

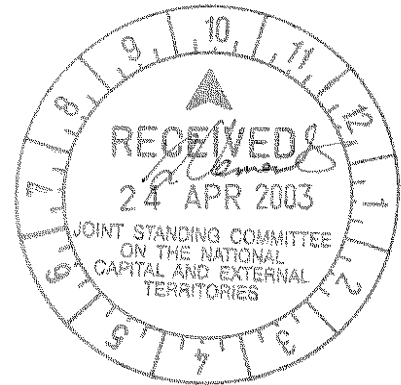
SUBMISSION 2

Miletic, Daniel (REPS)**FILE COPY**

From: dan cuthbertson [danadia@norfolk.nf]
Sent: Friday, 25 April 2003 8:23 AM
To: Committee, NCET (REPS)
Subject: Norfolk Island Governance Inquiry

The Hon. Senator R. Lightfoot,
 Chairman,
 Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories,
 Parliament House,
 Canberra.

Dear Senator,



Regrettably I only received your letter of 4 April yesterday and I am leaving the Island for an extended period on Sunday 27 April, hence the following are some hurried thoughts on the subjects to be covered by your Inquiry.

1. Though I believe a measure of self-government is very desirable for Norfolk Island I am concerned that certain of the responsibilities which have been handed over to our Assembly by the Commonwealth require resources which are too complex for the expertise which could reasonably be expected to be found in a place with such a small population. Among these I particularly refer to the drafting of legislation and economic planning. In such respects I am of the opinion that the Commonwealth has a duty to provide supporting expertise. For example where Norfolk Island is currently considering the introduction of a GST, it would seem absolutely essential that the Commonwealth should assist by checking that the assumptions and calculations put together by the local government are correct. It should also be prepared to offer advice as to the method of taxation which would best suit the special conditions under which the Island operates so as to ensure its continued financial viability and prosperity. Also the drafting of legislation should not be left to the scarce legal resources which the Island can muster. Too often the Island's legislation is woefully out of date and remains so indefinitely. By this I refer to such subjects as Company Law, the Crimes Act, Bankruptcy Law, Children and Social Protection Law, Guardianship Provisions etc. etc. In such regards one of the problems is that there are seldom people with the expertise to issue instructions to the Legal Draughtsperson to update such legislation.
2. The much too prevalent feeling of 'Them versus Us' that is engendered partly by Inquiries such as the current one, partly through historical misunderstandings and partly by the personalities of the players involved, could be reduced if the Commonwealth were to regularly review the needs and problems being faced by the Island and offer friendly advice and where necessary support. This could be done through the Administrator and/or by the Minister - in discussions, without a great deal of formality and fanfare. I believe much could be achieved in this way. It is fair to say that the 'Islanders' are proud of what they have achieved, which is considerable. But there are those who are skilled at fanning negative emotional responses. While the majority is either not aware or fails to recall just how beneficial some of the initiatives fostered by the Commonwealth have been.
3. I do not believe the Commonwealth Government has much to gain by being seen to coerce a small place like Norfolk Island into doing 'the right thing'. Nor do I believe that it would be 'good' for the community of the Island if suddenly social welfare, health, education etc. were to be funded by the Commonwealth in exchange for some form of direct taxation. I am certain a more cost and socially effective system can be put in place through negotiations and the provision of sound advice.
4. Through such negotiations the question of upgrading the Island's infrastructure could also be managed - and whatever the Commonwealth sees its way clear to contributing would still be much less than if it were to take a more direct role in managing the Island.
5. Finally I do not believe that direct elections for the position of Chief Minister would change a great deal. Nor do I think it is politically feasible to hark back to days when the Island was run by a Council headed by the Administrator. I do however believe that ensuring that T.E.P.'s and other new arrivals are enfranchised is essential. When this is achieved it would be equally essential for the Office of the Administrator to give an information package to such new electors, making them aware of some of the historical, political and other relevant current realities. There is no other such source of information on Norfolk Island. I see this as the only way for the power of block voting to be diminished.

28/04/2003

Should you wish to contact me about any of the above between 28 April and 23 May I shall be reachable on 0243 588 546. On 24May I will be returning to Norfolk Island.

Yours sincerely,

Nadia Lozzi-Cuthbertson

As it will be readily obvious I am proposing that the Commonwealth Government invest considerably more resources in Norfolk Island, but it should also be obvious that such an investment should result in better relations between this external territory and the Commonwealth, while still constituting a considerable saving on the more direct intervention such as applies to Christmas Island.

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