



Submission No. 07
Norfolk Island Economy
Date: 16/04/14

Submission to New Inquiry into economic development on Norfolk Island

I was a visitor to the island from 30 March to 6 April 2014. Since a previous visit in 2011 there is noticeable decline.

ABSTRACT

Marketing is needed, not only for tourism but for existing and new products for export. Labels must suggest pride in quality products whether coffee, wine, guavas, beer or fish. Tourism should be advertised with new ideas. The shops I spent money in were the shops with quality products. A product specific to Norfolk Island, that associates itself as belonging only to Norfolk Island (as complementary to tourism) is needed. Something that says to the World “*we are small but look how wonderful we are. This is what we stand for. The Best*”. For such products, and change, a younger population should be encouraged. Communication and working together is a must.

AN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN IS NOTICEBLE. I noticed:

Plane only half full each way.

Good, but under-utilised accommodation.

Many properties and good land for sale.

Many empty shops and the brewery closed.

Decline in the number of shops selling quality goods.

Decline in the bulk of goods in quality ware shops. eg. Lack of range in shoe sizes.

Road in need of urgent repair, except in the National Park area.

Coffee and Wine industries (which are great tourist attractions) under stress.

Lack of green vegetables and this was evident 3 years ago.

THE ISLAND OFFERS:

An interesting history.

Good sub tropical climate.

Good volcanic soil that will grow most things, eg. olives, avocados, citrus.

Good walking tracks in the National Park where a pride in the ecology is noticeable.

People who are prepared to have more than one job.

I was pleased to note that eggs purchased were NI eggs and bread is baked daily. There are many innovative people. This is what the Island needs. But new ideas and Marketing are needed.

TOURISM

The planes are half full so something isn't working. Is it an advertising problem? How many times I have I heard visitors to the Island say, “*It was an enjoyable trip but I've seen it now. Seven days was enough*”. Perhaps those being attracted to the island are those less likely to return. Is a survey necessary?

Once people went to Norfolk Island for a short trip. It was a shopping haven for elderly rural women. They returned year after year. Now other places serve this niche. Melbourne, Auckland, Sydney, Brisbane, and further afield Dubai, not to mention the *Internet*. Some Norfolk Island

entrepreneurs try their best. There is a sound and light show , food hospitality tours and packages to the historical buildings of the second settlement and the cemetery.

A different marketing is needed. Do you advertise in botanical magazines for people to see the trees and birds of the National Park and Botanical Gardens? The cafes are good and in vogue. What about including Norfolk Island in a package tour so that you get people from other centres. A 14 day round trip Tasmania>Sydney > Lord Howe> Sydney> Norfolk Island> Brisbane> New Caledonia> Cairns>Auckland> Norfolk Island> Auckland > etc. Giving people only a day or two might give them incentive to come back to see what they missed out on. They need to feel there is a little more that they need to return to do. Perhaps to sit and read in the wonderful local history section in the library, or to walk to Rocky Point to see the mutton birds.

MARKETING OF A PRODUCT SPECIFIC ONLY TO NORFOLK. QUAVAS!

Bundaberg has its rum, New Zealand markets kiwifruit, Australian shiraz is noted around the world and there is Buderim ginger. The one thing that grows very well on Norfolk Island is Quavas. Instead of eradicating them, propagate them. Make the industry diverse. Quavas are full of vitamins and antioxidants which is a rage word in the world today. I noticed 42 acres of land for sale near the airport. Cultivate it. Grow quavas, set up a canning factory, jam and jelly making, chutney products, a research team to develop the medicinal prospects that will one day make the industry a rich one. This will require water sprinklers in stress times, employers and workers. If South Africa can do it, why not Norfolk Island? And the market is a closer, South Pacific one.

If the government set up such an industry, it could be listed on the stock exchange. The government could own half the shares, with the remainder open firstly to those involved in the industry, and then to the public. Ships once unloaded would return with, among others, well labelled NORFOLK QUAVA products.

OTHER CROPS

I see the need for a dynamic horticulturalist settler on Norfolk Island. An example is on the island of Ua Huka in the Marquesan Islands where a (I think German) horticulturalist has developed an arboretum of tropical fruits from all over the world. These are doing well and supplying the island and neighbouring islands. It is also a great tourist attraction , sadly only once a month, when the Aranui does its trade round from Tahiti and carries 200 or so passengers ashore in dinghies . Think also of Madeira which in Roman times was barren and now is an island lush in every fruit and vegetable one can think of. It was a water system that caused such progress.

FLOWERS

Do you export Hibiscus plants to garden centres in Australia and New Zealand? I know Kentias are propagated. Surely the soil is suited to some flowers which could be sent to florists in Australia and New Zealand during our winter months. Again it is marketing.

MARKET GARDENING AND A BETTER WATER CATCHMENT SYSTEM

Nearly every tourist we spoke to, lamented that they could not buy green vegetables . On both my visits to Norfolk Island I came home desperate to have a meal of green vegetables. Most people like

to eat out but sometimes cook for themselves. Even the restaurants serve very little in greens. The volcanic soil should also grow carrots, beetroot, parsnips, swedes, radishes and other root crops. If water is the problem, then this fact enhances the need for a good catchment system for rainwater.

There are plenty of cows on the island and therefore a good source of manure. Here we have another industry. Even a worm farm would be desirable. A Tree Crops Association could be formed so that people in the fruit and vegetable industry could share knowledge. They could combine with such bodies in Australia and New Zealand.

CO-OPERATIVE MARKETING SYSTEM

The canning factory idea mentioned above, for whatever product, could be supplied by growers from their small holdings and marketed with a Norfolk Island special quality logo. Quality control would be an integral part of such a canning factory.

CONSTRUCTION OF AN EXTENDED OR SHELTERED WHARF

The cost of such a structure means that it should be used for more than bringing tourists ashore. Loading ships with export produce and a good fishing industry (fish factory would be then needed).

YOUNGER POPULATION NEEDED

The island has been developed to accommodate the elderly. This is not all bad and a good retirement home bringing people from colder climates could be an advantage. But there needs to be facilities to encourage a younger innovative work force who can adapt to change and skilled managerial staff. The National Park offers good walking and jogging but ideas such as a cycle track could be encouraged both for the Island population and in getting younger tourists to visit.

Communication, co-operation and working together is the key.

Elva Leaming

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