

Mrs R Peter

25 March 2009

The Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee  
on the National Capital & External Territories  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sirs

Thank you for this opportunity to submit my thoughts and ideas regarding the future of Christmas Island, Indian Ocean.

I am writing as a private individual who is also an ex-islander. I recently visited the Island after an absence of more than 30 years. The trip convinced my family to migrate there for our impending retirement. So it is with much excitement and anticipation that I submit my ideas to your committee for consideration.

In brief, I believe the future of the Island will be determined by 2 fundamental aspects. These are

- Economic
- Infrastructure

Christmas Island must capitalize on the burgeoning tourism industry. It is strategically situated for eco-tourism where there are many wonderful natural assets yet to be explored and developed. However before tourism could be developed into a viable industry, much infrastructure must be put in place prior.

It is also my belief that it is crucial for the Island residents to work towards self sufficiency in viable and practicable ways for the future.

Enclosed is a brief outline of my suggestions which will no doubt require further in-depth and detailed discussion. I write with the hope that your committee will seriously consider these ideas and not regard them as too simplistic. I believed your proactive commitment demonstrates that Canberra has a genuine interest in the economies and future welfare of the Island's residents.

I would appreciate if your department could acknowledge receipt of my letter and hopefully keep us informed of the progress of this enquiry. Thank you once again for your consideration.

Yours sincerely



R Peter  
Encl (2)

# CHRISTMAS ISLAND- where to from here?

## ECONOMICS

### 1. Tourism- Cruises & Small groups

Christmas Island needs to capitalize on the popularity of cruises & tour groups. Cruise ships could easily call in during the dry season and anchored not far from the landing jetty at Flying Fish Cove (FFC). However there need to be a concerted effort to take full advantage of the potential aquatic and other activities that are not yet developed. Some suggestions include but are not limited to:

- **Cove activities-** snorkelling, glass-bottomed boats & swimming in protected waters. The coral reef shoreline of FFC provides excellent shallow water snorkelling activities. Snorkelling equipment could be hired out for a fee. A coned off area for snorkelling could be supervised by small boats to ensure safety. Other activities could include glass-bottomed boats and kayaking for non-swimmers.
- **Deep sea diving & fishing.** There is need for assistance to encourage and develop more charter businesses to provide these activities.
- **Golf.** The 9-hole golf course could be developed and beautified to be hired out for quick games with equipment provided.
- **Eco walks-** eg Grotto, Dale & Dolly beach. Eco tours could be conducted to visit the various existing nature attractions. There was a report previously submitted (to Canberra) for a walking trail around the accessible part of the island, but this was believed to have been lost in the system. (Author: Jamie Allnut circa 2002)
- **Cultural & historical tours around the Island including the phosphate mine.** There could be an interactive information museum highlighting the many floral & fauna species endemic to the Island. The residents could be trained as tourist guides.
- **Beach camping.** This all-inclusive activity could provide a unique opportunity for turtle-watching when in season.

### 2. Self Sufficiency Projects

One of the important factors that will enable sustainable living for local residents is the need to be self sufficient. The aim is to become less dependant on imports and freighted consumable goods such as meat, fruit and vegetables. The tropical climate is ideal for the cultivation of local fruit & vegetable sufficient for local consumption.

In practice, this entails:

- **Leased land.** The government must lease land for the set up of a fruit & vegetable farm with additional assistance to import fertilizer, pest control and seedlings. This farm could be run by locals. In 1982, there was a Sweetland inquiry (sponsored by the government) which recommended & supported such a project. Unfortunately nothing eventuated. The last and latest economic development enquiry was completed in 2005, again nothing resulted.

- **Live stock & fish farms.** Again land could be leased to set up live stock farms to raise poultry and sheep for local consumption. The harvest of local seafood could also be placed in cold storage facilities for when increment weather prevents fishing activities.
- **Co-Operative.** A co-operative could be set up for the management of the fruit & vegetable production including the poultry farms etc; again to be managed by the local residents.
- **Power via solar panels.** Local energy requirement could be managed by installation of solar panels in every home & business. This will lead to less reliance on freighted liquid fuel.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

To develop the tourism industry, basic infrastructure must be established such as:

1. Facilities in the FFC area such as refreshment (eg cafes), ablution blocks, sheltered picnic & safe beach areas.
2. Transport to various activities above eg water transport from the cruise ships to shore and buses for eco tours.
3. Seasonal personnel for aquatic & forest activities.
4. Co-ordinated marketing programme to sell the local attractions to tourist operators in Asia, Australia & the world. This should target cruise, eco, bird watching etc groups.

## PRIORITIES

1. Autonomy to make decision that directly affects the livelihood of the residents.  
The government must engage in more proactive consultation with the Island residents regarding policies that directly impact on their livelihood. This does not entail self-governance but rather self determination of everyday issues that may be remote from the mentality of Canberra decision makers. There must be a genuine commitment to work towards best policies to ensure sustainability of its future as a remote community.
2. Cheaper airfares to & from island.  
This is the biggest single obstacle for visitors. Commercial flights to and from Perth & Asia could be encouraged to make a diversion to the island for visitors as part of a tour itinerary.
3. Tourist accommodation.  
Hotel rooms at the Casino could be leased to a tourism operator without the need to use the gambling facilities. This should include the restaurant & recreational facilities within the resort.
4. Environmental protection.  
The existing programme of eradicating the Crazy Yellow ants with bi-annual baiting must be continued straight away. This will safeguard the population of the Red Crab which is the most important draw card for tourism. There must also be immediate effort to eradicate feral fowl, feral cats & giant African snails.
5. Heritage Listed Buildings.  
The government must be proactive to either restore or demolish derelict buildings which were supposedly heritage listed. These are eye-sores unless something urgently is done with them. Once restored, these may be used for public recreational and social purposes.