



**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE
NATIONAL CAPITAL AND EXTERNAL TERRITORIES**

Current and future governance
arrangements for the Indian Ocean Territories

Chairman: Senator Ross Lightfoot

Indian Ocean Territories

- Governance report recommends referendum -

Federal Parliament's External Territories Committee will today table its report on current and future governance arrangements for the Indian Ocean Territories. The report's key finding is that a **referendum on options for future governance arrangements should be held in the Indian Ocean Territories before the end of June 2009**. These options would include:

- **Maintaining current arrangements with some refinement;**
- **Incorporation of the Indian Ocean Territories into Western Australia;**
- **Some form of limited self government.**

Committee Chairman, Senator Ross Lightfoot, said: "It is important to give the people of both Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands a say in their own future by giving them a chance to vote on options for future governance."

Senator Lightfoot emphasised, however, that it was important that "aspirations for future governance be based on a realistic assessment of what can be achieved. There are limits to the level of autonomy which small isolated communities can attain".

The report also addresses concerns within the Indian Ocean Territories communities about the **accountability** of the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services in its administration of the Territories, and shortcomings in **consultation** between residents and the Department. Other recommendations in the report include **expanding the role of the local Shire Councils**, and **reissuing the licence for the Christmas Island Casino**. The reopening of the Casino is particularly important to the economic future of Christmas Island.

During the course of the inquiry, the Committee received 18 submissions and took evidence at public hearings on Christmas Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, in Perth and in Canberra. The full report can be found at the Committee's website at:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/ncet/iotgovernance/report.htm>

TABLING DATES—Indian Ocean Territories Governance Inquiry

This report will be tabled in both the Senate and the House of Representatives on the following dates:

SENATE: 13 JUNE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: 19 JUNE

To arrange media comment: contact the Chairman of the Committee, Senator Ross Lightfoot on (02) 6277 3626 (Parliament House)

For further information: Please contact the Committee Secretary on (02) 6277 4355, via email at jscncet@aph.gov.au, or visit the Committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/ncet