

PO Box 97  
NORFOLK ISLAND 2899  
14 February 2001

**The Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories - Inquiry in Norfolk Island Electoral Matters.**

**Submission from Merval Hoare, Norfolk Island.**

My submission is confined to item (a) in the Committee's Terms of Reference.

I strongly support the principle that Australian citizenship should be required for eligibility to vote for, or be elected to, the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly.

Norfolk Island is passing through a very difficult time of social and political unrest. The circulation of petitions, public meetings, statements by some Assembly members at their monthly broadcast meetings and letters and statements in the Norfolk Islander, our only newspaper, all point to undesirable undercurrents in the community.

We have the haves and have-nots, those who seek to distance the island politically from Australia and those who look to Australia as a protector, and conflict in the Assembly. At a time of social and political unrest, and indeed at all times, we need full representation by Australian citizens in the Assembly to maintain our traditional close ties with Australia.

The Committee will be aware that, in the early 1990s, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs held an inquiry into the legal regimes of Australia's External Territories and the Jervis Bay Territory. On 25 October 1990 I made a submission to that Committee, and in referring to Option 1, "Retain the status quo" in the Committee's Territory of Norfolk Island Working Paper/Emerging Conclusion I said:

Moreover, in retaining the status quo, Option 1, there is always the possibility, far-fetched as it may seem today, that we could get a majority of five members in the Assembly who did not hold Australian citizenship, had no allegiance to Australia, and perhaps were even hostile to Australia. Such a situation could have very serious repercussions in Australia as well as on Norfolk.

Eleven years on I believe the risk of a majority of Assembly members being hostile to Australia still exists.

I hope the present Committee studying Norfolk Island's electoral system will endorse Recommendation 41 in the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs Report Island in the Sun (1991): that Australian citizenship be a requirement for eligibility to stand for election or to vote in Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly elections.

I thank the Committee for their interest in Norfolk Island affairs and trust their forthcoming visit will be rewarding and enjoyable.

(signature)  
Merval Hoare

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