

To the Secretariat,

Hello, my name is Peter Griggs and I have been associated with, or a permanent resident of Christmas Island since 1993.

I currently own a small business, managed by my wife, since 2007, and have been employed in various positions during my time in the IOT's. Some of the positions held are, pre-operations team to establish the Christmas Island Casino and Resort and to provide ongoing management, OIC Quarantine service for the IOT's, Community Liaison and Grants Officer for The Office of The Administrator.

I would like to comment on some of the terms of reference as I was not on Island when the hearings were held. I am reliably informed that most small business owners were not invited to any of the round table discussions as it was predominately stacked by members of the Union/Shire under the guise of representing an association of some kind, non-union aligned associations were not invited.

As you know, the IOT's are missing the tier of government that State governments provide to communities. The SDA arrangements currently in place with Western Australia is the support mechanism to provide state type services to the IOT's, some of these are under review.

The difficulty that most residents are unable to reconcile is that, decisions are made in Canberra/WA regarding which services/projects are to be implemented in the IOT's with very little input requested from the local communities. This problem is further exacerbated in the fact that we are unable to voice our frustration through the ballot box, as there is no state type election for the residents.

The current Federal and Shire elections in my opinion need to be reviewed. Why the IOT's residents have to vote Federally in the Northern Territory is hard to understand, when the majority of services are provided from Canberra or WA, with none from the Northern Territory. Whilst no current state/territory government wants the IOT's, realistically the IOT's should be aligned with an electorate in either ACT or WA to receive state type services and voting rights.

The local Shire elections are tainted by poor practices and a ridiculous voting system. Concerns have been raised to the relevant WA department, but residents have been told that basically the local shire are responsible for their own elections and that the department will not intervene. An example of poor practice: candidates sitting in polling booth whilst resident is early voting, vote is then placed into unsealed cardboard box, when voter leaves vote can be accessed or deleted. Every election a cardboard box is produced at the end of counting and surprisingly there is always enough votes for the incumbent to be re-elected. Some shire councillors have been elected who do not reside on Christmas Island and have a paid visit to come to the Island and fulfil the meetings attended quota. The Shire of Christmas Island in all reality is the financial arm of the Union of Christmas Island Workers. It is a pity that the Federal Government finances this Union/Shire. All long-time residents don't even bother with the shire anymore because it is a waste of time and considered a joke amongst the 70% who do not vote any more. I am one who does vote to exercise my democratic right even though I know it is a waste of time.

I would respectfully advise that you disregard the rants of the shire president that he represents the local community as being the head of the only democratically elected body on the Island, as these elections are not democratic.

My thoughts as to governance for the IOT's would be for, the Commonwealth to wholly manage the territories, or the IOT's be absorbed into a WA electorate, probably the Pilbara and the IOT's budget be allocated to the WA government with provisions regarding maintaining services.

Economic Development:

The private sector needs to be encouraged to invest in the IOT's and there is interest from mainland and overseas.

The Commonwealth needs to decide whether to facilitate the needs of the private sector or continue to hinder any progress, the shire also need to be persuaded to stop being as detrimental to development as they currently are.

The Canberra office has been fixated on tourism as being the cure-all for the IOT's but has done very little to provide investor confidence.

An example to enhance tourism:

Airport, which is a Commonwealth asset is designated as International, yet is not resourced with fire-fighting equipment or engine starter, chicken and egg scenario, Commonwealth want Airport management, Toll, to pay, Toll want commonwealth to pay, end result nothing happens, current and previous private operator of northern flight unable to procure sustainable favourable flight for tourists. All businesses suffer. The cost of these essentials is miniscule in relation to the IOT budget but would help to make a significant boost to the economy of the IOT's, yet the Commonwealth is happy to spend approx. \$ 12 million on building a jetty extension that will see very little use and will have virtually no positive economic impact.

At this time without this essential equipment, Singapore, Malaysian or Garuda airlines will not service Christmas Island. These are the airlines willing to fly from Singapore or Malaysia which are the northern hubs needed for tourism if this equipment was to be procured. A regular service a northern hub would ensure a vibrant tourism sector for the IOT's.

Numerous investors have enquired as to the opportunity to build either a resort, higher education facility or eco-lodges but are unable to acquire/lease land as most land is controlled by the Commonwealth.

An available land register of some kind would be a good place to start, much the same as a mainland state lands title office. If the Commonwealth does not wish to lose ownership of the land, leases similar to 99 year pastoral leases could be devised. Further-more a number of prospectus could be developed and taken to market.

Presently, investors give up because current Commonwealth processes are too difficult.

A position of Economic Development Officer was previously put in place out of a JSC recommendation but did not succeed for whatever reason, could be revisited but the community would probably be better served if it was someone with local knowledge and contacts.

Until these type of foundations are implemented I doubt that any private sector or tourism development will occur in the IOT's in the future, it is up to the Minister and Department to make a decision on the direction of the IOT's.

I was going to comment on the role of the Administrator, but having been a close witness to the shabby and disrespectful treatment of the previous Administrator, Mr Jon Stanhope, by the Department, I would not like to be accused of a conflict of interest.

I thank you for your time and would be happy to discuss or elaborate on any IOT's issues.

Regards,

Peter Griggs