

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

Inquiry into the changing economic environment in the IOTs

Chair: Senator Kate Lundy

The economic future of the Indian Ocean Territories under review

Federal Parliament's External Territories Committee has begun a new inquiry investigating the changing economic environment on Australia's Indian Ocean Territories of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

The joint standing committee's terms of reference for this inquiry referred by the Minister for Home Affairs Bob Debus will examine the changing economic environment in the Indian Ocean Territories with consideration to current arrangements, barriers to business development and future need. The inquiry will look at:

- communication services such as broadband internet, digital television and mobile telephony;
- transport services and costs including passenger and freight transport;
- Commonwealth Government services and programs;
- the operation of businesses in the region;
- cost and availability of housing; and
- the impact of climate change.

Christmas Island is located 1,565 km from the Northwest Cape of Australia. The phosphate mine on Christmas Island is the largest single employer accounting for between 90-100 full time jobs or about 14 per cent of Christmas Island's total employment.

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands are made up of 27 coral islands about 900kms south-west of Christmas Island and nearly 3000km from Perth. Economic activity on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands is limited, with the public sector providing the majority of the employment, through administration, education, health and local government.

The committee will accept submissions, preferably by email, until Friday, 27 March 2009.

Submissions may also be posted to: The Committee Secretary, Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories, PO Box 6021, Parliament House, CANBERRA ACT 2600.

Further details about the inquiry, including how to make a submission, can be obtained from the committee's website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/ncet/index.htm> or by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4355 or emailing jscncet@aph.gov.au.

To arrange media comment: Please contact the Chair of the Committee, Senator Kate Lundy on (02) 6230 0411 (electorate office).