studies considered by the CSWG indicate that negative impacts to social and cultural fabrics are increased in more traditional societies with little tourism infrastructure. In Norfolk Island where tourism infrastructure exists, the CSWG's approach is promotion rather than protection. Each CSWG works towards encouraging the revitalisation of skills, fostering new forms of cultural expressions, encouraging experiences founded on integrity, authenticity and uniqueness and raising the profile of culture in community life contributing to a stronger Norfolk identity.

Mr Magri said that members of the CSWGs were willing to meet with community groups or to attend their meetings to provide more detail on the planning for cruise ship tourism. He also said that the CSWG is always looking for constructive, hardworking individuals to join the group and he encouraged any interested persons to contact Rhonda Griffiths at the Norfolk Island Tourist Bureau on 23310.

Chris Magri
Acting Chief Minister

14 August 2009