

SUBMISSION **23****Miletic, Daniel (REPS)**

From: pip [pip@norfolk.nf]
Sent: Tuesday, 22 June 2004 12:42 PM
To: Committee, NCET (REPS)
Subject: submission to Joint Standing Committee on National Capital and External Territories



23rd June, 2003

To: The Joint Standing committee on National Capital and External Territories
 Canberra

From: Philippa Reeves, resident of Norfolk Island for 41 years

Dear Sirs and Mesdames,

Thankyou for this opportunity to present a submission to this inquiry.

Once again Canberra has put us on the defensive. A situation we are getting very frustrated and disillusioned with. Why should we have to defend and justify our system of government to every change of administration in Canberra when The Commonwealth of Australia were achitects of The Norfolk Island Act of 1979 which made it possible for us to virtually govern ourselves with a unique position within the Australian Constitution. Credit is due to the then Minister for External Territories, Mr Ellicott who took the effort and time to understand how very different we are and clearly understood that there were few similarities to other remote and regional parts of Australia and that it would be "inappropriate" for us to be "normalised". Most of us were aware at the time and aware now that the cost of fully integrating us into Australia and enabling us to access social security benefits and all the other services available to Australian Citizens is too high in considering the small taxable population to try to recover from on Norfolk and that it suited Canberra's purse to allow us to generate our own income and provide our own services.

Why then, 24 years after giving us the opportunity to return to the freedoms and pure democracy that has always been identified by Norfolk Islanders as vital to their existence and identity, do we have to be ashamed of economically surviving (without major monetary input from Canberra into the infrastructure that was in poor repair from colonialism) using the machinery of our Norfolk Island Government and Public Service to provide what it has so far. In so saying, we do acknowledge gratefully the one off grants that have been given to the community from time to time and the accessability of regional grants but we ask Canberra to also acknowledge that they could have set us on the road to self-government in 1979 with some cleaning up after them and major injection of capital to get us off to a flying start. So let me ask you this, where is the failings in our present form of government that has provided free care for our geriatrics, free education for our children, an affordable and effective health care system (one we had to orchestrate after being ditched by Medicare in Australia with 10 days notice), our own social welfare scheme and an affordable tax system to deliver these things while still encouraging the enterprising spirit of its residents to benefit from hard work and entrepeunistic ideas. I could go on, enlightening you to the incredible benefits we residents experience on our Island, but I would prefer to think that you have done some serious background research into our positives and not already adopted a "blinkerred" view of our negatives on the advice of our latest Minister for External Territories who seems very put out that we have achieved all this without being constricted within the confines of "small local council" governance and finds us very unco-operative in not agreeing with his opinions. I will be very interested to see from your visit next month whether you have his agenda already in mind or if you are truly open minded and appreciative enough to help us maintain and capitilise on our efforts so far.

I am not saying that we are not experiencing financial difficulties in trying to deliver the three things that make our society civilised, that is, Health, Education and Welfare and that we have to come to our own collective awareness that our present tax system is not going to be able to maintain these services to future and present Norfolk Island residents unless we find a method that will still allow the average family to reside here instead of becoming a place for the affluent only. I would accept guidance readily on these issues without eroding the system of government that has always tried to deliver these things to the Norfolk Island people. Let me

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also add that we are not disadvantaged here and the opportunities are boundless for us to find the necessary funds. If you are really serious in helping us within a sensible timeframe as a result of this latest inquiry, send us experienced, far-sighted statesmen who can advise us financially on our capabilities and spend some time within the community (more than a week) getting to know us personally (there's only about 1800 of us) so that they can have the benefits of looking out and not just looking in from afar. I would also suggest without being overtly rude that Minister Tuckey has employed very overpowering, bullying and culturally insensitive tactics towards us that don't represent cohesive and helpful attitudes that Canberra has the potential to deliver to the benefit of workable relations between us and that a more diplomatic and enlightened mind who truly believed in democracy would be a major key turning point for us both.

In closing, I would just like to add that Citizens Initiated Referenda is one of the most pure tools of democracy and has served the people of Norfolk Island well in keeping our Government transparent and committed to good governance. I see a fixed term of government to be detrimental to this. I would however like to see for a more cohesive government, successful candidates to the Legislative Assembly taking up the executive portfolios most suited to their experience in private business and qualifications instead of pulling one out of a hat so to speak and a slight change in our voting system to be able to vote the candidates to a specific portfolio might ensure this. As for a candidate to stand for election to the separate office of Chief Minister seems to me to be a very pompous idea that is not in keeping with the way our community works and modelled on other peoples perceptions of how a government should be structured. Why would anybody want to isolate themselves so totally from the comfort of sharing decision making (both good and bad) anyway and be subject to the wrath of an entire population. Another suggestion from people who have no understanding of the delicate balance of a small remote island community but think they do. I would also like to say that as a mother of two children of Pitcairn Descent and having spent most of my life here, that I am willing to invest my future to ensuring that my children have a place to inherit which they will always identify as special, unique and worth fighting for.

Thankyou for this opportunity to have my say.

Yours sincerely,

Philippa Reeves