

NORFOLK



ISLAND

Christmas message from the Chief Minister

2009 – A year of community growth and achievement

By the time you read this, Christmas will be less than a week away and many of us will be scrambling to organise gift buying, food and drink for traditional Christmas dinners and putting the finishing touches to the many family, community and church events that form such an important part of the festive season.

This year has without doubt been one of the most challenging for Norfolk Island in a very long time. There has been much talk about the global financial crisis, plunging visitor arrivals and economic downturn. But in fact the past year has seen a great renaissance in many areas of our community and economy, and we are now well placed to seize the day and ensure that the future is bright for all of us.

For example, it is good to see the tourism industry lining up to support the new brand and advertising strategies which are now beginning to bear fruit as part of the 5-year strategy to completely rejuvenate our appeal to broad segments of the tourism market. This is evidenced by the high response rates to our television campaigns and growing use of social media. However, visitor arrival numbers for this financial year are still slightly below those for the previous year and we face many challenges as we move toward the goals of steady and dependable growth in our most important industry.

Another encouraging trend has been the establishment of a number of innovative and successful new businesses in 2009, especially by younger members of the community. I am confident that this trend will continue, especially after we have high-speed broadband facilities when the SPIN project comes on line.

There have been some great improvements in communication, consultation and information sharing in the past 12 months. The Council of Elders has become a valuable forum for ideas and programmes to ensure that we value, enhance and protect our unique culture. The Year of the Norf'k Language created initiatives to teach our young people and to reward creativity in writing, song, art and spoken uses of Norf'k. These awards and events will continue in 2010. CIRCA, the community/government information sharing partnership, opened its Community Information Centre, provided support to local groups with successful grant applications, expanded its information network and began an ongoing series of well-attended training seminars and workshops for all in the community. CIRCA was honoured when Her Excellency the Governor-General agreed to be the organisation's patron.

There are many more examples of the community coming together to achieve progress for the good of all. These include the establishment by the Chamber of Commerce of the Christmas Pageant, now supported by many businesses and organisations, and the much closer cooperation between the religious and community groups on the Island to join together in commemorative events for Bounty Week, Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas, among others.

All these are signs of growing community involvement and goodwill, which of course we celebrate at this special time of year.

In closing, I wish to say a special “thank you” to our support staff, including the Chief Executive Officer, Research Assistant-Government, Clerk and Deputy Clerk, Secretary to Government and every member of the public service, statutory bodies and advisory boards and committees for their dedication and support over the last year. All of your efforts have been very much appreciated.

Finally, I wish everyone at home or away the very best festive season and a happy, healthy and prosperous 2010. Enjoy Christmas and New Year and join us next year in moving forward toward a positive and rewarding future for Norfolk Island.

André Nobbs
Chief Minister

17 December 2009