

**Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications**

**Division:** Territories

**Inquiry:** Inquiry into economic, social and environmental sustainability in the Indian Ocean Territories; Availability and access to enabling communications infrastructure in Australia's external territories

**Topic:** Status and implementation of Committee recommendations

**Proof Hansard Page:** Written (25 February 2021)

**Committee asked:**

The status and implementation of this Committee's recommendations from past inquiries relating to the Indian Ocean Territories and Norfolk Island (44th and 45th Parliaments).

**Answer:**

There were 55 recommendations in total raised in the four previous JSCNCET Inquiry reports identified by the Committee for the Indian Ocean Territories from 2010-2017, and 8 recommendations identified for Norfolk. The recommendations largely focus on tourism, governance and economic diversification in the Indian Ocean Territories. Further to the Australian Government responses, the Department has considered all of the recommendations, has addressed the majority of them and continues to progress those that span across an extended time period.

Further information on the status and implementation of the recommendations can be found at **Attachments A and B**.

**Attachments**

- Attachment A: Indian Ocean Territories Inquiry Recommendations 2010-2017 - status update
- Attachment B: Norfolk Inquiry Recommendations 2014 – status update

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**Strategic importance of the Indian Ocean Territories (August 2017)**

**(7 Recommendations: 1 Noted | 5 Agreed | 1 Agreed in Part)**

Recommendation	Official Australian Government Response	Update as of March 2021
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p>In light of the changing dynamics in the Indian Ocean region, the Committee recommends that the Australian Government refer an inquiry that considers Australia’s Indian Ocean Territories and its engagement in the broader Indian Ocean region to this Committee, at least every five years.</p>	<p><b>Noted.</b> The Australian Government will refer inquiries to the Committee, as appropriate.</p>	<p>The Australian Government continues to refer inquiries to the Committee as appropriate.</p> <p>On 25 September 2020, the Hon Nola Marino MP, Minister for Regional development and territories, referred two inquiries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquiry into economic, social and environmental sustainability in the Indian Ocean Territories</li> <li>• Inquiry into enabling communications infrastructure in Australia’s external territories</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Australian Government strengthen its engagement with Australia’s Indo-Pacific partners, through existing regional forums and alliances that Australia currently participates in, particularly through pursuing opportunities for bilateral and multilateral defence activities and training exercises in the Indian Ocean region.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b> Strengthening Australia’s engagement with Indo-Pacific partners to promote an open, inclusive and prosperous region is a key Australian Government priority. The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper provides a framework for Australia’s international engagement for the next 10 years, with a strong focus on engagement in the Indo-Pacific.</p> <p>Regional engagement is pursued through regional forums such as the East Asia Summit, the Association of South East Asian Nations, the Pacific Islands Forum, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the Indian Ocean Rim Association. Australia will deepen bilateral and multilateral engagement through the United States-Japan-Australia Trilateral Strategic Dialogue and the Australia-Japan-India Trilateral.</p> <p>The 2016 Defence White Paper confirms that defence engagement is important to building international partnerships and commits to more regular bilateral and multinational engagements and exercises. Australia recently deployed its inaugural joint task group, Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2017, to promote security and stability of the region through engagement, training and capacity building activities.</p> <p>The Department of Defence continues to strengthen existing multilateral engagement with Australia’s Indo-Pacific partners, including through the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium. Australia’s bilateral defence relationships with partners in the Indian Ocean region continue to develop, consistent with commitments in the 2016 Defence White Paper. The Australian Government will continue to pursue relevant opportunities for bilateral and multilateral defence activities and training exercises in the Indian Ocean region.</p> <p>The Department of Home Affairs and Australian Border Force will continue to work with Indo-Pacific partners developing regional responses, capacity building programmes and joint operations to strengthen cooperation in maritime law enforcement operations throughout the region.</p>	<p>The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Australia and India was finalised by the Hon Scott Morrison MP in June 2020. In February 2021, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Australian Space Agency (ASA) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) was announced, and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands were identified as a potential location to support the launch of the Indian Gaganyaan space missions. The Department is working with ASA to explore how we can support this internationally significant venture.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>Noting the receptiveness and support of local communities, the Committee recommends that the Australian Government consider increased Defence and Border Protection activities, such as surveillance, naval patrols, a military reserve or cadet unit, and potential training exercises on Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands to demonstrate Australia’s commitment to the</p>	<p><b>Agreed in part.</b> The Australian Government recognises safeguarding Australia’s maritime approaches, offshore territories and borders is essential for Australia’s national security. Through investment in the Department of Defence and the Department of Home Affairs’ maritime and surveillance capabilities, the Australian Government maintains awareness of activities in its maritime domain, enabling early detection of potential threats to border security and appropriate responses to deter and defeat such threats.</p>	<p>The Department of Defence is currently in the project phase for the extension of the runway on Cocos (Keeling) Island.</p> <p>The Department of Home Affairs maintains responsibility for the North West Point Immigration Detention Centre.</p>

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islands. Consideration should also be given to how locally engaged employment opportunities can be provided as part of these activities.	<p>The Australian Government has increased the Department of Defence and Department of Home Affairs’ presence in the vicinity of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in recent years. Significant Australian Defence Force activities in Australia’s north and north-west maritime domain include Operation RESOLUTE and Exercises KAKADU, PITCH BLACK and NORTHERN SHIELD.</p> <p>Three Australian Army Regional Force Surveillance Units, located in North Queensland, Northern Territory and the Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley regions of Western Australia, meet Australia’s strategic and operational needs. These Reserve-staff Units conduct long range reconnaissance and surveillance patrols in sparsely populated and remote regions of northern Australia and protect against illegal smuggling and fishing. Their capability relies on significant support from the wider Army and larger nearby regional centres to provide management, logistics and training. A more permanent Australian Defence Force presence through a reserve capability in the Indian Ocean Territories is unlikely to deliver enhanced situational awareness in our maritime domain.</p> <p>The Department of Home Affairs employs a small contingent of locally engaged non-ongoing Australian Border Force Officers on Christmas Island who deliver functions on behalf of the Australian Border Force, including clearance of goods and people. Due to the limited demand for these functions, the Department of Home Affairs has no plans to increase this cohort.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that, as part of the project to upgrade the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Airport runway, the Australian Government ensures that extensive consultation is undertaken with all stakeholders, including Australian Government agencies, commercial partners, and the local communities. Care should be taken to fully assess and manage concerns relating to water catchment and storage issues, including for firefighting purposes near the airport.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b> The Australian Government, through the Department of Defence, will consult with all stakeholders, including Australian Government agencies, commercial partners and the local communities about the runway upgrade. Consultation will align with the Community Engagement Framework being developed by the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities to guide Australian Government engagement with the Indian Ocean Territories community.</p>	<p>The Department of Defence and the consulting team are working with other Departments and key stakeholders on future water considerations for Cocos (Keeling) Islands.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Australian Government consult with relevant stakeholders including Australian Government agencies, Christmas Island businesses and the local community in developing medium and long term solutions for the Christmas Island wharf to ensure that strategic, economic and social objectives can be met.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b> The Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities is finalising the detailed design of a replacement wharf crane and mooring system at Christmas Island. Significant users of this port infrastructure were consulted during the design process.</p>	<p>The Australian Government announced \$27.3 million over three years from 2018-19 to replace the wharf crane and mooring systems on Christmas Island.</p> <p>Following a report for tender, the combined crane and moorings upgrades will be delivered.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Australian Government engage with local communities to ensure that any proposals for works, funding and planning in the Indian Ocean Territories result in direct benefits to the local communities and, where possible, draw on local suppliers of goods and services.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b> The Australian Government will work with local communities to ensure benefits of works are maximised. Subject to Commonwealth Procurement Rules, and where the appropriate skills are available, local suppliers will be engaged to provide goods and services.</p>	<p>The original Australian Government response still holds.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends any Australian Government departments wishing to do work in the Indian Ocean Territories should do so in genuine partnership with local communities. Departments should undertake extensive consultation processes and respond to the needs of the local community. Government departments should discuss their proposed consultation methods with key stakeholders on the islands to ensure those processes are effective and genuinely inclusive.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b> The Australian Government consults with and works alongside local businesses and communities to achieve positive economic and social outcomes for communities.</p> <p>The Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities is developing the Indian Ocean Territories Community Engagement Framework to guide Australian Government engagement with the community.</p>	<p>The Australian Government consults with and works alongside local businesses and communities to achieve positive economic and social outcomes for communities. The Department is committed to meaningful, two-way engagement and communications with the IOT communities on matters that are of importance to, or affect, residents. The Department and Administrator share information and consult with the community through a range of local channels, to maximise reach and engagement. Engagement and communication is tailored to the project or issue – and the relevant stakeholders/communities (including use of channels and supporting materials which reflect cultural and linguistic diversities). All</p>

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		stakeholders on island are supported and encouraged to engage through a variety of channels. Engagement is consistent with best practice public participation models and public service engagement protocols and principles. The Department engages with, and provides advice to, other government agencies and contractors on their consultation approaches and activities in the IOT
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**Governance in the Indian Ocean Territories: final report (March 2016)**

**Economic Development and Governance:**

**(19 Recommendations: 2 Noted | 11 Supported | 1 Partially Supported | 5 Not Supported)**

Recommendation	Official Australian Government Response	Update as of March 2021
<b>Recommendation 1</b> The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development require air carriers to the Indian Ocean Territories to distribute a visitor information card to all passengers for the purpose of collecting visitor data. The completed cards will be deposited in a marked box at the airport arrival terminals on Christmas Island and West Island for collection by the Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands Tourism Associations.	<b>Not Supported.</b> The Cocos (Keeling) Islands Tourism Association currently collects data on incoming and outgoing passengers at the airport. The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development has implemented alternative arrangements with the Christmas Island Tourism Association to support the collection of visitor data.	Visitor data is collected by both Tourism Associations to inform future initiatives of tourism stakeholders.
<b>Recommendation 2</b> The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development negotiate a Service Delivery Arrangement, in consultation with the Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands Tourism Associations, to facilitate access to tourism support services provided by Tourism Western Australia.	<b>Supported.</b> The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development is seeking the views of the Western Australian Government on options to support the development of tourism in the Indian Ocean Territories.	The Regional Development Organisation was established to support economic development in the Indian Ocean Territories and is developing a strategy to increase tourism in the Indian Ocean Territories, including through increased promotion. The strategy will ensure the Indian Ocean Territories are included in national marketing campaigns alongside Tourism Western Australia.
<b>Recommendation 3</b> The Committee recommends that the relationship between Tourism Australia and the Indian Ocean Territories tourism associations be formalised. The formalised arrangement should include provision for Tourism Australia to build capacity, including promotion and marketing expertise, in the Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands Tourism Associations. This could include secondment placements and mentoring opportunities.	<b>Not Supported.</b> The Australian Government does not consider there is benefit to formalising the relationships between Tourism Australia and the Indian Ocean Territories tourism associations. While Tourism Australia does not undertake domestic marketing or destination development assistance, Tourism Australia regularly engages with the Indian Ocean Territories tourism associations to support the development of tourism products and advise on marketing, policy and strategic issues. Tourism Australia also supports the Indian Ocean Territories participation in trade events, including the annual Australian Tourism Exchange, and provides access to its digital and social media channels.	The Department supports the relationship that has been established between Tourism Australia and the Indian Ocean Territories tourism associations. Tourism Australia has already committed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advocate for the inclusion of the Indian Ocean Territories in the Australia Tourism Data Warehouse;</li> <li>• incorporate the Indian Ocean Territories onto the online Tourism Australia map within six months;</li> <li>• assess Indian Ocean Territories tourism products for inclusion into the Aussie Specialist program, an online course designed to assist travel agents to sell Australian tourism products; and</li> <li>• meet with the Indian Ocean Territories tourism associations to discuss marketing opportunities within 12 months.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 4</b> The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development exempt airline operators that are interested in providing scheduled international flights to Christmas Island from landing and security fees for an initial operational period of 12 months.	<b>Supported.</b> The Administrator of the Territories of Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands has the authority to set fees and charges for utilities and services. In March 2016, the Administrator provided an exemption from landing charges to all international air services using the Christmas Island Airport. Security fees are not currently charged.	Security Fees: The Department did not support providing an exemption for security screening charges on the basis that the charges recognise the additional staffing costs for providing security services to an aircraft.  Landing Charges: The Department granted an exemption effective from 1 March 2016 for landing charges to all international air services using Christmas Island Airport. Prior to the COVID19 related international travel bans, Christmas Island was receiving chartered flights from Indonesia and Malaysia that were taking advantage of this exemption. It is expected that flights will resume once restrictions are eased.
<b>Recommendation 5</b> The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development review the scope, structure and functions	<b>Noted.</b> The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development will develop options to support economic development, including considering the role of the Regional Development Organisation.	In August 2020 the Regional Development Organisation announced a range of projects funded by the Department to help the IOT tourism sector recover from COVID-19, including:

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<p>of the Regional Development Organisation and publish the outcomes of the review on the Department’s website.</p> <p>If the review reveals that the organisation has merit in continuing, dedicated funding should be provided to support its scope, structure and functions.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of an IOT Destination Management Plan targeting the mainland Australian market, which also includes a \$445,000 IOT regional tourism marketing package.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 6</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, as a priority, commission a comprehensive geological survey on Christmas Island to inform land development and responsible water management.</p> <p>The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development should explore the options to share the cost of the survey with Phosphate Resources Limited.</p>	<p><b>Supported.</b> The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development and Geoscience Australia signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 6 May 2016 to assess the feasibility of mapping potential groundwater resources on Christmas Island using airborne geophysical technologies and on-ground hydrogeological methods. Phosphate Resources Limited made a financial contribution to the initial scoping study.</p> <p>Geoscience Australia completed their initial scoping study in February 2017. The Department and Geoscience Australia expect to progress the next phase of analytical work in mid-2017. Conduct of airborne electromagnetic mapping is subject to the outcomes of the analytical work and available funding.</p>	<p>The Department has worked with Geoscience Australia to explore the feasibility of mapping the basalt and groundwater system on Christmas Island.</p> <p>In 2017, Geoscience Australia undertook a scoping study. Then, in November 2019, the agency undertook a technical risk assessment.</p> <p>Geoscience Australia estimated a total cost of \$9.1 million to undertake three-dimensional mapping and drilling.</p> <p>The Department is considering the most cost-effective options for ensuring water security for Christmas Island.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development engage a legal specialist to review the land trust on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands to determine legal ownership and control of all land with a view to reforming or replacing it.</p> <p>New arrangements must be informed by agreement with trust beneficiaries, define the responsibilities and obligations of trustees to the people of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and subject to probity considerations, enable land to be leased or sold in support of economic development.</p>	<p><b>Supported.</b> The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development has obtained legal advice on the land trust deeds and the operation of the trusts. The Minister with responsibility for Territories will provide advice and options to the community and the Trustee – the Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands – to improve the operation of the trusts.</p>	<p>The Department has received legal advice in relation to the land trust on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands to distinguish the role of the Council and its role as a trustee.</p> <p>This legal advice has continued to inform policy work currently being undertaken by the Department, including efforts to support economic diversification.</p> <p>It is understood that the Shire of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands sought and received legal advice with regard to the Trust and role of the Shire.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, as a priority, develop a Crown land management framework for the Indian Ocean Territories.</p> <p>The Crown land management framework, including the updated Crown Land Management Plan and the Commonwealth Assets Management Plan, should be published on the Department’s website, and a package of information made available to potential investors. The Crown land management framework should make clear the principles governing the release of Crown land, and the process that developers need to follow to lease and purchase available Crown land.</p>	<p><b>Supported.</b> The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development consulted on a Draft Christmas Island Crown Land Management Plan in 2016. Following approval by the Minister with responsibility for Territories, the Plan will be released in March 2017.</p> <p>The Department will commence work on a Crown Land Management Plan for the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in 2017, noting that approximately only 15 per cent of land on the islands is Crown Land. The remaining 85 per cent of land on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands is held in the land trusts.</p>	<p>The Department developed a draft Crown land management framework for Christmas Island, comprised of an updated Crown Land Management Plan and Land Disposal Policy (referred to as a Commonwealth Assets Management Plan in a previous Departmental submission), to support the release of land.</p> <p>The Strategic Assessment Plan will guide future development proposals to align with the Government’s strategic direction for land on Christmas Island.</p> <p>A draft Crown land management framework for the Cocos (Keeling) Islands has been produced and the Department will undertake consultation shortly.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 9</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development investigate whether Crown land disposal ordinances are warranted to facilitate the lease and sale of Crown land in the Indian Ocean Territories.</p> <p>If Crown land ordinances are warranted, they should be established without delay.</p>	<p><b>Not Supported.</b> The Australian Government is committed to providing Crown Land on Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands for commercial and residential purposes and in accordance with the Commonwealth Property Disposal Policy.</p>	<p>The original Australian Government response still holds.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 10</b></p>	<p><b>Supported.</b> The Australian Government will investigate the implications of transferring the proposed sites and, where appropriate, seek formal approvals for the transfers.</p>	<p>The Department continues to liaise with the Shire to establish its interest in, and whether the release of this land is appropriate for the suggested purposes.</p>

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<p>The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development transfer, on a long-term lease basis, the following Crown land assets on West Island to the Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands for development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the four commercially zoned parcels on <b>Emden Walk</b>;</li> <li>the <b>Light Industrial Area</b> bounded by the Sydney Highway, Fremantle Road and Alexander Street; and</li> <li>the land suitable for retail at lot 193 <b>William Keeling Crescent</b>.</li> </ul>	<p>The Australian Government notes that one of the proposed commercially zoned blocks is privately owned and cannot be transferred.</p> <p>The Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands also recently accepted the Government’s offer of two parcels of land at Buffets Close for residential development.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 11</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development develop, publish and implement a formal consultation protocol for Service Delivery Arrangements and the delivery of services in the Indian Ocean Territories.</p>	<p><b>Supported.</b> The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development has a number of mechanisms in place to consult with the community, including information sessions on Service Delivery Arrangements, publication of Facts Sheets and an online feedback form. The Department will publish a formal consultation protocol in 2017.</p>	<p>The Department and Administrator share information and consult with the community through a range of local channels, to maximise reach and engagement. Engagement and communication is tailored to the project or issue – and the relevant stakeholders/communities (including use of channels and supporting materials which reflect cultural and linguistic diversities). All stakeholders on island are supported and encouraged to engage through a variety of channels. Engagement is consistent with best practice public participation models and public service engagement protocols and principles. The Department engages with, and provides advice to, other government agencies and contractors on their consultation approaches and activities in the IOT</p> <p>The Department has in place a number of mechanisms for consulting with the community and stakeholders around the delivery of services. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SDA contact officer meetings to discuss service delivery issues and feedback from the community;</li> <li>publication of SDA Annual Report;</li> <li>online feedback form;</li> <li>SDA information kits as guidance for State agency employees;</li> <li>SDA factsheets for the community; and</li> <li>feedback from the Administrator on service delivery issues and community priorities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 12</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development continue to publish Service Delivery Arrangement factsheets and annual Indian Ocean Territories’ budgets, and recommence the publication of annual performance reports for Western Australian agencies providing services in the Indian Ocean Territories.</p> <p>These accountability and transparency documents should be made easy to locate on the Department’s website and accompanied by current governance and administration information.</p>	<p><b>Supported.</b> The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development will continue to publish information on Service Delivery Arrangements, including an Annual Report and Facts Sheets. The Department will review its website to improve the accessibility of information.</p>	<p>The 2019–20 Annual Report is currently being finalised, in conjunction with the WA Government.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 13</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>publicise the process by which community engagement forms are monitored and responded to; and</li> </ul>	<p><b>Supported.</b> The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development will publish an overview of arrangements to respond to community engagement forms as part of the consultation protocol.</p>	<p>The Department routinely reports back to the community on the outcomes of consultation processes and what was heard through various consultation channels. The Department ensures feedback received through forms and other channels receive timely responses, in line with public commitments and engagement protocols. Forms and email inboxes are regularly and routinely monitored. The Department’s web pages are actively reviewed and updated to ensure information on services is current.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>commit to responding to feedback provided via the community engagement form within a specified timeframe.</li> </ul>		
<b>Recommendation 14</b> The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development commit to publishing commissioned reports on issues affecting services in the Indian Ocean Territories, or a summary of report outcomes, as soon as practicable. This commitment should be specified within the Department’s consultation protocol.	<b>Supported.</b> The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development will publish commissioned reports or a summary of those reports where they include classified or commercially sensitive information.	Reports and report summaries, including on services and projects, are routinely published on the Departmental website, excluding those which include content that is commercial-in-confidence or of a highly sensitive nature. Publication are promoted through government media releases and community bulletins.
<b>Recommendation 15</b> The Committee recommends that the Australian National Audit Office examine Service Delivery Arrangements between the Commonwealth and Western Australian agencies to determine whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>services are coordinated effectively;</li> <li>agreements are adequately monitored; and</li> <li>outcomes achieve value for money.</li> </ul>	The Australian National Audit Office responded to this recommendation on 15 December 2016.	The original Australian Government response still holds.
<b>Recommendation 16</b> The Committee recommends that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, as a priority, identify all delegated and legislated powers vested in the Administrator, or departmental officials, for the governance and administration of the Indian Ocean Territories. This information should be contained in a register that is maintained and updated regularly to ensure currency.	<b>Supported.</b> The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development is working to simplify and improve transparency of delegation arrangements.	Where appropriate, the Department continues to simplify and improve transparency of delegation arrangements.
<b>Recommendation 17</b> The Committee recommends that the Minister for Territories provide the current Administrator and future Administrators with formal advice about their reportable responsibilities and a list of all legislated and delegated powers vested in the role. If, as a result of this undertaking, additional responsibilities are identified that attach to the role of the Administrator, these should be supported by a secondment of staff from the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development.  The Department should also maintain publicly available information about the role of the Administrator, including readily accessible information on their responsibilities and decision making powers in relation to the governance and administration of the Indian Ocean Territories.	<b>Supported.</b> The Minister with responsibility for Territories provides the Administrator of the Territories of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands with advice about his or her role at the commencement of his or her term. The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development has published an overview of the Administrator’s role and responsibilities on its website.	The current Administrator was provided with an induction briefing on commencement of the role. The package included information on the role and responsibilities of the Administrator and a list of all legislated and delegated powers held by the position.  The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development has published an overview of the Administrator’s role and responsibilities on its website. The Administrator regularly communicates about her role, responsibilities and activities through a range of channels.
<b>Recommendation 18</b> The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with the shires, undertake a review of local government in the Indian Ocean Territories to determine if there is scope to streamline and amalgamate some functions.	<b>Partially Supported.</b> The Australian Government does not propose a comprehensive review of local government in the Indian Ocean Territories at this time.  The Government agrees there may be scope to streamline the delivery of some services delivered by the Government. The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development will consider options to increase private sector or local government delivery of services and functions.	The Department continually assesses opportunities to streamline service delivery, where and when appropriate to do so.



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<p><b>Recommendation 19</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Australian Government seek formal advice from the Governments of Western Australia and the Northern Territory to determine whether they are receptive to the proposal for incorporation of the Indian Ocean Territories into their State or Territory.</p> <p>Based upon a positive response to this proposal, the Australian Government should develop an incorporation model for consultation and review.</p>	<p><b>Supported.</b> The Minister with responsibility for Territories will write to the Premier of Western Australia and Chief Minister of the Northern Territory in 2017 to formally explore interest in incorporation. The Australian Government will only give further consideration to this recommendation in consultation with the local communities.</p>	<p>Formal and informal engagement with the WA Government have taken place regarding incorporation. This includes correspondence from the Minister with responsibility for the Territories to the WA Premier and NT Chief Minister, and meetings between senior Government officials of the Department and the WA Department of the Premier and Cabinet.</p>
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**Governance in the Indian Ocean Territories: interim report (June 2015)**

**Economic Development: (3 Recommendations: 1 Noted | 2 Not Supported)**

Recommendation	Official Australian Government Response	Update as of March 2021
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Australian Government commit to reopening a casino on Christmas Island and establish the necessary policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks to allow for this without delay.</p> <p>Once the necessary frameworks are in place the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development conduct an appropriate process to assess proposals to operate a casino from private sector proponents.</p>	<p><b>Noted.</b> The Australian Government will seek independent advice on regulatory and compliance arrangements for casino operations in the states and territories and a best practice model for Christmas Island.</p>	<p>The Australian Government has not made a decision on the re-establishment of an integrated resort with a casino licence on Christmas Island. The issue is complex and any proposal for an integrated resort with a casino licence must maximise benefits to the community. Rigorous due diligence must be undertaken, including an assessment of financial viability and capacity to comply with any regulatory requirements.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development take action to address any legislative anomalies or administrative deficiencies that may prevent educational institutions in the Indian Ocean Territories from providing educational services to international fee-paying students in accordance with the framework established by the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (Cth).</p>	<p><b>Not Supported.</b> The attendance of international students at schools in the Indian Ocean Territories would be on a full cost-recovery basis. As costs are significantly higher for schools in the Indian Ocean Territories, they are unlikely to be competitive relative to schools on the mainland.</p>	<p>The original Australian Government response still holds.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Australian Government call for expressions of interest for the delivery of freight by sea to the Indian Ocean Territories for the carriage of Australian Government goods, to be followed by a full tender process if indicated by the outcome of this process.</p>	<p><b>Not Supported.</b> Sea freight is a commercial service provided by the private sector. The Australian Government is not a major user of sea freight and does not have sufficient purchasing power to drive cost reductions.</p>	<p>The original Australian Government response still holds.</p>

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**Inquiry into the changing economic environment in the IOT (March 2010)**

**(26 Recommendations: 7 Noted | 13 Supported | 6 Not Supported)**

Recommendation	Official Australian Government Response	Update as of March 2021
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that the Shire of Christmas Island in partnership with the Christmas Island community and relevant stakeholders examine ways to diversify the local economy, with a focus on developing tourism as part of its economic strategy in response to the possible permanent closure of the Christmas Island phosphate mine. In addition, the Attorney-General’s Department should provide adequate funding for secretariat support to the Shire for this purpose.</p>	<p><b>Support.</b> To date, the Shire has been reluctant to take a leadership role in economic development on Christmas Island. The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government has not allocated specific funding to the Shire for this task, but the Shire receives annual funding which in the 2010/2011 financial year was \$2.839 million. The Shire has the ability to allocate this funding according to its priorities. The government has previously funded studies on developing tourism (The Christmas Island Destination Development Report of April 2008). The Territories Division, as part of the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government is also involved in the Inter-Departmental Committee for National Long Term Tourism Strategy and through this will pursue access for the Territories to training, mentoring and advertising.</p> <p>There is currently no need for the funding of specific secretariat support to the Shire for the purpose of tourism development.</p>	<p>In 2020-21 the Shire received \$6.1M as part of the Australian Government’s Financial Assistance Grants Program.</p> <p>The Regional Development Organisation is charged with economic development across both Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.</p> <p>In 2020, the Australian Government provided \$445,000 for a tourism promotion package for the Indian Ocean Territories, including the production and broadcasting of Destination WA episodes on the IOTs. The Department continues to work closely with the Regional Development Organisation to support tourism and other economic diversity opportunities in the Indian Ocean Territories.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>The committee recommends the Government provide funding for economic modelling to be undertaken on the impact on the Christmas Island economy of activities associated with the operation of the Christmas Island Immigration Reception and Processing Centre and make this information available in a public report.</p>	<p><b>Support.</b> The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government has allocated funding for a Social and Economic Impact Assessment of the operation of the Christmas Island Immigration Detention Centre on the local community, which will include economic modelling. The project has commenced and will be undertaken with input from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.</p>	<p>The Social and Economic Impact Assessment was publically released on 25 October 2013 and is available on the Department’s website.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>The committee recommends the Shire of Christmas Island and the Attorney-General’s Department coordinate a program of price monitoring for the Indian Ocean Territories.</p>	<p><b>Support.</b> The Department has explored on-island options for collecting the data. However this was not successful. The Department is now considering other methods to collect data in line with the ABS “basket of goods” to enable analysis of cost of living trends and comparisons for both Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.</p>	<p>Through a Service Delivery Arrangement with the Western Australian Government Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), cost of living trends in the Indian Ocean Territories are now analysed and published in the Indian Ocean Territories Price Index. The Price Index compares the cost of living in Perth using a standardised ‘basket of goods and services.’ The basket is made up of approximately 250 items across categories including food, tobacco and alcohol, clothing, utilities, household equipment, transport, health, education and recreation. Indian Ocean Territories Price Indices were published in 2012 and 2020. The Department intends to conduct and publish the Indian Ocean Territories Price Index biannually, aligning with the WA Government Regional Price Index program. Price collection activities for 2021 have commenced, with additional qualitative information being collated related to changes to the Indian Ocean Territories retail environment, including any COVID-19 impacts.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p>The committee recommends the Minister for Home Affairs take measures to ensure Corporations Law is applied to the Indian Ocean Territories as soon as possible.</p>	<p><b>Support.</b> The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and The Treasury are working together on the extension of the operation of Corporations Law to the Indian Ocean Territories. A community consultation process is currently underway. The Administrator of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, as chair of the Economic Development Consultative Groups (EDCG), is leading consultation with relevant stakeholders on both Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.</p> <p>Feedback received from the communities on Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands will inform any further consultation to be undertaken with parties directly</p>	<p>Legislation to extend Corporations Law to the Indian Ocean Territories has passed and will come into effect on 2 August 2021.</p>

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	affected by the extension of Corporations Law to the Territories and amendments to the legislation will be undertaken where required.	
<b>Recommendation 5</b> The committee recommends that Government agencies sourcing goods and services from businesses of the Indian Ocean Territories ensure payment of accounts within 30 days of the receipt of invoice.	<b>Support.</b> It is Government policy to pay invoices within 30 days. The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government makes every effort to comply with this policy.	The Department continues to work within government policy to have invoices paid within 30 days.
<b>Recommendation 6</b> The committee recommends that arrangements be progressed as far as possible between the Attorney-General's Department and the Government of Western Australia to place a health and safety inspectorate on Christmas Island.	<b>Do not support.</b> Occupational Health and Safety inspections and compliance are provided by Worksafe WA under a Service Delivery Arrangement. Worksafe WA inspectors regularly travel to the Indian Ocean Territories to conduct inspections. A permanent inspector is not needed and not consistent with comparable remote communities on the mainland.	Comcare inspectors regularly travel to the Indian Ocean Territories to undertake inspections of all Commonwealth facilities and workplaces.
<b>Recommendation 7</b> The committee recommends that the building codes currently applied to the Indian Ocean Territories be reviewed with the aim of making them more suitable to the physical environment and climate.	<b>Support.</b> The Indian Ocean Territories are subject to the same building code that applies throughout mainland Australia: the Building Code of Australia. The provisions of the Code are appropriate to a range of environments, including coastal and tropical climates.  The code only applies different standards to regions with different perceived risk of cyclone or high wind action, as determined by Australian Standard 1170.2:2002. The Standard rates the Cocos (Keeling) Islands as region B (cyclonic) and Christmas Island as region C (non-cyclonic). The Standard was compiled in 2002 and it may be appropriate to reconsider these ratings with regard to current data. The Department has written to Standards Australia supporting a review of the Standard.  Requirements relating to plot ratios, car parking and limits on land use are found with the Town Planning Schemes of each Territory. The Schemes are the responsibility of the relevant local governments and are compiled through the same process as is used in remote and regional Western Australia. Both the Shire of Christmas Island and the Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands are in the process of reviewing their Town Planning Schemes.	The original Australian Government response still holds.
<b>Recommendation 8</b> The committee recommends the Government provide funding to the Shire of Christmas Island and the Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands for the establishment of local economic development officers.	<b>Noted.</b> The Australian Government provides funding for an economic development officer for the Indian Ocean Territories. The officer works with the Shires on local issues, however, is attached to the Indian Ocean Territories Administrator for funding and oversight purposes. Both Shires have access to the services of the economic development officer.	Support for Regional Economic Development is provided by the Department, and delivered through the Regional Development Organisation.  Two project officers have been engaged by the RDO under this funding. The development of an IOT strategic plan will be funded under the project in line with the RDO's business plan and the requirement for all Regional Development Agencies to develop regional strategic plans.
<b>Recommendation 9</b> The committee recommends that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Minister for Home Affairs provide discretionary grant approval authority to the Indian Ocean Territories Economic Development Consultative Groups for approval of individual grants under the economic development funding program; and</li> <li>the former Indian Ocean Territories incorporated advisory bodies be dissolved.</li> </ul>	<b>Do not support.</b> The Australian Government has Commonwealth Grants Guidelines that are designed to ensure probity in the administration of grants programs. These guidelines require decisions about discretionary grant funding to be made by Commonwealth Ministers or delegated senior officials after receiving agency advice on the merits of the grant application. The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government complies with these guidelines and submits applications for grant funding to the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government.  <b>Noted.</b> Dissolution of the former Indian Ocean Territories incorporated advisory bodies is a matter for the membership of those bodies.	The original Australian Government response still holds. However, we inform that the former Indian Ocean Territories incorporated advisory bodies have been dissolved.
<b>Recommendation 10</b> The committee recommends that the application process required under the economic development funding program be reviewed with the aim of streamlining the application process.	<b>Support.</b> The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government has completed a review of the economic development grants program, including related policy and processes. The review included 7 recommendations for streamlining and further developing the economic development grants program. The review contains input from relevant stakeholders.	This program no longer exists. However, the Australian Government is committed to diversifying the Indian Ocean Territories and has provided a range of funding, including a \$4.2 million economic diversification package for Christmas Island in 2019, and \$8.15 million of COVID-19 stimulus projects for Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands in 2020.

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	The Department commenced new arrangements as of 1 July 2011, including reviewing the Terms of Reference for the Economic Development Consultative Groups, increasing the amount of funding available through the program to \$150,000.00 and implementing a complaints process, dispute resolution process and an appeals process.	
<b>Recommendation 11</b>  The committee recommends the amount of funds available under the economic development funding program be increased to \$150 000 per annum for each of the Indian Ocean Territories.	<b>Support.</b> Following a review of the economic development funding program, the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government has increased the amount available under the program to \$150 000 per annum for each of the Indian Ocean Territories. This will enable applicants with larger projects to apply for funding through the program.	This program no longer exists. However, the Australian Government is committed to diversifying the Indian Ocean Territories and has provided a range of funding, including a \$4.2 million economic diversification package for Christmas Island in 2019, and \$8.15 million of COVID-19 stimulus projects for Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands in 2020.
<b>Recommendation 12</b>  The committee recommends that on finalisation of the feasibility study into the upgrade of the road that runs to the North West Point Detention Centre on Christmas Island (not withstanding any recommendations and findings contained in the report) that, funds be made available without delay for the upgrade of the road to commence as soon as possible.	<b>Noted.</b> The Indian Ocean Territories Taskforce has commissioned WA Main Roads to undertake a feasibility study on the road to North West Point. The study has been completed. The Shire of Christmas Island has negotiated funding support to maintain the road with the Department of Immigration.	The Department provided \$293,000 to upgrade the road under the Roads to Recovery Program. The upgrade was completed in 2014.  The North West Point Immigration Detention Centre road is an asset of the National Parks, with Australian Government funding provided to commence road network upgrades, including sealing.
<b>Recommendation 13</b>  The committee recommends the Shire of Christmas Island and the Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands put into place a practical, administrative complaints handling process. In addition, the Attorney-General's Department should provide ongoing adequate funding for secretariat support for this purpose.	<b>Support.</b> Local governments are required to have a designated complaints officer under the Local Government Act 1995 (WA) (CI) & (CKI). Local governments are encouraged to supplement this position with a complaints process and policy. These are useful mechanisms for improving customer service and identifying and responding to problems.  As this is a core function of local government, it should be funded from with existing operating budgets.	The original Australian Government response still holds.
<b>Recommendation 14</b>  The committee recommends the Government examine the feasibility (including cost and security considerations) of implementing a tourist or short stay visa waiver scheme to encourage international tourists to visit the Indian Ocean Territories.	<b>Do not support.</b> Australia has a universal visa requirement for all non-Australian citizens intending to enter Australia. Australia's visa system is non-discriminatory and visitors from anywhere in the world need to apply for a visa.  Australia is committed to facilitating the movement of people across the Australian border, while protecting the community and maintaining appropriate compliance. Australia does not operate a visa waiver program for any country and our visa arrangements are not based on reciprocity.	The original Australian Government response still holds.
<b>Recommendation 15</b>  The committee recommends the Steering Committee responsible for implementation of the Christmas Island tourism plan in consultation with the Attorney-General's Department, develop a service delivery arrangement with Tourism Australia to review, revise and implement the Christmas Island Destination Development Report.	<b>Support.</b> The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government supports the operation of the Steering Committee. However, the Steering Committee has not met for some time and has not taken an active role in developing the tourism market on Christmas Island.  The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government continues to support tourism in the Indian Ocean Territories through funding both the Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands Tourism Associations to provide destination marketing, visitor information services, member support and other initiatives. Both Associations are implementing their recently completed destination marketing plans.  The Christmas Island Destination Development Report still provides a basis for tourism growth. It is used by organisations and individuals including the Economic Development Officer, employed through the Department, and the two economic development consultative groups to promote tourism opportunities.  Additionally, the Indian Ocean Territories are part of the Mid-West Gascoyne Regional Development Australia committee who in conjunction with the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government are funding various tourism initiatives for the Indian Ocean Territories.	The Regional Development Organisation's role is to work with all levels of government, businesses and community groups to support the economic development of Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands, including for tourism.  The RDO works with local businesses, community organisations and individuals to identify new opportunities, and develop solutions to a variety of issues. One of its main objectives is to support economic diversification in order to build sustainable industries, and provide local jobs.

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<p><b>Recommendation 16</b></p> <p>The committee recommends the Shire of Christmas Island and the Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands in consultation with the Attorney-General's Department, explore the viability of establishing sources of renewable energy to supplement the power needs of the Indian Ocean Territories, taking into consideration infrastructure requirements and costs.</p>	<p><b>Support.</b> The Indian Ocean Territories Power Authority continues to investigate possible alternative energy sources in the Indian Ocean Territories. A report has been received and the recommendations are being considered. This information will be used in future capital and infrastructure planning.</p>	<p>A private company, Island Power, received \$315,504 from the Australian Government to undertake technical and financial viability studies into renewable energy microgrids in the Indian Ocean Territories in 2020.</p> <p>In 2020, the Department amended its Renewable Energy Buy Back Scheme to encourage the uptake of small scale solar in the Territories resulting in more than 60 additional premises installing solar panels in the past year. The Department has sought expressions of interest for the supply of solar renewable energy on Christmas Island and is in discussions with a private company for the supply of solar renewable energy on Home Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 17</b></p> <p>The committee recommends the Shire of Christmas Island and the Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands in consultation with the Attorney-General's Department, draft and implement a land release and development plan to attract investment and stimulate the construction industries of the Indian Ocean Territories. In addition, the Attorney-General's Department should provide ongoing adequate funding for secretariat support for this purpose.</p>	<p><b>Noted.</b> The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government has completed a Crown Land Management Plan Report, which will be used to guide land management decisions. The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government has also commissioned Outline Development Plans for high value areas in the Territories, such as the Q Station, CI Light Industrial Area, Poon Saan residential area and Buffett Close extension. The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government is in the process of releasing land on Christmas Island for both residential and commercial use. Most land on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands is under the control of the Shire, through the Cocos Land Trust arrangements.</p> <p>Any disposal of Commonwealth land, must comply with the Commonwealth Property Disposals Policy.</p>	<p>The Department released a Christmas Island Crown Land Management Plan in 2017. A Cocos (Keeling) Islands Crown Land Management Plan is under development. The Christmas Island Strategic Assessment will also help inform land release and development.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 18</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that the Commonwealth transfer ownership of the accommodation and facilities located at the former Quarantine Station site on West Island to the Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands to ease pressure on housing supply.</p>	<p><b>Do not support.</b> The Government acknowledges a shortage of housing exists on West Island in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. The majority of land in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, including land on West Island, is held on trust by the Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands for the benefit of the Cocos community.</p> <p>The Government does not support transferring the former Quarantine Station site on West Island to the Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands. In the short term, the accommodation buildings at the former Quarantine Station are being used to house the workers for the Rumah Baru port project. Once this project is completed, the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government expects the accommodation buildings to be used by workers for the runway refurbishment project. Storage buildings at the former Quarantine Station are being used by the Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands.</p> <p>The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government recently completed an Outline Development Plan (ODP) for the former Quarantine Station site. The ODP acknowledged that, in the first instance, residential development on West Island should occur closer to the settled area to take advantage of existing infrastructure. The ODP proposed a number of options for the former Quarantine Station, which were developed in close consultation with the Cocos community. Options include short term accommodation, but not residential accommodation.</p> <p>The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government is in the process of building housing on Commonwealth owned blocks in Buffet Close. Other blocks are privately held and have not been built on. In 2010/11, the Department will commission a plan to expand Buffett Close to provide additional residential blocks close to the existing settled area.</p> <p>Any disposal of Commonwealth land, must comply with the Commonwealth Property Disposals Policy.</p>	<p>The original Australian Government response still holds.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 19</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that the potential effects of climate change be acknowledged as they will affect future economic</p>	<p><b>Support.</b> The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government is undertaking this work in close consultation with the Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands communities. The Indian Ocean Territories Climate</p>	<p>The Department, in collaboration with the Shire and the WA Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH), has undertaken a study to determine the vulnerability of Cocos (Keeling) Island to coastal hazards, including erosion and</p>

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development, especially on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and that the Economic Development Consultative Groups and other stakeholders are fully briefed on these, and an appropriate risk evaluation built into any proposals relating to economic development.	Change Adaptation Strategy has been developed and released for initial comment. Community consultation regarding implementation of this strategy commenced on the Islands in November. This work is ongoing and will continue to inform the Government's activities in the Territories.	storm surge inundation. The study involved the collection of wave and current data (both inside the lagoon and ocean side of the atoll) to determine present and future predicted sea levels and identify which constructed and natural assets are at risk over time. The study will be used to enable DPLH to work with the Shire to deliver the Shire's first ever Local Planning Strategy, along with a new Local Planning Scheme. The Local Planning Scheme will provide strategic direction for land use planning and development, including consideration of potential impacts such as sea level rise and its effect on Cocos (Keeling) Island people, property and infrastructure. The project will also deliver the information required to inform Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaption Planning (CHRMAP) consistent with State Coastal Planning Policy. The CHRMAP is a separate project involving wide stakeholder engagement that will proceed once the finalised version of the Coastal Vulnerability Study is complete.
<b>Recommendation 20</b>  The committee recommends the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy in consultation with the Attorney-General's Department review the operation of the Australian Broadband Guarantee as it applies to the Indian Ocean Territories.	<b>Do not support.</b> The Australian Broadband Guarantee program has now closed. Services meeting the Australian Broadband Guarantee's defined standard for a metro-comparable broadband service are available commercially in the Indian Ocean Territories through the Christmas Island Internet Administration (CIIA).  Access to high speed broadband services will be improved in the Indian Ocean Territories with the launch of the National Broadband Network Long Term Satellite Service which is scheduled to commence in 2015. NBN Co is working to deploy two Ka-band satellites to provide access to peak download speeds of 12 megabits per second and upload speeds of 1-4 megabits per second. This represents a step-change over speeds experienced by users of these technologies today.	The original Australian Government response still holds.
<b>Recommendation 21</b>  The committee recommends the Government subsidise improvements to the satellite link for the Indian Ocean Territories to enable improved communication links with the mainland and to assist with business and service delivery.	<b>Noted.</b> The government's decision to create NBN Co Limited (NBN Co) will allow all Australians to obtain access to affordable high-speed broadband services. The new services will be delivered via a range of technologies, and the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy has advised that, in remote locations such as the Indian Ocean territories, the National Broadband Network (NBN) will be provided via next generation satellite technologies capable of delivering peak download speeds of at least 12 megabits per second.  Next-generation satellite technologies are capable of providing excellent broadband services in areas with low population density and will provide vastly superior satellite broadband services to those available today.  NBN Co is progressing the development and rollout of next-generation satellite broadband services. On 20 December 2010, NBN Co released its Corporate Plan which indicates that it will take approximately four years to design, build and launch two next generation Ka-band satellites. NBN Co anticipates long term satellite services commencing in financial year 2015.  Whilst this process is underway, the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government is investigating alternatives to improve the current accessibility.	Connectivity on Christmas Island is provided through the NBN Sky Muster <sup>™</sup> Satellite, as well as a second internet satellite connection with Speedcast. Vocus Communications' Australia-Singapore Cable also connects to the Island.  NBN Co's Sky Muster satellites also serve the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. NBN Co's BSS is available to businesses and enterprises on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. No commercial satellite service is available on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.
<b>Recommendation 22</b>  The committee recommends the Government provide assistance for the urgent upgrade of mobile telephony infrastructure and services on the Indian Ocean Territories in line with service standards available in metropolitan areas on the mainland.	<b>Noted.</b> Mobile telephony is currently provided by the private sector. The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government is considering what support might be available for these activities. However, there are significant areas of mainland Australia that do not have mobile telephony infrastructure and services to the same level as metropolitan areas.  As stated in its responses to questions on notice to the Committee in October 2009, the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy understands the Indian Ocean Territories do not have access to mainland mobile networks. There is currently no Australian Government funding available for the extension of mobile telephony infrastructure.	Round Two of the Building Better Regions Fund (2018) provided a \$628,000 grant to Christmas Island Domain Administration Limited to replace the 2G network on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands with a 4G LTE network. The project completion was delayed due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; completion is now expected in the first quarter of 2021.

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	<p>The provision of mobile phone coverage in a particular area is primarily a commercial decision made by mobile phone carriers. In making the decision to extend coverage to a particular area, carriers consider a range of factors, including site availability, cost structures, likely levels of demand from users and overall economic viability of the service.</p> <p>Carriers partly base this decision on how many people live and travel through the area, placing towers where there is a higher level of use. The cost to install towers in the Indian Ocean Territories could be great, especially given that the underlying infrastructure may also require an upgrade.</p> <p>It may be useful for organisations or communities in the Indian Ocean Territories to identify for carriers the potential demand for mobile services in the area. Information such as current and projected growth of population, together with records of traffic volumes can be helpful in assisting carriers to make informed decisions about whether to extend coverage to certain areas.</p> <p>Currently satellite mobile phone services cover the Indian Ocean Territories and are available from a number of providers. The Australian Government’s Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme improves the affordability of mobile communications for people living and working in areas without handheld terrestrial mobile coverage, by providing subsidies for the purchase of satellite phone handsets.</p> <p>As there is no reliable terrestrial mobile coverage in the Indian Ocean Territories, people who permanently live there or spend significant amounts of time on or around the islands are eligible to apply.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 23</b></p> <p>The committee recommends the Government explore the possibility of funding ‘self help’ transmitters in the Indian Ocean Territories to enable live sporting events to be received.</p>	<p><b>Noted.</b> The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government currently provides a range of analog radio and television services to the Indian Ocean Territories as a community service. The television service features the same content that is currently transmitted in analog to regional and remote Western Australia by the commercial and national broadcasters. This means those served by the community television service provided by the Department have access to a similar level of live sports coverage that is available to regional and remote Western Australian analog television viewers.</p> <p>The Territories have been included in the national plans for the transition to digital television. This will roll out via the Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) service, with a government subsidy scheme for individual households. The transition from analog to digital television across Australia is due for completion by the end of 2013. The subsidy will be available to Territories’ viewers in November 2012, at the same time as Western Australia. The Territories are scheduled to have full access to digital television, utilising the satellite installation subsidy, between November 2012 and the end of 2013. Digital television provides viewers with access to 16 channels, some of which feature sports coverage not available to analog television viewers.</p>	<p>Through the Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) service, the Christmas Island community has access to ABC and SBS as well as commercial channels. Digital commercial television channels provide programming from the 7, 9 and 10 Networks and high definition channels, One HD, 7mate and GEM.</p> <p>The Cocos (Keeling) Islands community has access to ABC and SBS as well as commercial channels through the VAST service. Digital commercial television channels provide programming from the 7, 9 and 10 Networks and high definition channels, One HD, 7mate and GEM.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 24</b></p> <p>The committee recommends the Government provide a subsidy aimed at reducing the cost of sea freight and shipping services for the Indian Ocean Territories.</p>	<p><b>Do not support.</b> The Government has not considered offering a subsidy on sea freight for the Indian Ocean Territories and does not consider that the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme (TFES) is an appropriate model for any such general sea freight subsidy. The TFES is targeted at goods of Australian origin shipped to Tasmania as inputs to production for selected industries only and for goods transported to mainland Australia from Tasmania (but not for international export). TFES does not assist the movement of fuel or private consumables such as household goods or food.</p> <p>Further, under Part VI of the Navigation Act 1912, ships carrying domestic cargoes across Bass Strait are required to obtain a coasting trade licence or permit – licences require that crew are paid Australian wages and permits are only issued when a licensed ship is not available. In contrast, the carriage of cargo or passengers between Cocos (Keeling) Islands or Christmas Island and ports in the Commonwealth or Territory are exempt from the provisions of Part VI of the Navigation Act 1912. The</p>	<p>The original Australian Government response still holds.</p>



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	<p>exemption of Cocos (Keeling) Islands has been in place since 28 June 1956 and the exemption of Christmas Island has been in place since 1998.</p> <p>The Government already provides significant support in the form of subsidised port fees and an underwritten air service that includes freight.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 25</b></p> <p>The committee recommends the Government continue to underwrite domestic air services to the Indian Ocean Territories in response to demand for services.</p>	<p><b>Support.</b> The Government engaged Virgin Australia on 1 April 2010 to provide an underwritten air service to the Indian Ocean Territories for the next three years, with an option to renew for a further two years. This service currently consists of three flights a week from Perth to Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. A fourth flight also operates between Perth and Christmas Island on Thursdays.</p> <p>To meet the Indian Ocean Territories freight demand, the Department is investigating the introduction of a dedicated air freighter to service both Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. A dedicated fortnightly air freighter service, using a 737-300, currently operates between Perth and Christmas Island.</p>	<p>The Government continues to underwrite air services. Currently Virgin Australia Regional Airlines service the islands twice weekly, Tuesday and Friday.</p> <p>A fortnightly freighter out of Perth also services both islands.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 26</b></p> <p>The committee recommends that cabotage restrictions should be removed for the Indian Ocean Territories (IOTs) and that prior to this the Government undertake an assessment of the infrastructure and administrative requirements for the IOTs, taking into consideration asset and funding needs, and time frames for upgrades and restructures particularly in regard to the runway and immigration facility upgrades.</p>	<p><b>Noted.</b> In 2009, the Australian Government released the National Aviation Policy White Paper (White Paper), which provides a comprehensive long-term aviation policy framework for the Australian aviation industry. The Government's position on cabotage is discussed at page 44 of the White Paper, which provides that:</p> <p>'As a general rule, the Australian Government does not intend to permit cabotage. [However]...the Government may consider unilateral cabotage in exceptional circumstances: for example...on a more long term basis when a foreign carrier may seek to operate on a route which is not currently served by scheduled domestic airlines or which requires a government subsidy (such as routes between some of Australia's external territories and the mainland).'</p> <p>Noting the variety of possible costs and benefits the Joint Standing Committee's Report has identified in the event of removal of cabotage restriction for the Indian Ocean Territories, any application to allow a foreign operator to carry domestic passengers would only ever be considered on a case-by-case basis. Safety is the Government's first aviation priority, and any decision to grant cabotage to a foreign airline would only be taken should exceptional circumstances exist and after full consideration, assessment and agreement by Australia's aviation safety regulator, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority.</p>	<p>An airline can apply to the Department to be exempt from cabotage restrictions. Cabotage dispensations are considered on a case-by-case basis, and the applying airline will demonstrate that no Australian airline can or will operate the relevant service. Cabotage dispensations are not a common occurrence.</p>

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Attachment B

**Same Country: Different World – the Future of Norfolk Island (October 2014)**

(8 Recommendations: | 7 Agreed | 1 Agreed in Part)

Recommendation	Official Australian Government Response	Update as of March 2021
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that, as soon as practicable, the Commonwealth Government repeal the <i>Norfolk Island Act 1979</i> (Cth) and establish an interim administration, to assist the transition to a local government type body, determined in line with the community’s needs and aspirations. This will require the development of a new legislative framework.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The <i>Norfolk Island Act 1979</i> (Cth) was amended to formally replace the then Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly and related governance structure from 1 July 2016 with a Regional Council model.</p> <p>An Advisory council was established in the lead up to 1 July 2016 to facilitate the transition.</p> <p>From 1 July 2016, the Norfolk Island Regional Council commenced operations and delivers a range of local and state-type services on Norfolk Island.</p>	<p><b>Temporary suspension and appointment of interim administrator</b></p> <p>Two independent audits of the Norfolk Island Regional Council (NIRC) by Nexia Sydney Audit (Nexia) and Grassroots Connections Australia (GCA) found significant issues in relation to the NIRC’s operations, governance, financial performance and financial sustainability.</p> <p>Following the audits, on 5 February 2021, the councillors and Mayor of the NIRC were temporarily suspended for three months.</p> <p>Also on 5 February 2021, Mr Michael Colreavy was appointed as interim administrator of the NIRC during its suspension. The appointment of the interim administrator is intended to restore the proper or effective functioning of the NIRC.</p> <p>The interim administrator will exercise all the functions of the NIRC, including the functions of the councillors and the Mayor.</p> <p>During the suspension, the day-to-day functions of the NIRC will continue under direction of the General Manager, and the Australian Government will continue to provide financial support to the NIRC for payment of immediate critical priorities, such as staff salaries.</p> <p><b>Public inquiry and postponement of the NIRC election</b></p> <p>On 10 February 2021, the Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories (Minister) announced a public inquiry into the NIRC.</p> <p>The inquiry will examine the financial and asset management practices of the NIRC and that the council and the elected councillors discharged their responsibilities under the relevant legislation. These matters were identified as a major area of concern in the recent independent audit reports by Nexia and GCA.</p> <p>At the end of the inquiry, the commissioner will present the Minister with a report outlining her findings in relation to the Terms of Reference (ToR). The ToR is available on the department’s website - <a href="http://www.regional.gov.au/territories/norfolk_island/governance/nirc.aspx">www.regional.gov.au/territories/norfolk_island/governance/nirc.aspx</a></p> <p>The Minister has appointed Ms Carolyn McNally as the commissioner to hold the inquiry. Ms McNally will have the same powers as commissioners who conduct inquiries into NSW councils.</p> <p>The Minister has also announced that the NIRC election scheduled for 13 March 2021 will be postponed for 12 months because the NIRC is subject to a public inquiry. This will enable full consideration of the results of the public inquiry before an election is held.</p>

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		Anything done for the election that would have been held on 13 March 2021 has no effect or operation, including nominations and postal votes that have been issued or received.
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that formal mechanisms for community consultation be established which allow for regular and ongoing communication between any transitional administration and the community about the reform process and new governance arrangements.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The Norfolk Island Advisory Council provided a conduit between the community and Australian Government in the lead-up to 1 July 2016. The current Norfolk Island Regional Council continues this work, through five community elected representatives.</p>	<p>In addition to the work undertaken during the transitional arrangements on Norfolk Island, the Australian Government is committed to ensuring best practice communication and consultation practices with the Norfolk Island community on an on-going basis.</p> <p>The Department has developed a Community Consultation Framework which underpins communication between the Australian Government and the Norfolk Island community. This is used by the Department and other Commonwealth agencies prior to the introduction of new reforms on Norfolk Island. It was developed in consultation with the Norfolk Island community.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government assume responsibility for the Cascade and Kingston Pier upgrades and that the Commonwealth Government expedite the works in line with Australian standards and occupational health and safety requirements, as soon as practicable.</p>	<p><b>Agreed in part.</b></p> <p>Upgrades to Cascade Pier were completed in May 2018. The contractor delivered services in a manner consistent with Commonwealth WHS and safety standards.</p> <p>Upgrades to Kingston Pier will be identified in the Ports Management Strategy, which is due for completion by June 2021. The strategy will define sustainable long-term approaches to port management, freight transfer and development of ports infrastructure. It was initiated in response to safety issues at the ports and due to divergence of the sea freight industry away from the historical sea freight practices of Norfolk Island.</p>	<p>The Department is overseeing ongoing improvements to Cascade Pier and Kingston Pier.</p> <p>The Kingston Pier Channel Construction Project seeks to augment the channel bed at Kingston Pier to increase its depth and width, to improve access and safety and to ensure it meets required standards. It is currently at the 80% design stage and the project will also address structural integrity issues with the Pier that were encountered in 2020 while the design was being progressed.</p> <p>The Kingston Pier Channel Construction Project will be progressively concluded over 2022-23.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government purchase multi-purpose barges for use on Norfolk Island in conjunction with upgrades made to Cascade and Kingston Piers. Barge use must be integrated into the design and functionality of the upgrades.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The Passenger Transfer Vessels (PTVs) arrived on Norfolk Island in July 2019, and have been in operation since October 2019. Some 3,500 passengers have been transferred, providing significant economic stimulus to the island.</p> <p>Tourism operators on Norfolk Island have noted most, if not all, of the cruise visits in 2019-20 would not have taken place if the Australian Government had not invested in the PTVs and improved port infrastructure.</p>	<p>The Department is overseeing ongoing improvements to Cascade Pier and Kingston Pier.</p> <p>Cruise ship visits to Norfolk Island have paused due to restrictions imposed on the shipping industry caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The Department is in the process of tendering the civil works at the Cascade Port for the improved storage of the PTVs.</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 5</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government ensure that, as part of the new governance arrangements, the public road infrastructure on Norfolk Island is assessed against current Australia-wide design, building and engineering standards and, where needed, work is undertaken to remedy deficiencies.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>Roads management responsibility was transferred to the Norfolk Island Regional Council on 1 July 2016.</p>	<p>The Australian Government continues to provide funding through a range of programs that the Norfolk Island Regional Council can apply for. This includes the Roads to Recovery Program and the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program.</p> <p>The Australian Government also provides Financial Assistance Grants type payments to assist the Norfolk Island Regional Council manage the roads infrastructure on Norfolk Island.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government appoint officers in the transitional administration to strengthen Norfolk Island’s economic and human resource capacity.</p> <p>Officers from Commonwealth agencies like Tourism Australia and Austrade should be tasked to provide advice and support to define the tourist market, develop the tourist product and promote and market tourist and other products and services, including new ones.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The Australian Government appointed an experienced temporary General Manager to the Norfolk Island Administration during the transition period.</p> <p>A permanent General Manager commenced in that role on 1 July 2016.</p> <p>Following the resignation of that General Manager, a new General Manager, Mr Andrew Roach, commenced in the role on 6 January 2020.</p>	<p>The Office of the Administrator, on behalf of the Australian Government, is working closely with Tourism Australia to increase Norfolk Island’s visibility in the domestic market.</p> <p>This includes a local visit in March 2021 by Tourism Australia officials to work with local stakeholders and the local tourism team at Norfolk Island Regional Council.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government provide a dedicated officer to assist Norfolk Island cottage industry owners and operators to brand their products, set up a cooperative shopfront, and look at ways to market and export their products.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>Support for the economic development of Norfolk Island is provided by Regional Development Australia – Mid North Coast (RDAMNC). This includes small business (cottage industry) owners.</p> <p>In 2017-2018, a Regional Investment Officer (RIO) was deployed on island by RDAMNC to assist small business development and regional investment.</p> <p>RDAMNC have implemented a variety of programs to enable growth in Norfolk Island’s economy, including a successful business incubator scheme focusing on tourism in 2019 and a 2020 incubator focusing on agri-foods.</p>	<p>The Office of the Administrator, on behalf of the Australian Government, has been working with RDAMNC to support the tourism industry on Norfolk Island.</p> <p>In 2021, the Office of the Administrator and RDAMNC will work on the development of a tourism strategy for Norfolk Island. This will include future branding, a marketing plan and product development within the Australian tourism industry.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government take charge of the psyllid eradication effort on Norfolk Island, and that responsibility for quarantine control matters be transferred to the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.</p>	<p><b>Agreed</b></p> <p>The Australian quarantine and bio-security regime has been extended to Norfolk Island.</p>	<p>The Australian Government has allocated funding of \$1.3 million over 2019-20 to 2020-21 for the eradication of pests, particularly Argentine Ants.</p> <p>The project is being delivered by the Norfolk Island Regional Council.</p>

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		The biosecurity survey, approved in 2020-21, will assist with confirming the presence or eradication of the psyllid and if it still exists as a pest/problem on Norfolk Island.
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