

CHAPTER THREE: NORFOLK ISLAND

Commonwealth Legislative Role

3.1 The constitutional background of Norfolk Island is generally described as complex.¹ The Island is now part of the Commonwealth of Australia and, under section 122 of the Constitution, the Commonwealth has the power to legislate in respect of the Island. However, since 1978 Commonwealth legislation has not extended to Norfolk Island unless expressed to do so. The Island is administered under the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* that provides the basis of the Territory's legislative, administrative and judicial system.

3.2 Norfolk Island is self-governing, with an elected nine member Legislative Assembly. The Administrator is appointed by the (Australian) Governor-General, is responsible to the Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government and the Office of the Administrator is financed from Commonwealth expenditure. Generally, Commonwealth laws do not apply to Norfolk Island unless expressed to do so. However, if Commonwealth legislation is extended, it overrides local law. In addition, the Governor-General can disallow any legislation passed by the Norfolk Island Assembly.

3.3 The local administration provides most federal (including immigration), state and local government type services. The Commonwealth Government provides police (partly funded by Norfolk Island), staff from Parks Australia and the staff who work in the Administrator's Office.

3.4 In commenting on the provision of communication services, the Norfolk Island Government stated that:

What the Norfolk Island community wants or needs in terms of its communications system is a matter to be determined by the Norfolk Island Government and the Norfolk Island community itself, if necessary, through the political process. The Norfolk Island communications system is funded by Norfolk Island. The development of a normative model of communication systems for Australian External Territories would appear to have limited value for Norfolk Island.²

3.5 The Commonwealth Government's current objectives for Norfolk Island are:

To establish an appropriate level of self-government on Norfolk Island consistent with ensuring that residents enjoy rights, opportunities and responsibilities equal to those of their fellow Australians; to protect the Territory's natural and cultural heritage; and to discharge Commonwealth

1 See Table 3.1.

2 Norfolk Island Government, *Submissions*, p. S109.

responsibilities under Territory legislation efficiently, effectively and equitably.³

3.6 In evidence the Department of Transport and Regional Services stated that:

...As part of this objective this Department supports a communication regime for the island which provides the island with a communications regime similar to that enjoyed by other Australians in remote areas.⁴

3.7 Although not the subject of this inquiry the varying opinions of the island's residents on the degree of independence of Norfolk Island from Australian sovereignty were raised in submissions from Norfolk Island and during the public hearing and inspections on the Island.⁵

3.8 Advice from the Department of Transport and Regional Services on Norfolk Island's constitutional position is that:

...Australia's sovereignty over the Island has not been questioned by any other government in the United Nations or elsewhere...

...Norfolk Island has no international status independent of Australia. The fact that Norfolk Island has achieved a measure of internal self-government is of no greater significance, internationally, than the self-government conferred by the Australian Parliament on the Northern Territory and the ACT.⁶

3.9 For federal elections Norfolk Islanders may enrol in any Commonwealth electoral division with which they can show some connection, except Fraser (ACT) or the Northern Territory.

3 *Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories annual report 1996-97*, Canberra, AGPS, 1997, p. 125.

4 Department of Transport and Regional Services, *Submissions*, p. S178.

5 See Mr Woolley, *Transcripts*, pp. 127-128; Mr Walsh, *Transcripts*, p. 129; Mr Bennett, *Transcripts*, pp. 146-147; Mr Bennett, *Submissions*, pp. S79-S85; Norfolk Island Government, *Submissions*, p. S109.

6 Exhibit No. 14, Department of Transport and Regional Services, *Norfolk Island: Constitutional position, 1998*, p. 2.

Table 3.1 Constitutional background of Norfolk Island

Date	Constitutional status
	Evidence of Polynesian or Melanesian presence on Norfolk Island
1774	Discovery by Captain Cook
1788	Occupied by the British as a penal colony from 1788-1814 and again from 1825-1855
1844	Until 1844 either attached to or part of NSW. From 1844 to 1855 controlled by Van Diemen's Land authorities.
1856	Removal of last convicts. By agreement with the British Government the then population of Pitcairn Island relocated to Norfolk Island - responsibility of the Governor of NSW as a 'separate and distinct colony'
1897	Placed by British Government under the administration of the colony of NSW with provision for its annexation to any federal body of which NSW might form a part
1900	In anticipation of the consequences of the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia, further Order in Council continued above arrangements with the Governor of the new State of NSW
1913/14	<i>Norfolk Island Act 1913</i> and corresponding British Order in Council of 1914 accepted Norfolk Island as a Territory 'under the authority of the Commonwealth of Australia'. Local affairs of the Island were governed by an Administrator appointed by the Commonwealth of Australia, supported by an advisory Council.
1963	Under the <i>Norfolk Island Act 1963</i> the Territory's Administrator, responsible to the Commonwealth Government for the Islands administration, was made ex officio chairman of the 8 member elected Norfolk Island Council, Commonwealth Government to continue to hold or legislate executive power, the Council being advisory only.
1957	<i>Norfolk Island Act 1957</i> – repealed 1913 Act - ensured all laws in force immediately before the commencement of the Act or in relation to the Territory were to continue in force.
1979	<p>Nimmo Commonwealth Royal Commission examined Norfolk Island's future status, its constitutional relationship to Australia and the most appropriate form of administration for it. The Commission recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • full Commonwealth voting rights to Norfolk Island residents; • replacement of the advisory Council with an elected Assembly; • extension of mainland services and obligations to Norfolk residents, and • application of all Commonwealth legislation to Norfolk Island. <p>The Government response to the report led to the enactment of the <i>Norfolk Island Act 1979</i> which accepted the first three of the above recommendations but granted a greater degree of self government than Nimmo had recommended.</p> <p>Preamble to the Norfolk Island Act states that it was the Commonwealth Parliament's intention that Norfolk Island achieve, over a period of time, internal self government as a Territory under the authority of the Commonwealth, with the Act to be reviewed in five years.</p>
1981, 1985, 1989, 1992	Various powers transferred to the Norfolk Island Government. The powers are those normally exercised by State and local governments, including powers over the Public Service of the Territory, public works and regulation of industry.
1989	Quarantine and social security (Commonwealth responsibilities on the mainland) were added to the list of powers in relation to which the Commonwealth Minister had a veto

Data Source: Commonwealth Grants Commission, *Report on Norfolk Island 1997*, Canberra, AGPS, 1977, pp. 14-18.

Postal Services

3.10 Given the considerable business dealings with Norfolk Island, it is disappointing that Australia Post did not provide a submission to this inquiry.

3.11 As indicated, Norfolk Island generally is outside Australia's postal, broadcasting and telecommunications legislation but within some provisions for radio-communications. Under Schedule 2 of the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* the Norfolk Island Government has power over various services. These include: control of radio and television (item 35), postal services (item 36), the provision of telecommunications services (within the meaning of the *Telecommunications Act 1989*) and the prescribing of rates of charge for those services (under item 48). However, as the legislation excludes Norfolk Island, Australia Post's Community Service Obligations (CSO) do not apply. Although there is no obligation on Australia Post to meet the CSO standards on delivery and price, in many areas this appears to happen.⁷ Internationally, although Norfolk Island is recognised as a separate postal administration from that of Australia, it is not a member of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) and does not have UPU voting powers. Australia represents the Island's views in these forums.

3.12 Norfolk Island operates its own postal and philatelic service separate from Australia Post. The only delivery is to leased post office boxes, but with the cost of local mail being 5 cents compared with the 45 cent charge on the mainland, the Island residents seemed fairly happy with the service.⁸ In general, it was thought that a mainland standard of service was being provided.

3.13 However, the Island relies on Australia Post for the delivery of mail, incoming parcels, etc. from the mainland to the Island. At the public hearing, Norfolk Post claimed to have a very good relationship with Australia Post:

Australia Post have been terrific in many cases where we have had difficulties with mail, mostly due to weather, when mail has had to be off-loaded in order for aircraft to take on extra fuel. They have been very helpful in re-routing mail through Brisbane to come across on a different aircraft and they have made other provisions that have been of assistance.⁹

3.14 For all general mail services, other than parcels, Norfolk Island is treated as part of New South Wales. The basic uniform 45-cent rate for standard (small) letters extends to the Island.¹⁰ Other uniform rate services (i.e. small parcels, Parcel Post satchels, Express Post envelopes and satchels) also extend to the Island. Large letters are charged for as to any New South Wales destination (i.e. intrastate from within NSW and interstate from elsewhere).

7 Australia Post, *Transcripts*, p. 3.

8 Commonwealth Grants Commission, *Submissions*, p. S55.

9 Norfolk Island Post, *Transcripts*, p. 101.

10 Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Submissions*, p. S238.

3.15 Surface mail is carried by ship and, with two shipping lines currently serving the Island, is received from Australia at least monthly.¹¹ However, as long as the volume coming from Australia is reasonable, Australia Post tries to send as much by air as possible in order to maintain a good service. In a week, there are 5-7 flights from Australia and three (of which two services are on a weekend) from New Zealand.¹² Mail is in the same ratio as tourist numbers: 75 per cent from Australia and 25 per cent from New Zealand.¹³ For the most part ordinary mail took approximately 48 hours to reach Norfolk Island from Australia.¹⁴ While there appear to be few difficulties with the ordinary mail service, there have been occasions when large non-standard letters have come by surface mail.

Issues of concern

3.16 Witnesses before the inquiry did raise concerns. Some related to past grievances and appeared to have only residual significance.

There were some difficulties back in 1993-94 when there were some submissions made between the government [of Norfolk Island] and Australia Post and at the time that certainly made life a little difficult, and that was one of the reasons why we ended up with a memorandum of understanding ... [O]n the whole the relationship between Norfolk Post and Australia Post is a good one. It is complicated by the fact that Australia Post personnel are often much more mobile than Norfolk Post personnel ... our (previous) personal contact has (often) moved to another department or taken early retirement and we have to re-establish contact(s).¹⁵

3.17 Other matters of continuing concern were: the time for delivery and the condition of the mail and parcels received on Norfolk Island; the cost of parcel delivery, especially with the abolition of the 'airmail' rate for parcels; the effectiveness of the 2899 postcode; and the route for international mail into Norfolk Island.

Delivery time and condition of mail

3.18 The delivery time and the condition of mail received were a source of complaint. The problem affected non-standard mail and parcels rather than standard letters. To ensure that a parcel from Australia to Norfolk Island is guaranteed air carriage, it needs to be sent by Express Post. This should only take 2-4 days, although on some exceptional occasions, parcels have gone astray for 1-2 weeks. Medical staff from the Norfolk Island Hospital provided exhibits to the committee illustrating that large non-standard letters, clearly marked 'X-rays', 'Air Mail' and 'Do Not Bend', had been received (in Sydney and in Norfolk Island) in a bent state, via surface (sea)

11 Norfolk Island Government, *Submissions*, p. S49.

12 Norfolk Post, *Transcripts*, p. 106.

13 Norfolk Post, *Transcripts*, p. 108.

14 Norfolk Post, *Transcripts*, p. 104.

15 Norfolk Post, *Transcripts*, p. 101.

mail – with delays of up to 30 days.¹⁶ Other isolated incidents suggest mail can be received in a damaged, tatty or even wet condition.

3.19 Further examples of the slowness of mail were provided by complaints received by members of the Committee from their own constituents. A 3.6 kg parcel destined for Norfolk Island was posted at Erindale Post Office in the Australian Capital Territory on 12 December 1998 at 9.30am. The local post office advised that air mail delivery cost \$16.40. This amount was paid to ensure delivery before Christmas. There was no delivery prior to the end of January. Another 10 kg parcel posted on 14 December 1998 to the same address on Norfolk Island arrived on 4 January 1999.

3.20 In the above case, Australia Post advised on 12 January that normal parcel mail to Norfolk Island takes four weeks and that the first parcel was believed to be on a ship due to dock on Norfolk Island mid to late February. The sender was advised to contact Australia Post once the item had been received for consideration of compensation.¹⁷

3.21 It was also noted that Committee papers were received in Norfolk Island after the Committee's closing date for submissions, but it is understood these were sent 'air-mail' rather than 'Express Post'. As there is no airmail parcel post, these were probably off-loaded to sea delivery, and treated as surface mail. It is suspected that the same fate befell the Committee transcripts, which also arrived past the responding date.

3.22 Norfolk Island (and some remote parts of Australia, including the Indian Ocean Territories) is defined as being "outside of the Australian network".¹⁸

3.23 Australia Post documentation does state that 'next day service' is not guaranteed to certain areas. However, in the experience of the Committee next day service applies only to capital cities. This view was reinforced by the parliamentary inquiry into rural and remote letter delivery services, *Keeping Rural Australia Posted*, which found that next day service applied only within metropolitan areas.¹⁹

16 Norfolk Island Hospital, *Transcripts*, p. 123

17 Exhibit No. 29, Statement from Senator Lundy.

18 Norfolk Post, *Transcripts*, p. 105

19 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and Microeconomic Reform, *Keeping Australia Posted: Rural and remote letter delivery services*, August 1996, p. 23.

Table 3.2 Australia Post mail delivery services

Mail path	Delivery time (Business days after lodgement)
Intrastate	
Within capital cities' metropolitan areas	1
Metropolitan to country	2
Country to country	2
Interstate	
Metropolitan to metropolitan	2
Metropolitan to country	3
Country to country	4

Source: House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and Microeconomic Reform, *Keeping Australia Posted: Rural and remote letter delivery services*, August 1996, p. 23.

Charges

3.24 The charges imposed by Australia Post for its services have been an issue for some time. In particular, the amounts charged for parcel delivery between Australia and Norfolk Island and the amount of compensation paid by Australia Post for the imbalance in mail between Norfolk Island and Australia²⁰ were commented on during the inquiry. On the mail imbalance payments:

Norfolk Island receives significantly more mail than it despatches. So it incurs costs in delivery which exceed the revenues from its outgoing mail. So, in 1997, the Norfolk Island postal service received around \$60,000 from imbalance payments.²¹ ... In 1994, a memorandum of understanding was concluded between us and the Norfolk Island postal service. A key element of that is the payment by Australia Post of \$1 per kilogram for the imbalance in mail.²²

3.25 The parcel charges were contentious prior to 1994 when, according to Australia Post,

20 In 1995, the imbalance was estimated by Australia Post to be 5:1. Norfolk Island Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport, Communications and Infrastructure inquiry into Rural and Remote Letter Delivery Services, *Submissions*, p 537.

21 The specific amount in 1997 was \$58,442. By comparison in 1995, before the increases in charges, it was \$100,000. Department of Communications, Information technology and the Arts, *Submissions*, p. S237.

22 Australia Post, *Transcripts*, p. 4.

Norfolk Island was included in the country New South Wales zone for parcel charging purposes. We found in fact that there had been wide scale abuse of the parcel service to Norfolk Island, including the ordering and sending of such items as motor vehicle tyres through this heavily subsidised rate. As a result we created a special parcel charging zone for Norfolk Island.²³

3.26 The adjustment in parcel rates to Norfolk Island, which took place as a result of this decision, occurred over three stages six months apart. According to Australia Post the rate is now at a level comparable to the rate for similar services on the mainland.²⁴ Australia Post now recovers its costs and provides a reasonable margin on that route.²⁵

3.27 The Norfolk Island Government, in its submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Australia Post Rural and Remote Letter Delivery Services in 1995, set out the Island's concerns. In particular, the Government expressed the view that the new parcel rate for parcels over 9-10kg, either by surface or airmail, was grossly in excess of Australia Posts costs. The new rate for this weight experienced a fourfold increase after the adjustment.²⁶ This issue has not been resolved and it was argued by one witness that the higher postage rates applied by Australia Post discriminate against the Island. The position in respect of the inward mail charges remains in dispute.²⁷

3.28 Finally, the airmail category for parcels has been abolished. The Grants Commission inquiry, held in 1997, pointed out that the abolition of airmail had left only the more expensive Express Post and surface mail for the delivery of parcels to Norfolk Island. For parcels the choice is between a long delay and an expensive service. Furthermore, given the premium paid for speed with Express Post, it does not offer the same level of delivery to Norfolk Island. Because of transportation problems, Express Post cannot reach Norfolk Island by the next day and surface mail can take up to six weeks to arrive.²⁸

3.29 Therefore, despite recent changes, the lack of a category for airmail parcels has been confusing to both citizens and to operators in the postal system itself. Many Australia Post branches, now operating as franchises, do not understand that there is no airmail parcel post rate to Norfolk Island. In many cases they charge a New South Wales airmail rate and, parcels designated airmail - for which there is no longer a

23 Australia Post, *Transcripts*, p. 4.

24 The service quoted was Sydney-Perth, which, while the distance to Perth was greater than to Norfolk Island, the cost of the transport to each place was similar (ie a \$2 per kg distance charge for ordinary parcels and a \$7.45per kg for Express Post). Australia Post, *Transcripts*, p. 11 & *Submissions*, p. S238..

25 Australia Post, *Transcripts*, pp. 10-11.

26 The submission quoted increases of surface mail for 9-10kg from \$7.30/\$7.40 to \$29 and for the same weight of airmail from \$25 to \$108 Norfolk Island Government submission, Inquiry into Rural and Remote Letter Delivery Services, p. 538.

27 Bennett, Mr Geoffrey James, *Submissions*, p. S084.

28 Norfolk Island Government, *Transcripts*, p. 100

category - rather than Express Post, quite often will come by surface mail. That matter needs to be addressed from both sides. Norfolk Post indicated that it would be beneficial for an airmail parcel rate to be re-established from Australia to Norfolk Island.²⁹

Postcode 2899

3.30 Norfolk Island operates on the postcode 2899. It was introduced so that mail could be sorted more quickly using the equipment in the international mail exchange in Sydney. However, some local businesses complained that the 2899 postcode caused confusion as to Norfolk Island's status. There are instances where local businesses on Norfolk Island are trying to do business as international entities, especially as sole agents for products, and find that the 2899 code interferes with their ability to be recognized as a separate and distinct entity from Australia.³⁰ The export sales tax exemption can be difficult to get if Norfolk Island has an Australian postcode and is viewed as a domestic customer.

International Mail into Norfolk Island

3.31 Witnesses to the inquiry expressed concern that important documents sent from the United States clearly marked first-class mail, airmail and priority paid were coming airmail as far as Sydney, then by sea mail to Norfolk Island, even though airmail postage had been paid at the other end. According to the witness, this situation occurred about 40 per cent of the time.³¹ It should be noted that Australia Post has an arrangement with the International Postal Union which means that mail is airmail until it gets to the country of destination and then, once it arrives in the country, it can be surface or airmail, at the option of the post office. However, while Australia Post's actions are not contrary to these arrangements with the International Postal Union, the witness as a consumer questioned the ethics of Australia Post's decision to downgrade.

3.32 The US Postal Service has now suspended its express air service and priority mail to Norfolk Island.³² In effect this means that there is no guaranteed, international airmail service into Norfolk Island. One witness told the Committee that mail sent by air, goes by air to Sydney then is on-sent to Norfolk Island by air or sea "depending on the whim of Australia Post" and that this makes business and professional practice in Norfolk Island somewhat difficult. He said that to avoid Norfolk Island becoming a "permanent backwater", something must be done to give the Island an efficient and reliable system of receiving mail.³³

3.33 The Committee is concerned about the downgrading of the status of mail before the point of destination.

29 Norfolk Post, *Transcripts*, pp. 100-101.

30 Norfolk Post, *Transcripts*, pp, 100-101.

31 Dr Walsh, *Transcripts*, p.130.

32 Walsh of Brannagh, Dr John, *Submissions*, pp. S226-S227.

33 Walsh of Brannagh, Dr John, *Submissions*, p. S226.

3.34 On the question of the overall balance of advantage in the current arrangements, the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts put forward the view that, despite ‘the absence of detailed cost and revenue estimates for all elements of the postal arrangement with Norfolk Island...the differences would only have effects at the margins’:

If Norfolk Island were to come fully within the Australia Post network, Australia Post would be required to meet additional costs for the final delivery of Australian origin mail in Norfolk Island, collection and delivery of mail on Norfolk Island, shipment of Norfolk Island mail to Australia and shipment of Norfolk Island mail overseas. It would gain additional revenue from charging for Norfolk Island origin mail (and possibly Norfolk Island’s share of the philately market) and avoid the imbalance payments it currently pays (\$58,442 in 1997).

Given Norfolk Island’s concern about maintaining its unique identity and the apparent satisfaction with services provided by the Norfolk Island Postal Service it is not evident that there is sufficient cause to seek to change postal arrangements on Norfolk Island.³⁴

Broadcasting

Existing services - radio

3.35 The Committee visited the studios of Norfolk Island Broadcasting Services (NIBS) to inspect the radio station and the satellite receiving dishes. The Committee also saw the broadcast re-transmission installation located on top of Mt Pitt. A Broadcast Manager coordinated NIBS operations along with other casual and voluntary staff. A wide range of local radio programming, combined with Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)³⁵ and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), was evident. Radio services were re-transmitted in standard dual amplitude modulation (AM) and frequency modulation (FM) bands.³⁶ Radio Australia was available on short-wave radio from the mainland and Norfolk Island continued to access it in this way even though it could have gained near perfect reception of the service broadcast by the Palapa satellite.³⁷ However, to access the satellite would require the redirection of the existing dish and, at a cost of around \$600, the conversion of receivers to different frequency bands.

Existing services - television

3.36 The Committee noted that the quality of re-transmitted ABC and SBS television services was poor. Evidence at the hearings suggested that the power of the Mt Pitt transmitters was inadequate to serve the whole of the Island.³⁸ The committee

34 Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Submissions*, p. S241.

35 But not Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) radio services.

36 Norfolk Island Government, *Submissions*, p. S111.

37 ABC, *Transcripts*, p. 223.

38 Norfolk Telecom, *Transcripts*, p. 68.

was told that a ten fold increase in the wattage was needed. The Norfolk Island Government thought that an upgrade to boost the power and include stereo sound might cost about \$20,000.³⁹ Overall, the Norfolk Island Government took the view that it could determine how the Island's urgent communications needs were being met and whether adequately met or not.⁴⁰

3.37 Individual islanders have acted to obtain their own satellite receiving dishes and decoders in order to enjoy Australian and/or overseas television and radio services. The cost of installation was around \$1,200 for a satellite-receiving dish plus receiver electronics costing from \$600 to \$800.⁴¹ As no commercial television was re-transmitted locally, nor was any pay television available, except for 'illegal' subscriptions obtained from the mainland or New Zealand, there was an incentive for islanders to procure their own satellite-receiving equipment. Clearly Australian regulation under the Broadcasting Services Act had little to no practical effect on broadcasting on Norfolk Island.

3.38 According to Norfolk Telecom's representative, Sky New Zealand had an agreement with Australia not to extend its twin-channel service outside New Zealand.⁴² However, in evidence, the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts stated that Sky New Zealand could serve Norfolk Island.⁴³

Broadcast changes resulting from satellite technology

3.39 With the change of satellite broadcasting from the Optus A analogue satellite to the new digital Optus-B series, Norfolk Island had to change its arrangements for receiving television and radio services.⁴⁴ The change would necessitate the acquisition of the following equipment:

- a large satellite dish;
- a digital decoder for each television service which is to be re-broadcast (reception of radio services can also be obtained through the same decoders);
- a transmitter for each television and radio service which is to be re-broadcast (conversion to digital satellite transmissions does not require the replacement of existing terrestrial transmitters).⁴⁵

3.40 The Norfolk Island Government allocated funds for the purchase of a new receiving dish and equipment for use when the new services commence. The Norfolk Island Government believed that it would cost around \$50,000 to upgrade to a larger

39 Norfolk Island Administration, *Transcripts*, p. 68.

40 Norfolk Island Government, *Transcripts*, p. 66.

41 Norfolk Island Administration, *Transcripts*, p. 70.

42 Norfolk Telecom, *Transcripts*, p. 68.

43 Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Transcripts*, p. 198.

44 Norfolk Island Government, *Submissions*, p. S112.

45 Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Submissions*, p. S263.

7.6 metre, commercial quality dish, in order to receive digital satellite transmissions from Optus.⁴⁶ The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts informed the Committee that technical studies were undertaken in the territories by Television Broadcast Engineering. They had reported that Norfolk Island would need a 6.8 metre dish for the continued reception of the Remote Area Broadcast Service on the Island. The cost of the equipment, according to the Department, would normally be in the range of \$140,000 - \$190,000; however, it was possible that special arrangements could be made for Norfolk Island as had been made for the Indian Ocean Territories. In these circumstances the cost might be reduced to \$85,000. In addition there would be installation costs for the dish, including freight, labour and materials, of approximately \$30,000 and decoders and transmitters, depending on the capacity, might cost \$3,500 and \$24,000 respectively.⁴⁷ The Committee was told that, throughout the transition to digital television services, local re-transmission would continue as before so that local residents should remain unaware of the changes.

3.41 With digitisation the Golden West Network (GWN) network serving Western Australia would actually become available on Norfolk Island on the national beam, subject to Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) approval. In addition, Imparja Television Network (ITN) from Alice Springs and Television Australia Ltd (TAL) from Townsville would all become available from late 1998.⁴⁸

3.42 The Committee was initially told that reception would depend upon a low-strength satellite signal. Therefore, there was no guarantee that the new satellite system would give continued, quality television reception. Consultants performed a series of engineering tests and estimates which confirmed that the Optus delivered RABS could be received on Norfolk Island if there were a larger dish.⁴⁹

3.43 There are also up to 28 pay TV channels available from satellites, including 8 from Optus, 18 from Austar and 2, unofficially, from Sky New Zealand.⁵⁰ In addition there are free to air channels such as CNN.⁵¹

Broadcasting regulation

3.44 There appeared to be some confusion over the position of the communications regulatory authorities in relation to Norfolk Island. In this regard, the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) claimed to have no power over the Island's channel allocation⁵² even though the ABA stated that the *Broadcasting*

46 Norfolk Island Government, *Transcripts*, p. 74.

47 Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Submissions*, p. S263.

48 ABC, *Transcripts*, p. 225.

49 Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Submissions*, p.S263. (See paragraph 3.40 for cost and installation detail)

50 Norfolk Island Administration, *Transcripts*, p. 71.

51 Norfolk Island Administration, *Transcripts*, p. 71.

52 A decision needs to be made regarding the allocation of the VHF television channels and whether some channels should move to ultra high frequency or UHF channels. However, "Section 10 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* states that 'This Act extends to all the External Territories'. However, advice from the Australian Government Solicitor indicates that

Services Act 1992 was in force on Norfolk Island to the extent of monitoring service transmissions.⁵³ The ABA explained this limitation in the following terms:

If it [the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*] does not apply to the planning of new services, then it would not apply to the licensing of those services either. So I suppose, to the extent that it does apply, it would apply in the ABA monitoring the broadcasting industry, which Parliament charges the ABA with doing generally. It would perhaps impose some responsibility on the ABA at least to be aware of what is happening with broadcasting services on Norfolk Island and, if possible, to assist in the re-transmission of services or the start-up of new services in that area.⁵⁴

3.45 However, according to the ABA, it had issued no broadcasting service licence for Norfolk stations and it had done no technical planning for broadcasting services on the Island. Furthermore, in answer to questions on notice, the ABA explained that laws relating to radio and television were made by the Island's Legislative Assembly 'pursuant to clause 35 of Schedule 1 of the Norfolk Island Act 1979 and require the assent of the Administrator of Norfolk Island but not the Governor-General of Australia. ... To the extent that any such laws have been made, the ABA would not exercise any jurisdiction that it had on Norfolk Island. ... [such jurisdiction] would be of no practical effect.'⁵⁵

3.46 Nevertheless were complaints to be made by residents of Norfolk Island concerning a broadcasting service licensed under the Broadcasting Act of 1992 or concerning one of Australia's national services (as opposed to a system originating on Norfolk Island) then the ABA would consider it had jurisdiction to consider that complaint.⁵⁶

Social impacts

3.47 The Committee put to witnesses before the inquiry the question of the significance of Australian broadcasting into Norfolk Island and the question of the impact of the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* on the role of the ABC in providing services.⁵⁷ The Commonwealth's view was stated in the following terms:

The question of whether the Islands are able to receive broadcast services such as television and radio from mainland Australia does have a fairly

the ABA is empowered to prepare licence area plans, prepared under S26 of the Act, for only those External Territories that fall within the definition of Australia ie the Christmas and Cocos Islands, but not unless it is otherwise stated. Therefore, broadcast planning has been done for Christmas and Cocos Islands but not for Norfolk Island", ABA, *Submissions*, p. S66.

53 ABA *Transcripts*, p. 233.

54 ABA *Transcripts*, p. 233.

55 ABA, *Submissions*, p. S234.

56 ABA, *Submissions*, p. S235.

57 Senator Allison, *Transcripts*, p. 228.

substantial influence on the perceptions of the local communities on their identity in association with Australia.⁵⁸

3.48 The Committee concurs. It is the view of the Committee that the availability of Australian broadcasting services to any Australian Territory is a matter of cultural importance. Since television is such a popular and powerful form of receiving news and entertainment, it plays a significant role in the national integration of the Australian community. The Committee believes it is in Australia's interests over the longer term to ensure that all communities receive a variety of Australian services through clear and reliable signals. A recommendation in Chapter 7 reflects this view.

Telecommunications

Telecommunications heritage

3.49 With the passing of the *Norfolk Island Telecommunications Act 1992*, Norfolk Telecom became the sole provider of telecommunications services to the local community. Norfolk Telecom is a section within the administration and has no legal standing separate from the administration.⁵⁹ Telstra noted that there are other islands in the Pacific Ocean that had their own telecommunications services and ran them as their own capability.⁶⁰

3.50 Norfolk Telecom may involve Telstra or some other entity in its planning and contractual arrangements. As well, Norfolk Telecom may negotiate with other carriers for international connections. In 1994, a commercial agreement was reached between Telstra and the Norfolk Island Administration for international telecommunications services to the Island. It is clear then that Australia generally does not have telecommunications responsibility for Norfolk Island and nor does the USO extend to Norfolk Telecom. The failure of legislative provisions to include Norfolk Island creates some confusion with regard to the policy of normalisation of island services by comparison with those existing on the mainland.

3.51 The Committee inspected the Norfolk Telecom exchange, noting that it served some 2,000 copper wire lines linking local inhabitants. The exchange had a Ericsson AXE103 digital switch. It appeared that 3,000 lines would satisfy the Island's immediate future needs.⁶¹ Very few households did not have a telephone, perhaps only half a per cent.⁶²

3.52 The switch could handle local and international telecommunications services including direct dial calls, operator assistance, directory, facsimile, telex, leased data,

58 Department of Transport and Regional Services, *Transcripts*, p. 160.

59 Norfolk Island Administration, *Transcripts*, p. 75.

60 Telstra, *Transcripts*, p. 36.

61 Norfolk Telecom, *Transcripts*, p. 81.

62 Norfolk Telecom, *Transcripts*, p. 83.

packet switched data, EFTPOS,⁶³ and emergency calls. It was a combined full regional switch, rather than the type usually installed to supply small towns.

3.53 The Committee also visited the Telstra ANZCAN cable station that operated independently to provide an undersea link between Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Canada. Through a contract, Norfolk Telecom utilised a small section of the cable capacity to Sydney in order to route all international calls through Telstra.⁶⁴ This operating agreement extended from 1 May 1994 to 30 April 1999 and so was soon up for renewal. The international line provided both digital and analogue transmissions.

3.54 In its submission, Telstra claimed that it reviewed as an ongoing activity international network infrastructure requirements to ensure high quality and adequate capacity⁶⁵ A former Norfolk Island Assembly member suggested that the Island had difficulties in dealing with Telstra due to the enormous size of the latter organisation.⁶⁶ However, he admitted that future negotiations would be better because of the many new options available in terms of commercial competition and technological developments.⁶⁷

3.55 Optus served the Island only to provide inbound calls from the mainland to Norfolk.

Issues of concern

Charges

3.56 The pricing of telephone calls was a perennial issue for Norfolk Islanders. The cost of calls out of the Island were generally at 160% of the prices that Australians paid for calls in to the Island. However, local calls were free with line rentals. The Norfolk Island Administration placed tariffs on calls made out to Australia. With no income tax on the island and limited financial resources, Norfolk Telecom was empowered to charge rates appropriate to local circumstances.

3.57 The Norfolk Island Government made no comment about price levels in its submission except to say that Norfolk Telecom was now a major source of income for its activities.⁶⁸ A former Assembly member suggested that deciding what was a suitable profit for the operations of Norfolk Telecom was an arguable thing.⁶⁹ One witness claimed that Norfolk Telecom paid Telstra 75 cents for calls to the mainland.⁷⁰ Another witness understood that 60% of call cost was paid to Telstra.⁷¹

63 Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale, an on-line banking facility.

64 Norfolk Island Government, *Submissions*, p. S118.

65 Telstra, *Submissions*, p. S104.

66 Bennet, Mr Geoffrey James, *Transcripts*, p. 150.

67 Bennet, Mr Geoffrey James, *Transcripts*, p. 153.

68 Norfolk Island Government, *Submissions*, p. S105.

69 Bennet, Mr Geoffrey James; *Transcripts*, p. 155.

70 Transcript in camera, p. 3.

Table 3.3 Norfolk Telecom Charges

PRICE BAND	IDD	Public Phone Charge/minute	Operator Assisted
Australia	\$1.50	\$1.80	\$2.20
Off Peak	\$1.30	\$1.56	\$2.20
New Zealand	\$1.99	\$2.39	\$2.60
Off Peak	\$1.38	\$1.66	\$2.60
All Countries	\$2.47	\$2.96	\$2.80

Norfolk Island Government, *Submissions*, p. S119

3.58 Notional call prices to Norfolk Island residents were 90 cents per minute for peak and 85 cents per minute for off-peak calls. Nonetheless, in the end, Norfolk Telecom had responsibility for telecommunications services and funding. Overall, the Norfolk Island Government took the view that it could determine best whether the Island's urgent communications needs were being adequately met.

The Millennium Bug and Mobile Phones

3.59 A problem has become evident with the AXE103 exchange, which, while considered state-of-the-art when purchased in 1992, now faced obsolescence due to the Year 2000 (Y2K) computer date problem.⁷² Its replacement would be an expensive exercise. The Norfolk Island Government appeared not to have communicated with other State and Territory Governments regarding programs to counter the Y2K problem.⁷³ The need to make provision for a solution to this problem had precluded the development of a public mobile phone system⁷⁴ estimated to cost around \$2 million for a digital (GSM) service or \$0.5 million for an analogue (AMPS) system.⁷⁵

3.60 The Norfolk Island Government expected to consider the matter of cellular phones before the year 2000 but only after they had resolved the problems of the exchange. They would then weigh up the costs and benefits of the analogue/digital choice based on a consideration of the demands on the island and the nature of the tourist traffic. Mobile phones were in demand for domestic use on the Island. Moreover, tourists rather than businessmen were the major users among visitors. Therefore the Norfolk administration considered the cheaper analogue system still a

71 Bennett, Mr Geoffrey James, *Submissions*, p. S83.

72 Norfolk Island Government, *Submissions*, p. S122.

73 Norfolk Island Government, *Transcripts*, p. 94.

74 Norfolk Telecom, *Transcripts*, p. 77.

75 Norfolk Telecom, Norfolk Island Administration, *Transcripts*, p. 79.

contender. However, no decision was to be made until the matter had been examined at a future date.⁷⁶

3.61 In the Committee's view, however, given the limited life of the analogue system and that by the year 2000 the Australian mobile system would be digital and CDMA, Norfolk Island would appear to have few options.

Telephone security

3.62 Norfolk Telecom provided a limited mobile trunk radio service for administration services and public subscribers to use. This service had four channels only and was susceptible to eavesdropping or use by other parties rendering its capacity unavailable or unacceptable to the authorities at times⁷⁷. The hospital also complained of the one way speech and large size of the trunk radiophones.⁷⁸ Norfolk Telecom claimed that it was not aware of the privacy problem on the trunking system.⁷⁹ However, police agents expressed concern to the Committee about this state of affairs, particularly if Island emergency situations should arise requiring evacuations or defence force assistance.⁸⁰ The Federal Police told the Committee that the trunk radio system was not secure. They had a separate set of handheld VHF radios for its own officers to use, but these were also not secure.

The trunking radio system also provides for the transfer of phone calls to the police station (when not occupied) to the police vehicle or portable police radio. This is an analogue system that is subject to interception by scanning that is common on Norfolk Island. The system does not provide the degree of privacy desirable for the conduct of police business. Members of the public have indicated reluctance to report crime by telephone because of concern that their voice will be broadcast over the airwaves and be recognised by persons scanning the system.⁸¹

3.63 There was a separate Inmarsat A terminal for emergency situations or for use in the event of a breakdown in the ANZCAN cable. As a last resort, local 'ham' short-wave radio operators had agreed to provide emergency communications.

Future Provisions – Cable or Satellite

3.64 A long-term problem was the changeover to satellite-based telecommunications as the ANZCAN cable only had a design life until 2005, after which no repairs would occur. The Norfolk Island Government regarded this as the fundamental communications challenge facing the island.⁸² Perhaps at that time, new low-earth mobile satellite systems might offer an alternative option for the Island.

76 Norfolk Telecom, Norfolk Administration, *Transcripts*, pp. 76-80.

77 Norfolk Telecom, *Transcripts*, p. 96.

78 Norfolk Island Hospital, *Submissions*, p. S59.

79 Norfolk Telecom, *Transcripts*, p. 96.

80 AFP, *Transcripts*, p. 57.

81 Australian Federal Police, *Submissions*, p. S73.

82 Norfolk Island Government, *Transcripts*, p. 66.

However for now, Norfolk Telecom was free to negotiate with any carrier, such as Optus or Telecom New Zealand to obtain telecommunications by satellite into the future.⁸³ The Norfolk Island Government had arranged for external consultants to review and advise on requirements for the introduction of a comprehensive, satellite-based telecommunications system.⁸⁴

3.65 The Norfolk Island Government had sought \$150,000 from the Commonwealth's Regional Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund for service upgrading⁸⁵. The RTIF secretariat claimed to have consulted with the External Territory Administrators about the scheme and had received a request for funds from Norfolk.⁸⁶ However, it was not able to advise further on the status of the claim:

Until the issue of whether the Island Territories have an allocation under the program is clarified, we are not able to progress consideration of that application. Certainly the independent RTIF Board would not be able to make any decisions on any applications from any of the Island Territories until the issue of the allocation of funds to the Island Territories had been clarified.

3.66 For now, it is notable that the Commonwealth Grants Commission concluded that in general, telecommunications services on Norfolk Island were thought to be comparable in standard with those provided in remote communities on the mainland.

Multi-media and the Internet

Current services

3.67 On Norfolk Island, there has been an Internet Service Provider (ISP) available for some time, although, in fact, part of its server operations were located in Australia. The ISP, Norfolk Island Data Services (NIDS), provides local customers with access to the Internet, on-line and e-mail services. However, NIDS could only provide channels with a limited data rate due to restrictions that Norfolk Telecom imposed on line use.

3.68 NIDS complained about Norfolk Telecom rates of \$98,000 per year for a 64 kbps link on the ANZCAN cable. By comparison an equivalent satellite line would

83 According to the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Optus was about to place a major cable between Australia and the United States. In March 1998, the Australian arm of WorldCom corporation had received a full-service telecommunications services licence for Australia and announced plans to build its own fibre-optic network. The network would link to a trans-Pacific submarine cable built in cooperation with Telecom New Zealand and Optus. The group planned to have the \$1.5 billion, 80-gigabit-per-second cable in operation by 1999, but it was not known whether the cable could transit Norfolk Island.

84 Norfolk Island Government, *Transcripts*, p. 67.

85 Norfolk Island Government, *Transcripts*, p. 72.

86 Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Transcripts*, p. 203-204.

give twice the performance for \$1,000 per month.⁸⁷ Unfortunately this option was not on offer through Norfolk Telecom. NIDS was charging users \$5 an hour to use its ISP operations.⁸⁸ NIDS expressed concern at the way the Norfolk Island Government managed Internet access by restricting NIDS to Norfolk Telecom and use of the ANZCAN cable.⁸⁹ This arrangement precluded NIDS from having a direct link straight in to the cable network or from accessing a satellite as an alternative.

3.69 The Committee sought advice on whether this arrangement constituted anti-competitive practices under the *Trade Practices Act, 1974*. It was informed that:

- Norfolk Island was not specified as a ‘Territory’ under either the *Trade Practices Act 1974* or the *Telecommunications Act 1997* and therefore the ACCC had no jurisdiction over complaints originating on Norfolk Island in relation to telecommunications; and, in addition
- the Trade Practices Act was ‘concerned with the behaviour of businesses and [did] not apply to the administrative decisions of government’.⁹⁰

3.70 The limitation on action in relation to this issue is twofold. One limitation, the fact that the action was an ‘administrative decision of government’, would also apply within the mainland; however, the exclusion of Norfolk Island from definition as a ‘Territory’ within the two relevant acts is consistent with the distribution of powers under the Norfolk Island Act. It appeared to the Committee that significant anomalies arose in numerous legislative areas as a result of the Norfolk Island Act. Norfolk Islanders are disadvantaged in that they cannot access the same protections as Australian citizens living anywhere else in Australia. The Committee believed it was a matter of concern and worthy of review.

Future prospects

3.71 After some study, this year the Norfolk Island Administration decided to establish its own ISP network. It had the name ‘NI.NET’ and a capacity of 300 users to provide standard Internet access and e-mail services to rival NIDS’ operations. The Administration contracted with an Australian systems integration company for establishment of the local ISP system through Norfolk Telecom. The Government will closely monitor NI.NET progress.

3.72 The Administration now proposes that NIDS will use the NI.NET infrastructure.⁹¹ The terms of NIDS’s access to the network is the subject of ongoing negotiation. According to the Administration, possibly NIDS will focus on the development and maintenance of commercial applications while NI.NET will control the basic infrastructure and provide basic standard access. Finally, the Norfolk Island

87 Norfolk Island Data Services, *Transcripts*, p. 139. The latter estimate appeared low compared to the AFP quote from Telstra for a line to Christmas Island from Canberra.

88 Norfolk Island Data Services, *Transcripts*, p. 140.

89 Norfolk Island Data Services, *Transcripts*, p. 142.

90 Exhibit No. 31, Correspondence from the ACCC to the Chair of the Committee.

91 Norfolk Island Government, *Submissions*, p. S115.

Government has also sought an extra \$150,000⁹² from the RTIF for Internet infrastructure.⁹³

Tele-medicine and community services

3.73 Tele-medicine is one service that is of significant interest in all the External Territories, and that is affected by the availability of high quality telecommunications and Internet capacity.

3.74 It is clear that remote communities can demonstrate a need access to tele-medicine and on-line community services. Without such access, remote people have to travel great distances, often at considerable inconvenience and cost, or call upon expensive emergency transport services. In some cases, the Commonwealth funds emergency transport by RAAF aircraft, whereas on-line consultations beforehand may obviate the need for such costly evacuations.⁹⁴ A week after the Committee's visit, the RAAF had to travel to Norfolk to provide an emergency airlift to Sydney. In the previous 11 months, the Norfolk Island Hospital had sent 225 people off the Island for second opinions by specialists.⁹⁵ Contracted medical services could also provide emergency patient transport, but at a cost of around \$20,000 and with some limitations.⁹⁶

3.75 For the hospital, relying on mail services at present often delays patient diagnosis by weeks.⁹⁷ This can pose difficulties in patient management and possible expense for the patient needing to travel to the specialist. The alternative would be to send the X-rays for specialist review by tele-medicine link.⁹⁸ The Norfolk Island Hospital therefore supports the setting up of a tele-radiology link.

3.76 Airfreight couriers provide an adequate service; however, both private companies have failed on numerous occasions in the delivery of the hospital's regular weekly cold pack of urgent human pathology specimens to Sydney. The specimens have been returned to Norfolk Island on the backleg of the outgoing flight, undelivered and ruined. This has limited diagnostic ability, necessitated re-collection of patient samples and made public health measures difficult.⁹⁹ Dr Ayton told the Committee that the problem lay in the complex chain of handlers involved in the service.

92 In addition to the \$150,000 sought for consideration of Norfolk's future options. See p.42.

93 Norfolk Island Government, *Transcripts*, p. 93.

94 Ms Ellis; Norfolk Island Hospital, *Transcripts*, p. 113, 116.

95 Norfolk Island Hospital, *Transcripts*, p. 113.

96 Norfolk Island Hospital, *Transcripts*, p. 121.

97 See also the anecdote of the lost X-Ray described on page 29, Norfolk Island Hospital, *Transcripts*, p. 112.

98 This matter is explored in greater detail in Chapter 5, paras. 5.50-5.55.

99 Norfolk Island Hospital, *Transcripts*, p. 123

It depends on the plane, on the courier service, and on Customs and Quarantine at the other end. Some of the difficulties have been with Quarantine. Because it is of human origin, they want reassurance ...¹⁰⁰

3.77 It was clear that there was a need to improve the system for the transportation of pathology specimens which require that the cold chain must be preserved.

3.78 The Committee inspected the 27-bed Norfolk Island Hospital after hearing of its needs for diagnostic equipment. While telecommunications from the Island were good, the Hospital lacked tele-medicine access or satellite-televised continuing medical education. The Hospital staff noted that people required access to mainland free-call services for matters of counselling, poisons information and personal crises.¹⁰¹ High call charges served to hamper medical education through tele-tutorials.

3.79 A recommendation on tele-medicine is made in Chapter 7.

Costs of tele-medicine

3.80 Among evolving tele-medicine services were those in fields of tele-radiology (X-rays), tele-ophthalmology (eyes), tele-intensive-care (emergency) and tele-psychiatry (counselling). The cost of a tele-conferencing room was estimated at \$80,000, tele-radiology equipment at \$20,000, a mammography unit at \$60,000 and an ultrasound machine from \$30,000 to \$50,000.¹⁰²

3.81 While the health benefits of tele-medicine for remote communities are agreed, cost benefit analysis of the service for small remote communities is still incomplete. The cost of the infrastructure is high and the recurrent usage costs for remote communities where telecommunications infrastructure is inadequate and slow are also prohibitive. In its 1997 inquiry into tele-medicine conducted by the House of Representative Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs, the Department of Health and Family Services argued that it was

Not prepared to say at the moment that in all of its implementations and all of its guises it is absolutely cost effective and the only way to go. We are being quite cautious about that. That is because the underlying infrastructure costs of some of these technologies are very high and frequently they are not brought to the table when you are actually looking at a particular thing.¹⁰³

3.82 Costs quoted in that report, which examined the value of tele-medicine for rural and remote Australia, included: \$1.2 million and \$2.1 million for the provision of a network to cover the Division of General Practice Northern Australia; and a range

100 Norfolk Island Hospital, *Transcripts*, p. 123.

101 Norfolk Island Hospital, *Submissions*, p. S60.

102 Norfolk Island Hospital, *Transcripts*, p. 122.

103 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs, *Health on Line: A Report on Health Information Management and Telemedicine*, 1997, p. 51.

of costs from \$20,000 to \$25,000 and/or \$65,000 for each workstation within the Melbourne Metropolitan Country Hospital Network.¹⁰⁴

3.83 There is little hard data on how these costs balance medical evacuation costs or longer term health costs or other social or qualitative issues such as improved levels of preventive medicine, better access to health care and the provision of care within communities.

3.84 The Commonwealth Grants Commission also noted that remote communities might have difficulty recruiting and maintaining staff who are trained to use such equipment. Otherwise, their own staff had to travel to attend training courses:

For this reason, the Northern Territory Government has quite specific policies about what pieces of equipment it puts into what medical centres in the Territory. Their policy is that they have patients travel to larger centres rather than have equipment scattered through smaller centres, because the patient who travels is more frequently requiring a range of services rather than ultrasound or just that piece of equipment, whatever it is.¹⁰⁵

Recommendation (1)

The Committee recommends that:

- **all letters be carried by air to and from Norfolk Island;**
- **Australia Post ensure that all Express Post articles are delivered by air to Norfolk Island;**
- **the Norfolk Island Government explore with Australia Post the possibility of reinstating an airmail service to cater for small packets and journals to and from Norfolk Island, and**
- **Australia Post not downgrade international airmail destined for Norfolk Island through the Sydney Exchange. (3.10 - 3.34)**

Recommendation (2)

The Committee recommends that the Norfolk Island Government negotiate with the private courier services for an improved, reliable service, particularly for carrying urgent human pathology specimens to Sydney. (3.76)

104 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs, *Health on Line: A Report on Health Information Management and Telemedicine*, 1997, p. 52.

105 Commonwealth Grants Commission, *Transcripts*, p. 193.

Recommendation (3)

The Committee recommends that Australia Post negotiate with the Australian Customs Service for improved customs and quarantine clearances of pathology specimens coming from or destined for the Norfolk Island Hospital. (3.77)

Recommendation (4)

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, after due consultation between the Australian Government and the Norfolk Island Government, clarify the role of the Australian Broadcasting Authority in relation to Norfolk Island. (3.44 – 3.46)

Recommendation (5)

The Committee recommends that, in 1999, the twentieth year of its operation, the Government initiate a review of the Norfolk Island Act with particular reference to the anomalies that arise as a result of the act as far as the citizens of Norfolk Island are concerned. (3.69 – 3.70)