



MEDIA ALERT

Issued: Thursday 3 April 2003

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL CAPITAL AND EXTERNAL TERRITORIES

New Inquiry: Norfolk Island governance

Interested individuals and organisations invited to have their say on how to improve governance on Norfolk Island

The Australian Parliament's External Territories Committee has been asked by the Federal Minister for Territories to look into potential ways of improving governance on Norfolk Island.

How can the operations and organisation of the Territory Ministry and the Legislature on Norfolk Island be improved? Should there be direct elections for the position of Chief Minister? Should there be fixed terms? Are there other changes which should be made to how government on Norfolk Island operates and is delivered to the Island community and residents?

All these questions are being asked with a particular emphasis on the need for achieving a financially sustainable and accountable system of representative self-government in the Territory.

The Committee wishes to hear the views and suggestions of interested individuals and organisations, and is seeking written submissions by **Friday 2 May 2003**.

For further information about the inquiry or making a submission, please contact the Inquiry Secretary, Mr Quinton Clements, on (02) 6277 2135 or via email at jscncet@aph.gov.au, or visit the Committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/ncet/index.htm. The full terms of reference appear below.

To arrange media comment: contact the Chairman of the Committee, Senator Ross Lightfoot on (08) 9344 8900 or the Deputy Chair, Senator Trish Crossin, on (08) 8931 0830

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Federal Minister for Territories asks that the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories report on measures to improve the operations and organisation of the Territory Ministry and Legislature on Norfolk Island, with particular emphasis on the need for a financially sustainable and accountable system of representative self-government in the Territory.

The inquiry should consider possible alternative measures, such as:

- a) *Direct elections for the position of Chief Minister; and*
- b) *Fixed terms of government.*

These matters should be considered in the context of the financial sustainability of self-government arrangements on Norfolk Island, with particular consideration of -

- a) *the findings of the Commonwealth Grants Commission documented in its 1997 report on Norfolk Island on the Territory's capacity to administer and fund obligations associated with:*
 - *current and future government functions and responsibilities;*
 - *the Island's current and foreseeable infrastructure requirements;*
 - *the provision of government services on Norfolk Island at an appropriate level;*
- b) *subsequent government and parliamentary reports relevant to the above; and*
- c) *the role of the Commonwealth and its responsibilities for Norfolk Island as part of remote and regional Australia*

BACKGROUND

The Joint Standing Committee is a parliamentary committee made up of members of the Federal House of Representatives and the Senate. It was established by Federal Parliament to inquire into matters concerning the Australian Capital Territory, the Antarctic, and the Island Territories, including Christmas Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Norfolk Island. Part of its role is to monitor governance in these Australian Territories to ensure that appropriate and effective government services and programs are provided to Territory communities and residents.

The Terms of Reference reflect the Committee's interest in how government is being delivered to Norfolk Island's residents and in how the Island's economic and social development is being managed.