

Angels and Eagles

A personal response to the constitutional change being forced on Norfolk Island by Australia. Will we lose far more than we gain?

1 Tuesday, April 04, 2006

MONEY MYTHS 2

MYTH4: Australia Pours Big Money into Norfolk Island

Definitely not.

In the later days of the Advisory Council, Australia was giving Norfolk Island a grant of a little over \$60 000. Even then, this represented only a small percentage of the island's revenue. And the cost of the Administrator and Canberra's responsibilities on the island came out of this money.

With the coming of self-government, the island was to raise and spend its own revenue. As is only right, there are certain things that Canberra pays for. Such as the cost of *their* Administrator and his staff and Government House. The island receives no direct annual grants, but the Commonwealth does contribute to the running and maintenance of areas that are owned by the Crown, or which serve Commonwealth interests. The Norfolk Island Government and the Commonwealth share the cost of KAVHA, which is Crown property and part of Australia's colonial heritage. They pay a third of the cost of the Federal Police presence here. For some reason, the Commonwealth assumes the total responsibility for National Parks. That is a good thing. When we see the incredible waste of money in that area, it is a warning to us of what will happen if Australia takes over other areas of responsibility.

In 1997 when the Commonwealth Grants Commission made its report into Norfolk's financial viability, the TOTAL spending on Norfolk Island by the Commonwealth was less than \$4 million. That included all sorts of things like the Meteorological Bureau, the Ionospheric station, Foreign Affairs and Defence, Veterans' pensions, matters which are totally Australia's responsibility. Of that amount, the things they said could be considered to bring some direct benefit to the island amounted to just \$676 000 ...and that included 50% of the costs of the Norfolk Island branch of the Territories department, 50% of the costs of the Administrator's office and Government House, and an amount of \$100 000 for

Medivacs. And 50% of the **Commonwealth share** of KAVHA costs was actually said to be properly a Norfolk responsibility, even though the island was already contributing far more than the Commonwealth in this area! The \$676 000 also included an amount of social security payments being paid to residents, which they had no doubt earned through years of paying Australian tax! The Federal Government has even subsidised private industry in Australia for far greater amounts! e.g. Mitsubishi, Kodak, Sugar, Ethanol.

In other words, it was chicken feed.

We didn't actually have to pay this amount, but it was firmly placed in the ledger as something for which we should feel beholden to Australia. Moreover, the Grants Commission implied that we were even more in Australia's debt because they allowed us to keep our Customs duty and departure tax revenue, which rightly belonged to the Commonwealth!

I wonder if other countries are made to feel in Australia's debt because of the cost of maintaining their embassies and diplomats there!

Now we will admit that Australia has made available some small grants from time to time, such as for the Water Assurance Scheme many years ago, the stabilising of the Cascade cliff, and the restoration of the Kingston wharf. Not only have these been mostly tied up with indemnity issues, but the amounts were extremely small when compared to aid given elsewhere in the region.

Let us get a bit of perspective here. In 2004-5, Australia spent \$674 million in foreign aid to this region just to assist in Governance issues. They have contributed \$4 million to Fiji's upcoming elections. A month or so ago, they announced they were giving \$38 million to Vanuatu to upgrade their judicial system.

Yet for the few scraps that Canberra throws us, there are great strings attached; we are made to feel dependent on them and incapable of managing on our own. If Australia was really interested in sound Governance on the island, it would cost them comparatively little to help us through our current potential difficulties. They could even do it simply by removing some of the legal and constitutional obstacles they keep putting in our path.

But they do not want to assist. They simply want to take control for themselves.

MONEY MYTHS

The media loves to portray Norfolk Island as a place where people avoid paying taxes. Some journalists like to imply that we have got away with this situation for too long, and it is about time Australia made us pull our weight. They also like to create the impression that the island is full of millionaires avoiding taxes that they should rightfully be paying to the Australian Government. This misinformation suits Canberra well, and they do nothing to dispel the myths. When Minister Jim Lloyd was interviewed on Radio National the morning after his announcement about changes in Governance on Norfolk Island, he was asked if it was right that Norfolk Island people should be allowed to get away without paying tax. He replied that the system was different here, but he did not attempt to explain that we receive very little from Australia either.

MYTH1 Norfolk people do not pay tax.

Norfolk residents do not pay income tax on money earned on the island. Most Norfolk residents do not pay any taxes to Australia, except on incomes and revenue earned in Australia (and the same applies to other countries like New Zealand, the U.S.)

Norfolk residents *do* pay a whole range of taxes and levies to our own government. Customs duty and Waste Management levy is charged on all goods brought into the island. We pay a Financial Institutions levy, a Healthcare levy, a Fuel levy, and all sorts of user-pays charges for registrations, licences and the like. Many people pay a Water Assurance levy (for sewerage) and businesses pay a range of levies, such as the bed tax paid by tourist accommodation owners. Our government also earns money from Government Business Enterprises such as Norfolk Telecom, the Electricity Undertaking, the Post Office, the Liquor Bond, the Lighterage Undertaking. Visitors and locals alike pay a departure tax. There probably ways we can spread the tax base more widely, and we are working on that. We are quite prepared to look at ways of contributing more to the running of the island...but we want that money to go to our own Government, not to Australia!

MYTH 2 Norfolk residents get special treatment from Australia.

Norfolk residents do not receive social services from Australia...no pensions, no baby bonus or family allowance, no student allowance, no childcare subsidies, no dole, no disability allowance, no business, training or employment subsidies, no Medicare, no pharmaceutical benefits.

There would be a handful of people receiving a Veterans pension, and rightly so. Likewise there are some people who have qualified for an Australian pension after a lifetime of

paying Australian taxes.

We pay totally for our own Health services and hospital, and for our Education system. There is a locally-funded pension and special allowance for those who need it. We pay for our own roads and other infrastructure. We pay for our own Public Service.

Australia used to help us out with medical evacuations, using the R.A.A.F, but no longer does provides this neighbourly facility.

We are remarkably self-sufficient and independent, and want to remain so.

MYTH 3 Norfolk Island is a tax haven for millionaires

If my reading of property prices on the mainland is any indication, millionaires are a dime a dozen nowadays. There may well be a number of them living here. It is hard to tell, because we do not see any ostentatious mansions or lifestyles, nor does anyone drive a really classy car (except for one or two eccentrics!) The better-off people here are often still working hard, and pulling their weight in the community.

They are certainly not avoiding tax. Any money they are earning in Australia or New Zealand is being taxed in those countries. Norfolk as a tax haven is well and truly a thing of the past. Those who exploit taxation loopholes have all gone elsewhere.

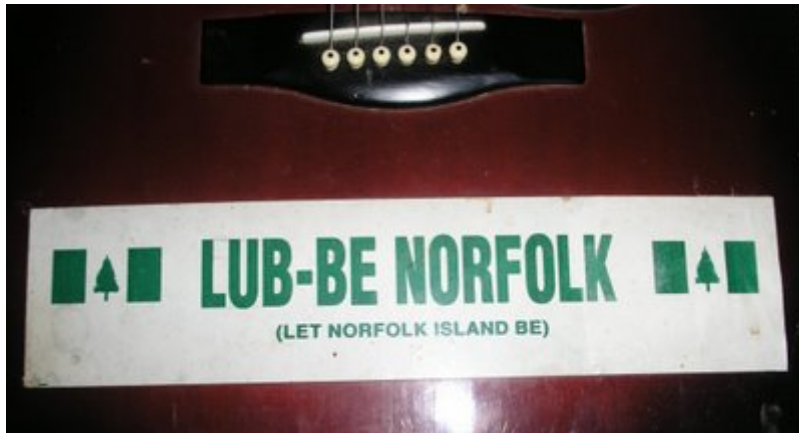
Of course, there may be a few people who, through enterprise, hard work and good investment have made a million here on Norfolk Island. I say "Good luck to them." They do not owe Australia anything!

I believe the myth about rich people exploiting the island comes from people who would like you to think there is a class structure here. Norfolk is a remarkably egalitarian place, offering opportunities for all.

In future posts, I will deal further with Norfolk's financial relationship with Australia, and with our own Government's financial situation. There will be still more myths to be laid to rest.

LUB-BE NORFOLK

Let Norfolk Island Be.



This bumper sticker was commonly seen on the back of Norfolk vehicles in the 1970's. It expressed very succinctly the feeling of frustration that Norfolk people felt with the continuing interference of the Federal Government in their affairs. For a small section of the community, it expressed a desire to really "go it alone." I have heard this view expressed fairly frequently in recent days, as people contemplate the possibility of another lifetime of having their basic rights squashed and their heritage and culture ignored. For most however, "Lub-be Norfolk" simply meant "Stop messing around with us, and let us get on with governing this island in the best interests of its inhabitants." Although there have always been some in the community who want closer integration into Australia, the majority by far simply want a close and friendly association which would benefit both countries.

The fact is that the Norfolk Island people have been remarkably *consistent* in their wishes and aspirations for the governance of their community.

On their removal from Pitcairn to Norfolk, the islanders desired that they should be allowed to live according to their own laws and customs, without interference from outside. Much the same as we desire today!

When almost all their laws were repealed in 1896, and they lost any measure of autonomy by being annexed to New South Wales, the incumbent magistrates Adams and Quintal expressed their concerns in a letter that gives a strong sense of *deja vu!*

They stated that that the move would:

" First, involve the destruction of the distinctive character and race of the people, as well as the ancient laws, institutions, and customs of themselves and of their Pitcairn fathers;

Secondly, subject the people to a code of laws entirely different from their own and unsuited to their circumstances;

Thirdly, inundate the island with strangers and expose all its unalienated land;

Fourthly, subject the island to taxation; and

Fifthly, deprive the islanders of the rights(which they had exercised for over 100 years) of electing their own magistrates."

Over the next 80 years, the feelings of the islanders remained unchanged. They never resigned themselves to being subjected to the rule and order of Australia and her representatives, and continually asked and petitioned for a greater say and genuine control in their own affairs, and the right to say how the moneys raised on the island were to be spent.

In 1962, after rejecting the local municipal governance offered by Australia, the President of the Advisory Council, Mr Jim Needham, said:

"Norfolk Island has been remarkably consistent in knowing what form of government it wants.....our policy, after all, has been consistent for 65 years. Can it be more clearly stated in any other form?" (Pacific Islands Monthly Jan 1962)

Today, in 2006, our aspirations still remain the same. We still know what we want and need. Could any member of the Australian government say that?

No, but with their blinkered eyes and blocked ears, they continue to call the tune with no real attempt to consult and negotiate with us.

Yes, I know they send commissions, committees and inquiries here with tedious regularity, and we will have a real barrage of them this year. The trouble is, they do not even know the *right questions* to ask, let alone the answers. They will only hear what they want to hear, and dismiss everything else as the rantings of a noisy, self-interested minority!!

By all means continue to write to and email the Minister and DOTARS, but contact the P.M., the Treasurer, the Foreign Minister and all the ordinary M.P.'s and Senators. If they will not listen, I feel we must start to tell the rest of the world. Let your friends and relatives know what is happening to this island. Write to the newspapers, Human Rights' Organisations, anyone you can think of. Get behind our Assembly, and encourage them to be proactive in resisting Australia's push.

Keep positive and don't give in.

If we lose what we have, we will never get it back.

WI GUUD, THAENK YU

It is probably hard for Australia to understand that Norfolkers are totally unimpressed by the carrots they dangle in front of us to persuade us that we would be better off under their system. It doesn't matter how many millions they promise to spend here, we think we already live in the best of all possible worlds. We don't envy another soul on this planet.

Norfolk Island is tailor made for Norfolkers.....that is, the Pitcairners and the people who have come to settle because they like the Norfolk way of doing things. It doesn't matter how much Canberra consults and deliberates to design a model of government suitable for this island. Their model just will not fit. Because they do not come even close to understanding this island or its people.

Our visitors come closer to understanding. They tell us time and time again: "*Do not let Australia come in. They will spoil this place. We envy your way of life.*"

This is a contented, busy, productive, vibrant society.

Early in the mornings, you will see all manner of people out walking, or swimming, or tending their gardens, or picking up rubbish along the road. They have something to get up for here!

During the day, you will see people gathering, chatting, laughing, interacting. You don't see anyone, young or old, just sitting round, sad and idle. Our senior citizens are active and productive into their later years, in their gardens, around their farms, in community work, and even in the paid workforce. Our young people are focussed, positive and courteous. Our children and our old people feel safe. Families and extended families are strong and supportive. You will rarely see any vandalism or graffiti.

Community organisations are well-supported. There is strong participation in sports and in arts and crafts. We know how to work hard and play hard. If you go to the Supermarket, you will see trolleys filled with consumables.

Rarely do you hear a complaint about our hospital or school. Quite the opposite....we are proud of both. Large numbers of people are connected to the internet. Some of our facilities may be on a small scale (as is appropriate for a small island) - but they are accessible to all.

Our homes and public buildings may not be ostentatious, but they are tidy and well-maintained. Our roads are excellent for a small semi-rural community. Large numbers of our people, young and old, own their own businesses, or reap the benefits of the tourist industry in some way. Our people are enterprising and resourceful.

There are some challenges living on small remote island. We have to catch our own water, and use it carefully. Our fuel and power costs are high, as are prices of some of our groceries. Sometimes the

supermarket runs short of things. You can't "take off" for a weekend. If we get really ill, we may have to go to the mainland. There is no garbage collection. If we want something, we have to work for it ourselves - we can't ask someone to do it for us.

We accept these "inconveniences" as part and parcel of living here. People who want the so-called comforts of an urban environment should not be living here. The Australian Government cannot do a single thing to change these less convenient aspects of rural island life. But in making us dependent on their handouts, and taking away our responsibility for meeting our own needs, they will greatly damage the wonderful spirit of this community.

Time and again, you will hear Norfolkers say:

"Ai guud, thaenk yu." (I am just fine, thank you.)

And they mean it.

STANDING UP FOR OUR RIGHTS

Politicians generally cop a lot of flak. It is part of the job. This includes the members of our own Legislative Assembly. Now our M.L.A.'s may have their shortcomings, both individually and collectively....but they *are* **our** representatives, **we** put them there, they are **our own people**. And if you watch Question Time in the Federal Parliament, as I do, I think **our** M.L.A.'s measure up pretty well when it comes to conducting themselves with dignity, decorum and sincerity.

Have you noticed how the Australian Government, the Minister and DOTARS have been treating **our elected government** with absolute disrespect and disdain? I myself heard Minister Lloyd publicly and rudely undermine them during his visit. When he met with them, he refused to discuss with them anything other than what was on his own agenda.

That makes me, as an elector, feel personally insulted and very angry.

But I should not be surprised.

From the time in 1856 when the Pitcairners were duped into believing this island was being given to them, to the present day, the attitude of the Colonial and Australian government has been, at best, one of benevolent paternalism, and at worst, outright trampling on our democratic rights.

In 1896, when Governor Hampden decided to bring to an end 140 years of the Pitcairn/Norfolkers managing their own affairs, the first that many of the islanders knew about it was by reading the Sydney Morning Herald! Their protests were coldly overridden. The response of the committee of one of the *three* investigations into the Island at that

time was to refer to the "pernicious doctrine of democracy."

In 1913, when plans were afoot to place the island under the Commonwealth of Australia, the Minister who moved the Norfolk Island Bill in Federal Parliament was asked whether the Norfolk Islanders had been consulted on the issue of the change in their constitutional status. The reply was

"They know what is going on; but no, they have not been consulted by the government."

Then in 1962, in an article in the Pacific Islands Monthly, the then President of the Norfolk Island Council. F.J. (Jim) Needham wrote:

"PIM in October reported the Minister for Territories, Mr Hasluck, as saying he did not regard the political views held by the majority (seven out of eight) of the present Council as necessarily being the will of the people. The Council, he said, did not have a mandate, because people voted for different reasons." (*"What Does Norfolk Want?" by F.J. Needham, P.I.M. January 1962*)

In 1977, more than two-thirds of electors on the island signed a Solemn Declaration that they supported the Norfolk Island Council and wanted Norfolk Island to remain a distinct and separate territory...with its own system of laws, taxes and benefits.

Minister Reg Withers dismissed these declarations as "totally, completely and utterly valueless." The same Minister also refused to receive a N.I. Council delegation when it travelled to Canberra. (*Norfolk Island, Australia and the U.N. Vol. 2 - United Nations Association of Australia*)

The attitude of contempt for local democracy continues to present times. The December 2003 report of the Joint Standing Committee states, referring to Norfolk referenda:

"referendums allow tyranny by the majority" !!! (*p. 112 Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? Dec 2003*)

They also accused us of using intimidation to manipulate results. I have visions of the senior members of our community who usually man the polling booths wielding big sticks and standing over people to force them to put their cross in the right box!

On Monday, addressing Federal Parliament, British P.M. Tony Blair urged Australia to continue the fight to establish democracy throughout the world. Yesterday, I heard Foreign Minister Downer holding up Australia's system of liberal democracy as a shining model in contrast to the system in China.

I wonder if Australia has any idea of what democracy is, unless it follows exactly their own model! They seem very "blinkered" when it comes to other people.

I believe it is time we told Australia - and the rest of the world - that we have been the victims of a high-handed, undemocratic, colonial-style rule for too long. This is the 21st century. Australia's hypocrisy, and contempt for Norfolkers' rights must not be allowed to continue any longer.

OUR ISLAND HOME

Many Norfolk Island families still live on land which is part of the 50 acre blocks granted to them by Queen Victoria. Some still proudly display the "Original Grant" documents on their walls. When the Colonial Government decided to cease handing out grants to island families over 100 years ago, the portions remaining became Crown land. Some of this became Reserve land, while other portions were "sold" as 28 year leases to new settlers. Of considerable interest is a large area of land - almost 1000 acres - which was purchased back from the Melanesian Mission when they moved their headquarters to the Solomons earlier in the 20th century. This land was purchased back from the Mission with trust moneys that belonged to the people of Norfolk Island, and the land was meant to be used for the benefit of the people of the island. However, the Commonwealth or "Crown" assumed the title to this land for themselves.

In very recent years, the Commonwealth has begun a process of converting much of the privately occupied leasehold land to freehold, at a fairly reasonable cost to the owners. The proceeds from these sales are to go into an Environment fund for the island.

A magnanimous gesture?

Well, not really, if the land was not morally theirs in the first place.

But it gets worse.

You see, you cannot charge rates or land taxes on leasehold land.

If either of the two options for governance models is imposed on this island, it is highly likely that property rates would be part of the raft of taxes imposed.

If we are forced to accept a "Municipal" style model, our own government will be forced to levy such rates, because much of their present sources of revenue e.g. customs, will have been taken away from them.

Now many Norfolk people are what you would describe as asset-rich and cash poor. As I said yesterday, they will make any sacrifices to hang on to their land for future generations. It is very important in island culture that you have something to hand on to your family, so that they can continue to call Norfolk Island "home".

The fact that fairly large tracts have been preserved in many parts of the island means that we have been able to retain the rural character of the island. There are many such

areas which are used to benefit more than the family owners. Privately owned land is often made available for community and sporting events. There are areas where tourists can walk, or where horses can be ridden. Both the Archery Club and the Pony Club use large areas belonging to the Church of England.

If land and property taxes are brought in, this amenity will surely be diminished. These owners will be forced to utilise this land for profit. Or they will be forced to sell it. There will be pressure to subdivide. There will be mainland-style "developments." The owners may expect facilities such as kerbing and guttering, or garbage services to justify the payment of rates.

If Australia also plans to take away control of our immigration, the problem will be compounded. No doubt there will be any number of people in search of a "sea-change" or "island escape" who will be willing to snap up homes and land from Norfolkers who can no longer afford to hang on to them.

Norfolk Island has always been an annoying anomaly to Canberra and the Territories Department. This will really fast track the final solution to the Norfolk problem for Australia. Just replace the Norfolkers with Australians, many of whom will no doubt proceed to turn this island into a glossy and ostentatious resort area much like the ones they thought they had left behind.

THIS LAND IS MY LAND

The way people view land and property is a very cultural thing. For instance, the Aboriginal people of Australia have a very different concept of land ownership to that of the 'white man'. Since the Native Title court case, a token acknowledgement is made of this, but I doubt that the most people have a real understanding of the Aboriginal's spiritual relationship with the land.

There is no doubt that the Norfolk Islander has a view of land and property that is different again. It is not only a product of his Anglo/Tahitian roots, but has also been shaped to a large extent by the history of the community since 1789.

When the Pitcairn community moved to Norfolk Island in 1856, they believed the island had been ceded to them for their exclusive occupation and enjoyment. Now the legal eagles will argue endlessly about whether in fact this is what happened, but there is no doubt that this community was *led to believe* the island was to be theirs, freely given. Many of the Pitcairners had been reluctant to leave Pitcairn, but had come for the greater good of the community. The fact that each family was given freehold title to around 50 acres of land on Norfolk Island helped them to settle and feel they had a future here.

It was puzzling and disappointing to the community when a large parcel of land was handed over to the Melanesian Mission in the 1860's. They had no choice but to accept this situation, and made the best of it.

Meanwhile, they began to clear and cultivate their own blocks, growing for their own needs, and just a little for the limited trading possibilities open to them. They came in for criticism from the colonial powers, initially for their preference for cultivating in a co-operative and communal fashion, and secondly because they did not clear and cultivate large areas, only what they needed and could manage. In some ways, their thinking was way ahead of its time!

In 1896, the practice of making grants was ceased, and thus land ownership became even more important. In 1906, the sale of land to outsiders was permitted for the first time, and new settlers were allowed to take up Crown leases.

Over the years, a certain amount of buying and selling has taken place, and in the social upheavals of the 1960's, when the island was opened up more to the outside world, a few families and individuals regrettably allowed large portions of their land to pass out of their hands. It is something no one wants to happen again.

Today, in island families, land is greatly valued. This is also true of many mainland families who have been here for the long term. It is not a case of enjoying the power and control and wealth that land ownership gives. It is not acquired for speculative purposes. It is not necessarily prized for development potential or as a financial asset. In fact, it may cost Norfolkers quite a lot to maintain their properties and keep them fenced and free of noxious weeds.

On Norfolk Island, **land is heritage**. It is something you hang on to at all costs, so you can pass it on to your children, and your children's children. It is something that ensures the continuance of the rights of the Norfolk Island people to call this island home. It is something that your offspring and heirs can come home to when they have finished with their overseas education and travelling, or even after their retirement.

It is what enables the Norfolkers to put down roots, and maintain their strong sense of belonging to this place.

It is not necessarily a special relationship with a particular property or place....although I have heard both the Rocky Point people and the Cascade residents refer to their little part of the island as God's own country. It is more a case of maintaining a firm and longstanding relationship with the island that they have always believed is rightfully theirs. Tomorrow, I will look at the implications the actions and plans of the Australian government will have on land ownership and island heritage.

MINDING OUR OWN BUSINESS

The Howard Government says they are the friends of small business, that they listen to the small business owner, and that they would like to make things easier for them.

Mr Howard, we have a message from **Small Business on Norfolk Island**.

Please do not bring us under your system of taxes and regulations.

You see, in a small community, especially a remote and isolated place like Norfolk Island, small business is our life blood. There are dozens, perhaps more than a hundred small businesses here. It happens when you cannot access public and private services and facilities that are available in bigger centres. Someone sees a need in the community. They get hold of some basic equipment or premises. They put a notice in the paper or flyers in the mail. And away they go! It us a very flexible arrangement.

There is a minimum of paperwork, regulation, compliance issues. You just get on with doing the jobs that people need doing. It works well.

We have a number of businesses servicing the tourist industry, that require a bit of capital and infrastructure.shops, accommodation, touring companies. Some are bigger and involve more investment than others. These types of businesses would need to keep their paperwork up to scratch. But it is nothing like it is under the mainland systems.

We have our normal tradesmen...our plumbing and electrical businesses, our builders, garages etc. They need to be organised, and there are some controls on their activities, such as O.H&S, planning and building regulations. But they would far rather conduct business here than anywhere else. Then there are our professionals...red tape is a little easier for them to handle, but they also recognise that it gets in the way of personal service. Even our accountants don't think much of your plans, although they are about the only ones whose businesses would prosper !

Then there are the smaller businesses and all the self-employed people. They carry out tasks like fencing, carting, grounds maintenance, producing crafts, pumping out our septics, cleaning our carpets, minding our kids, fixing our appliances, signwriting, beauty and massage therapies, mini tours, growing veges and flowers, catering, floor sanding..and many more. Many of them have two or three or more jobs they work at. It may be just one or two people involved. They may call in an extra person when a job is too big.

It all works very simply. Cash changes hands...and it is perfectly legal. Apart from their work tools, these small business people need little more than a cheque book, an account with a supplier, an invoice book and a receipt book...and sometimes they get by without even those!

Business and income taxes would cripple most of these small businesses. And if the financial constraints don't get them, the paperwork and compliance issues will. They simply cannot afford it. They would rather be out doing the jobs they are equipped to do....and keeping the money circulating round the community.

We are not in the Stone Age. We do have employment regulations, occupational health and safety standards, minimum wages, workers' compensation and things that really matter.

But if we are hit with all the red tape, regulations and taxes that the Commonwealth would impose on us, many of us would 'go under'. The 'big fellows' will take over, and they will not necessarily be *local* 'big fellows.' They will have a monopoly, and we will all get charged more for their products and services. I hate to say it, but if that happens, there would probably be plenty of people who would be in need of the dole they want to introduce here. But please.....they would really rather be working and producing, as they are now.

The spirit of enterprise is alive and well here on Norfolk Island. Please do not kill it!

PAUSE TO SMILE

I trust that all those politicians, public servants and journalists who enjoy having a sneer at little Norfolk Island will not mind if we stop to have a little laugh at your expense.

This 'letter' was printed in the local Norfolk Islander on the weekend, but for the benefit of all the readers of this blog outside the island, I have the writer's permission to print it here on "Angels and Eagles"

DOCTORS' COMMONS

Citizens of the Self-Governing Colony called the Commonwealth of Australia.

In light of your failure to elect a competent and worthwhile Government and thus to govern yourselves properly, and particularly having regard to the grave and despicable way you have treated our loyal and much loved Subjects on our bountiful and wonderful Crown Colony of Norfolk Island, We Hereby Give Notice of the revocation of your self-governance and your so-called independence, effective immediately.

Her Sovereign Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, will resume monarchical duties over all your states, territories, islands and ocean seas (except Canberra, which she thinks is a dreadful place). We shall rename Norfolk Island as The Norfolk Islands, as there are actually three

islands (all of which belong to Her Majesty and are not and never have been yours) and for the avoidance of doubt we shall extend the Crown Territory of The Norfolk Islands to an area of two hundred and fifty nautical miles around the three islands, and such shall remain the property of the people therein under her sovereignty.

We will appoint a Governor for Australia without the need for further elections. The House of Representatives and the Senate will be disbanded. A questionnaire may be circulated next year to determine whether any of you noticed. The so-called Commonwealth of Australia will cease to exist (and we never liked the expression Commonwealth as such was used by that bounder, Oliver Cromwell). From henceforth you shall be known as the Australian Group of Colonies and Territories.

To aid in the transition to a British Crown Dependency, the following rules are introduced with immediate effect. You should look up "revocation" in the Oxford English Dictionary. The letter 'u' will be reinstated in words such as 'colour', 'favour' and "labour" to avoid Australia slipping into sloppy American speak. Generally, you will be expected to raise your vocabulary to acceptable levels (look up "vocabulary"). Using the same twenty-seven words interspersed with filler noises such as "like", "oiu oiu" and "you know" is an unacceptable and inefficient form of communication. There is no such thing as "Australian English." We will let Microsoft know on your behalf and its spell checker will be adjusted accordingly.

You will relearn your original national anthem, "God Save The Queen" and sing it proudly at all public occasions. January 26th will no longer be celebrated as a holiday. April 1st will be a new national holiday, but to be celebrated only in England and on Norfolk Island. It will be called "Come-Uppance Day." You will cease playing Australian "football." There is only one kind of proper football; you call it "soccer." Those of you brave enough will, in time, be allowed to play rugby. You will still be allowed to play cricket.

An internal revenue agent (tax collector) from Her Majesty's Government will be with you shortly to ensure the acquisition of all moneys due backdated to 1901. Former members of your rather pathetic former parliament will be held personally liable in the case of default.

God Save The Queen.

Thank you for your co-operation

Her Majesty's Privy Council

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GOVERNMENT BY THE DISGRUNTLED

In the interests of fairness and balance, I have been spending time re-reading the 2003 report of the Inquiry into Governance into Norfolk Island. This is the report that is basically responsible for the stand now being taken by the Commonwealth Government that Norfolk Island is not capable of governing itself.

The report is titled, somewhat cryptically, *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* or "*Who is to guard the guards themselves?*"

If you read nothing else, make sure you read the extremely defensive opening paragraphs where the Chairman of the Committee, Senator Ross Lightfoot, says:

"There will be a vocal self-interested minority that will criticise the Committee's efforts and attempt to stifle considered debate on our recommendations."

Well, I do not really think I am part of a minority. And I am only self-interested in that I live here, this is my home, and what the Australian Government imposes on this island impacts on me, my daily life, my family, my home, my business, my livelihood, my lifestyle, my heritage.

I encourage **considered** debate on these issues, but they must be considered from a point of view that goes beyond the framework of the Commonwealth's pre-determined agenda. I am definitely prepared to be vocal.

I do not dispute the fact that our Government, like any other Government, must continuously face the challenge of reform and change, and of doing things better. But I say again

Let's do things better....our way!

One of the fascinating, but frightening features of the Joint Standing Committee's report is the extent to which it relies heavily on submissions and statements by individuals to justify its stance and recommendations.

The Appendices list a total of 33 Norfolk individual residents who tendered submissions or spoke at Public hearings. Of these, 13 were unnamed and confidential. A further name is given as submitting exhibits, plus 8 confidential exhibits, which may or may or may not be submitted by people from the group making submissions.

The N.I. Government and the N.I. Public Service Association also made submissions. All other submissions were from outside groups, organisations and individuals. Now there are some names on the list of people who have never made any secret about their desire to

see Norfolk have a closer relationship with and dependence on Australia, and I respect their views.

What is disturbing is that the JSC has made decisions based on evidence from fewer than 40 island residents, and of the 22 who are named, I personally know there are several who would be strongly opposed to the Committee's recommendations. At the same time, the Committee has strongly criticised and discarded as valueless the results of any island-wide petitions, polls or referenda! Not to mention the views of our own democratically elected Legislative Assembly!

One can only assume that the anecdotal evidence and complaints - however valid those complaints - of a handful of disenchanted or disgruntled individuals carry more weight than the silent **majority** (I say that with a fair degree of confidence), who see no need to stand before the Committee because they are either happy with the Status Quo, or consider these matters to be none of Australia's business!

To make matters worse, the writers of this report continually quote ill-considered comments from the discredited Nimmo Report of 1975-6:

Nimmo concluded it would be "exceedingly difficult for this small faction-riddled and confined community to evolve for the island policies that are likely to receive general acceptance in major matters"

They have even been cynical...and desperate.... enough to head chapter 2 with a quote from a report by Magistrate Henry Wilkinson in 1885!

"Here, the whole system and everything arising from it is rotten. And unless an immediate stop is put to this sort of thing, the consequences will be most disastrous..."

Good try.

It is suggested we could try to discredit members of the JSC Committee. Don't bother.... its chairman Senator Lightfoot has already done that for himself. His actions in the gun/cash affair in Iraq hardly brought him credit.

This same person also accused the island people of protecting one of their own in the Janelle Patten murder affair.

Who, indeed, is to guard the guards themselves?

MUTINY REVISITED

It is happening.

The outside world is starting to take notice.

It is hard to imagine how Australia thought they could get away with it.

Did they really think that in the 21st century, they could just get away with an act of colonial paternalism that most of the world rejected more than 100 years ago?

They did not count on the spirit of the Norfolk Island people. People like Greg Quintal, who featured some years ago in an article in GEO, Australia's Geographical Magazine, Vol2 No2, reprinted in today's Norfolk Islander. The article quoted Greg as saying at the time that "the Australian Government has a long way to go before it really understands the unique needs of Norfolk. If necessary, he will be ready, at the drop of a liberty, to mutiny again."

(GEO Vol2 No2)

Today Greg is the nearest thing we have to an elder statesman, and his love and passion for this island, its rights and its freedom is undiminished.

Many of us, like Greg, cannot help wondering:

How can Australia continue to do the following, and not risk being shamed in the eyes of the world?

*do things that affect us without our knowledge

*do things that affect us without consulting us

*do things that affect us without our consent

*do things that affect us when it is clearly against the wishes of our people

*do things that affect us against the wishes of our democratically elected government

*do things that affect us that are *contrary* to previous promises and commitments

*do things that affect us when it is clearly more in Australia's interests than ours

Australia has committed its troops to Iraq supposedly for the rights and freedoms of the Iraqi people, and yet it is prepared to trample on the very basic rights of the people in one of its own island territories.

How can Australia *give* self-government, and then *take it away*...just like that!! I cannot get my head around that one.

I mean, as my children got older, I gave them more and more freedom and responsibility.

There were periods of time....and there still are....when they came to me for advice or a bit of help. But I respected their right to make their own decisions and to do things their way, and I respected their dignity and self-esteem, and I treated them as equals.

The silly thing is that this Norfolk community is not even like a child that broke away from "Mother Australia."

This is a people who were managing their own affairs when Australia was still well and truly attached to Mother England.

WHO SAID THIS?

"They [the Cabinet] are asking us to assent to this proposition while no member of this House, on the one hand, would stand on the hustings and advocate that there should be a certain form of government here which would not give every man a voice in making the laws. On the other hand, the Government wish to deny to this handful of people those rights which they would not dare to deny in this colony."

(William Crick, member for West Macquarie in the N.S.W. Parliament 1896, referring to the proposal to bring Norfolk Island under the NSW government, to replace the island's locally elected magistrate and to abolish all existing Norfolk Island laws.)

A POTTED HISTORY

GOVERNANCE OF THE PITCAIRN AND NORFOLK COMMUNITY

Younger people and newcomers may wonder what all the fuss is about.

"Why fight so hard for something you have only had for 27 years?" "Haven't you managed under Australian and colonial rule up until that time?"

I shall attempt to give a very simplified outline of the way this community has been governed since the Mutiny.

1789-1838

After an initial period of violence and disruption, the Tahitian women and the children of the Bounty settle down to a peaceful and orderly existence under the benevolent eye of their "patriarch" John Adams

1838

With the assistance of Capt. Elliot of HMS *Fly*, a list of rules and laws is drawn up, which involves the *whole* community electing a Chief Magistrate each year. Pitcairn is the first place in the British Empire to give the vote to women and also at this time makes arrangements for compulsory education of children 6-16. At this time, the community formally comes under the British Crown.

"Unique in History, the Pitcairn Laws offer an insight into the islanders' priorities and their virtually unprecedented dedication to conservation, education and democracy" (HELL AND PARADISE by Peter Clarke)

1856

The Pitcairn community migrates *en masse* to Norfolk Island, which they believe has been ceded to them according to the wishes of Queen Victoria, and where they will be allowed to live *without interference* according to their own laws and customs.

June 24, 1856

An Order of H.M. Queen Victoria in Council makes Norfolk Island "a separate and distinct settlement" within the British Empire.

1857

Governor Dennison assists the community in drawing up 39 Laws and Regulations. The practice of electing a Chief Magistrate continues. For the next 40 years, the community enjoys a form of self-government.

1866

Melanesian Mission is allowed to acquire about 1000 acres, and Pitcairners realise they do not have control over the land on their island. However, things proceed relatively peacefully.

1896

Viscount Hampden, Governor of both NSW and Norfolk Island, abolishes all existing laws and makes new ones. He brings Norfolk Island effectively under the NSW Government. Chief Magistrate is no longer elected, but the position is filled by an outside appointee. This causes great anger in the community.

At this time, New Zealand makes noises about the possibility of assuming control of the island instead of Australia.

1913-14

Britain transfers control of the island to the Commonwealth. The role of Administrator and Chief Magistrate are combined.

There follows, over the ensuing decades, alternating periods of calm and discontent, often depending on the attitude, competence and goodwill of the incumbent Administrator and Federal Government.

1935

Role of Administrator and Judiciary are separated

Eight member elected Advisory Council established. This replaces the Executive Council which had the majority of members appointed by the Administrator, and only had responsibility for minor municipal matters such as roads.

1954-5

When the Australian Government proclaims a new Customs Ordinance, the islanders petition Her Majesty the Queen to repeal the Ordinance, to give back their right to control of their own affairs, and to create a new constitution or restore the one they had received from Queen Victoria.

1957-60

Norfolk Island Act 1957 is passed but does not come into operation until 1960. The Advisory Council is to be replaced by Norfolk Island Council with greater control over island affairs. This is actually rejected by the first Council elected under the new system, because they said they were only given

responsibility for municipal matters, the Administrator retained power of veto, they had too little control over revenues and would have to raise local taxes to pay for the areas under their control. The status quo (Advisory Council with Administrator as chairman) continues, with the Council able to give advice *relating to the peace, order and good government of the island*. There is continuing friction, mainly because of the lack of control over spending of moneys raised on the island.

1965

H.S. (Sid) Newbery goes to court to challenge the Commonwealth's authority to make laws for Norfolk Island, saying that Hampden's action in repealing all Norfolk laws in 1896 was invalid.

Newbery lost the case, and was refused right to appeal.

1975-6

The Nimmo Royal Commission recommends either abandoning the island, or incorporating it into a Canberra electorate, and bringing it under Commonwealth Law and Commonwealth Taxation and Social Welfare regimes.

1976-78

The Norfolk Island Council and community strongly opposes the Report's recommendations. An appeal is made to the U.N. (but not processed.)

1979

After an initial period of reluctance, the Australian Government grants Norfolk Island a degree of self-government, which is to be progressed and expanded over a period of time. There is to be a nine member Legislative Assembly, responsible for raising its own revenues. Role of Administrator continues to look after Australia's interests. Timetable for the handing over of powers, however, does not proceed as expected.

2006

It is up to you, me, and our Government to speak up and act!

Do not let them take it away from us again.

WE HAD OUR SAY

It is just over a month since Minister Jim Lloyd made his announcement about plans to change the governance arrangements for Norfolk Island. The first of a long list of investigative inquiries has come and gone. We have just about recovered from our initial stunned shell-shock.

Now we are talking. And planning. And taking action.

The Norfolk Action Group met again this evening. One purpose of the meeting was to consider the responses to the Have Your Say forum. All these responses have been recorded and summarised. They make interesting reading.

Overwhelmingly, the people of Norfolk Island seemed to be saying: "We love this island and our way of life. We feel very fortunate to live in a place like this. We may need to make some changes, but we want to be the ones making the decisions, and we don't want to risk the good things we now enjoy by allowing Australia to control us."

Someone at the meeting suggested we need to produce a bumper sticker. Perhaps

We can do it better....our way!

The second purpose of this evening's meeting was to meet with Legislative Assembly members, hear their views and plans, and to see how we can work together.

For the most part, the gathering was productive, fruitful and encouraging. We are starting to clear the path, so to speak.....a path that will eventually bring us to the point where we make a firm stand on the issue of retaining the right to self-determination. We have our mission. None of us is certain of what "taking a stand" will involve in the long run. But we do mean to be well-prepared for it. Meanwhile we intend to support our government in their firm resolve to get us back on track economically.

The most encouraging thing about the meeting was the wide cross-section of people there. There were old and young. There were relative newcomers to the island, and there were some "old hands" who have seen it all before. There were business people, professionals, public servants, retired people, self-employed people, blue collar workers and white collar workers. There were Norfolk Islanders, long-term residents, General Permit holders and Temporary permit holders. You could almost say that "Adversity makes strange bedfellows." But they were all there on an equal footing, and bound by a common desire to keep Norfolk Island a good place to live.

It is obvious that the membership of the Norfolk Action Group is to grow at a rapid pace as people recognise that here is a body that will give them a voice and will work in a positive and cohesive manner to promote the welfare of all the people of the island.

I strongly believe that a very healthy grass-roots movement is starting to make its presence felt, and that it is going to gather momentum. I believe we can teach Australia a great deal about "rights and responsibilities!" We are taking ours very seriously.

THE GOOD OIL

Sometimes people say they wonder why Australia even bothers with a little place like Norfolk Island. Australia tells us they take their responsibilities to us and *the Australian*

citizens living here very seriously. Maybe they do, but during 150 years when we have come under the oversight of the Colonial Government, the NSW government, and the Commonwealth Government, their track record has not been too good when it has come to really understanding and meeting our needs and respecting our rights and wishes. There is no doubt that Australia needs Norfolk Island every bit as much, if not more so, than Norfolk needs Australia.

It has been obvious for over 200 years that this island is strategically important to Australia from a geographic point of view. It would be rather valuable to have Norfolk as an ally, and this island has not let Australia down in that area, with record numbers, per head of population, of island men serving in Australian forces to help defend this part of the world.

Undoubtedly, in the past four or five years especially, border control has been an issue. It would surely be possible to station one or two officers from Australian Immigration on this island to help police that area if they have any concerns.

It may not be a significant amount, but Australia probably makes more money out of this island than they admit, through taxes paid to them by larger companies and corporations doing business on this island e.g. banks, fuel companies, airlines and shipping companies. We do not get to see any of that money.

But the real issue is oil. The West's intervention in the Middle East....justified and necessary or not....was basically to secure and stabilise oil supplies. When Australia helped East Timor gain its independence....and this was a good thing.... it gave them access to the oil between the two countries, and many would say it was more than their fair share! I am not making judgements about these issues. It is just a case of these developed, oil-reliant countries protecting their national interest.

Unfortunately, Norfolk is a pawn in Australia's "national interest".

There is undoubtedly oil in or near Norfolk Island's (Australia's?) 200 mile territorial waters. This is not some far-fetched idea or wild conspiracy theory. The probability of enormous reserves of gas hydrates under the sea bed in this part of the world has been scientifically established. The technology to access these fuels has not yet been properly developed. But when it is, Australia will be ready.

Canberra has been very busy lately buying the friendship of other nearby Pacific islands. But they have their "PROPERTY OF AUSTRALIA" logo firmly stamped on this island. This saves them from having to waste time showing us proper respect and diplomacy.

So do they really care what happens to us? At least two lots of people who had interviews with Minister Lloyd were told, when they sought his help with our airline situation, that Canberra had no obligations to this island other than to "keep the lights on."

When they have completed their takeover, and stripped us of all our identity, our culture, our heritage and our self-reliance, the lights may still be on. But they will be the lights of a convenient and permanent aircraft carrier, and of a base/headquarters for oil exploration and drilling.

THE KINGSTON EVICTIONS

It is amazing how quickly things can disappear from living memory. It only takes a generation or two, really. A number of people have said that what I have written has given them a better background knowledge and understanding of what is happening today. Those of us who were here around the time of the Nimmo Report 30 years ago find ourselves reflecting that "The more things change, the more they stay the same." Actually, ever since the time the Pitcairners first came to Norfolk Island in 1856, there has been a pattern. The people of the island have been offered or promised something, only to have it taken away. They were offered this island for their new home, and were then asked to share it with others. They were told they could live according to their own laws and ways, and then had rule imposed on them from outside. They were "granted" self-government, and now it may be taken away. As Geoff Bennett and Lisle Snell said in their recent letter to the Minister, we have failed to "nail down the deal" and have found that we have continually been disadvantaged by less than honourable colonial governments. When I first came to the island, the incident of the "Kingston Evictions" was still vivid in the collective memory of Norfolk Islanders. There were still many who actually remembered the event, which had taken place nearly 60 years before. It has been glossed over in history books, such as Merval Hoare's, but what happened burned a feeling of deep distrust and suspicion towards Australia in the older Norfolk Islanders.

My own mother-in-law, Dorothy Bailey, was a child of 6 at the time, and was at the home of Jemima Christian, who lived at Number 9 Quality Row. Number 9 had been George Hunn Nobbs' residence, allocated to him after the arrival of the Pitcairners in 1856. Jemima was his daughter, a widow, and she had cared for her father, and continued to occupy the house after his death.

The occupants of these buildings in 1908, often second and third generation of the original occupants, were asked by Australia to sign a document recognising that they had no right of ownership of the buildings, but occupied them by special licence.

The Australian representative at the time, a Captain Drake, was so upset by the reaction of grief and sorrow when he conveyed the decision to the people, that he offered to resign his position. (It was accepted.) His successors were prepared to carry out the task,

however. Young Norfolk men, including some who had fought in the Boer War, were pressed into service as special constables.

Only two households agreed to sign, evidently families who had nowhere else to go. Most chose to go "up country " and live with families. Dorothy remembers that Jemima waited on her verandah for the constables to come. The wife of the Administrator came along and offered her refreshments, but she refused, saying she could not possibly drink anything. Some people were forcibly carried out. One lady, who occupied the present Golf House, turned her calves on the constables.

Whether the Australian Government took this action because they believed the occupants were not maintaining the buildings properly, or because the Crown simply wished to assert its title to them, or a combination of both, is unclear. The Pitcairners certainly did not have access to the vast amount of convict labour to maintain these stone buildings as had their previous occupants.

In any case, after they left, most were neglected and fell into ruins anyway!

I am not suggesting that we continue to carry around feelings of resentment about what happened to previous generations of Norfolkers by previous Australian governments. However, I do believe that the time has come for some certainty about our rights and our constitutional status. The question needs to be settled once and for all, and it must be done with truth, honesty and justice, qualities that have been sadly lacking in our relationship with Colonial and Australian Governments in the past.

I am sorry there is no illustration today...I know it makes it easier to read and remember when there are pictures. But the program seems to have a glitch today, which hopefully will get sorted out.

GETTING PERSONAL

As it states at the top of this blog, what I write is a very personal response to the Commonwealth Government's moves to change Norfolk Island.

I am not a mouthpiece for any other person or organisation, although I know there are many others who think as I do. I have been greatly encouraged by the great number of people who have said they are reading "Angels and Eagles", and I am especially pleased that I am not merely "preaching to the converted."

So why am I doing it?

Well, I just love this place, and I just could not sit down and do nothing. I refuse to join the ranks of those who say:

"It's inevitable...it is no use us trying to fight it."

And I certainly do not endorse the view of those who say:

"Our own Assembly mismanaged things....it serves them right!"

That is really cutting off your nose to spite your face.

In almost four decades, I have learned to love living in a place where everything is accessible, where individuals can make a difference, where family is really important, and where people do things for themselves instead of relying on handouts. We enjoy the ultimate "sea change" existence that others dream of. But we know that it does not come without plenty of hard work, resourcefulness and commitment.

I cannot turn back the clock and be born a Bounty descendant, but I have still been able to feel a part of the place. I have never experienced any discrimination...until recently. That discrimination has come from Canberra. It is because I hold British citizenship. I would renounce British citizenship tomorrow if I could have a piece of paper saying that I was a citizen of Norfolk Island. However after all those years of living here and playing my part in the community, Australia said that *no non-Australian* could vote or stand for election. They did not actually take away my vote in the end, but they did disqualify me from ever standing for the Assembly. I became a second-class citizen. Me, and a whole lot of others, including quite a few Norfolk Islanders!

By the way, there is a handful of residents of this island who also experience discrimination when travelling. Visitors to Australia, other than those holding Australian and New Zealand passports, are required to have a visa. However, residents of Norfolk Island, whatever their citizenship, are no longer allowed to apply for a visa. We have to rely on a little "Permanent Resident of N.I." sticker in our passports, which is not even recognised by most Australian Immigration officers. We cannot even leave the Norfolk airport without the Airlines having to make a call to Canberra for permission. This situation causes enormous difficulties and delays when travelling back to Australia or Norfolk Island from an overseas destination.

I am not "against" Australia.....for Australians. I spent 16 years of my life there. When I turned 21, even as a British citizen, I qualified to vote. And if I still lived there, I would no doubt have taken out Australian citizenship. Aussies are great people. I even cheer for the Aussies in International competitions. I like to visit Australia. But I do not want to have to *be* an Australian in order to enjoy my full rights as a citizen of Norfolk Island.

The political and constitutional changes Australia wants to make are allegedly for our **economic** well-being and sustainability. What I fear is that the outcome will be unwanted **social** change and damage.

That is why I will continue, in my own way, to push for the rights and aspirations of Norfolk Island to be recognised by Australia, and hopefully, internationally.

"Angels and Eagles" is my soapbox, so to speak.

May I point out that there is no copyright on what I write. If anyone feels they would like to use it (but not misuse it) they have my permission. I would just like to be kept informed.

If you would like to tell your friends about these blogs, you can just click on the little envelope at the bottom of this posting, enter your friend's email address, and they will send a message and give the URL.

FAIR GAME

Many Norfolkers sat up last night in front of their televisions to watch the Opening Ceremony of the Commonwealth Games. They would have been particularly keen to see the Norfolk Island Contingent, who marched in towards the end, with broad smiles and waving their Norfolk flags with great enthusiasm.

No doubt the competitors from every participating country, large and small, were feeling immense pride in having the opportunity to represent their homeland on this broader international front. And none more so than the Norfolkers, who fear that this is the last time they will do so.

Changes to Norfolk Island's constitutional status may well disqualify the island from future participation in this and other International Competition. Canberra and DOTARS, sensing that this is a very emotional issue, have said that they are investigating ways by which Norfolk can still take part. Well, I know they often promise miracles, but I cannot see how they can influence or tinker with the qualifying criteria of the Commonwealth Games Organisation. The simple fact of the matter is that they are taking away our 'separate' status, and drawing us into mainstream Australia, and in future we will probably need to qualify as Australians and represent that country. Because, as they keep telling us, we *are* Australians and reside in Australia. Their plans to put all our borders firmly within Australia...i.e. by assuming control of customs, immigration etc...will take away the last evidence of our being a distinct and separate entity.

This is not a new issue. When Australia removed Norfolk's right to participate in the South Pacific Commission some years ago, our right to participate in South Pacific sporting events

was also under threat. Intervention by Sporting federations came to the rescue, and not only were we able to enter the South Pacific Games as a separate country, but were also admitted to separate membership of the Commonwealth Games Organisation. I recall that Canberra was extremely unhappy about this situation at the time. We held our heads high, and have taken part ever since the Auckland Commonwealth Games in 1986. The opportunity to compete with other smaller Pacific Islands and Commonwealth countries has been a great incentive and boost to our local sportspeople and organisations, and has contributed to the strength and vibrancy of the sporting scene on the island. It is an important factor in the social interaction and cohesion in our community, but also keeps health and fitness issues to the forefront. It helps our tourism, and it also helps us build and maintain a sound and friendly relationship with our Pacific neighbours. Desirable outcomes for any community, I should think!

Meanwhile Canberra's policy during the Games has begun to take a different twist. They have been sending *their* representatives, including the Minister and Administrator, to attend all the official functions at which Norfolk is represented. Are they trying to reinforce the fact that there is a change in the "chain of command?"

It is not just about being able to compete in future Commonwealth Games. It is about **us** representing **our homeland**. It is about our Norfolk Island **identity**. It is something we cherish. It is our heritage. It makes us what we are...Norfolkers first and foremost. Our separate and distinct identity is something we must not lose.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

I am not a lawyer, but I can recognise that what Australia wants to do to Norfolk is unjust. Similarly, I am not an accountant or an economist, but I can recognise an asset. The ones I recognise may not be the sort that get entered into ledgers and balance sheets. Sadly, they do not get factored in along with the clinical figures and data that are required by the endless inquiries and reports that Norfolk Island gets saddled with.

I consider that I live on an island that is rich in assets, and has the capacity and the will to provide for the wellbeing of its people...in the Norfolk way. I would like to look at three areas of service provision where we have demonstrated an awareness of what people need and a will to provide it.

SOCIAL WELFARE

The *Inasmuch* principle is still alive and well on this island. It underpins much of our dealings with one another, and our response when someone is going through a hard time.

It operates as a support network when someone is doing it tough, and a safety net when a crisis arises. It involves a whole range of things, including many kindnesses and acts of generosity which are never revealed to others. It translates into minding the kids, cooking meals, providing firewood, helping out with the lawns and the animals and the fences. Fish and vegetables are left on the kitchen bench. Individuals, churches, the Sunshine Club and other bodies quietly help out with cash. There is often a Benefit night where a large percentage of community members, including businesses, rally round generously. Opportunities are provided for someone needing extra cash to take on some work. Everyone gets behind community organisations, supports their raffles and fundraising, and takes an interest in what they are doing.

At the same time, everyone in the community is able to feel useful and valued and safe. Help is given in such a way that a person retains their dignity. We are particularly mindful of the rights and needs of our elderly folk and those who have disabilities. It is a fact that you will never be able to 'quantify' this aspect of Norfolk life, or even get people to talk about individual examples. We simply do what needs to be done for one another.

SPORTS , THE ARTS AND CULTURE

These areas are strong and vibrant on the island, and this has been achieved without government-funded facilities or subsidies. Strong sporting clubs have been built up, with many competing in international competitions, as well as hosting competitions and tournaments that attract visitors from overseas. Participation is keen, and club members work hard to raise funds for facilities and travel expenses.

The Arts are also well-served, with an extremely active and enterprising Community Arts Society promoting a huge range of arts and crafts both at workshop, exhibition and performance level. Other groups also promote areas such as music, drama, literature, dance. The island hosts a number of festivals and tournaments, such as Country Music, a Writer's Festival, Line Dancing, Ballroom Dancing, Scrabble and Bridge....and many more. We enjoy an annual Multicultural Festival. An Agricultural and Horticultural Society continues to stage a successful Annual Show, at a time when many local country Shows are struggling with falling participation and financial difficulties . Our museums, both public and private, are inviting, and user-friendly. There are private galleries and Art Studios, and active Craft groups. There is a good measure of local Business sponsorship in many areas. Many visiting artists (from all areas of the Arts) visit the island each year. The level of local participation in all aspects of the Arts is probably quite high for a community of this size, and young people are given every encouragement to take part, perform and develop their talents and interests.

However, almost all of this happens without direct Government subsidy. It is the resourcefulness, sharing spirit and enthusiasm of Norfolkers that makes it happen.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

I cover this area, because the Commonwealth Grants Commission 1997 report found that the provision of Vocational education and training was at a much lower level than average mainland standards, and threatened our economic viability.

Notwithstanding that this area has probably improved since 1997, one should note that there is a time-honoured process of 'education' that still happens here, one which has been lost in larger, urban communities. I refer to the passing on of skills and knowledge by the older generation to the younger. One can identify many Norfolkers who are earning a living, full or part-time, using workskills and lifeskills that have been taught or passed on by parents, relatives or older Norfolkers. In some cases, this has been supplemented by some formal training, but all are doing well for themselves, and many are running their own businesses very successfully. I can think of people in many areas who come into this category:

retail, hospitality, foodservice and catering, fishing, animal husbandry, lighterage, agriculture and market gardening, butchering, grounds maintenance and fencing, building and carpentry, milling, tourism, business management.....and probably many more.

I find this is a place where young people are given every encouragement to have a go at things for themselves. Moreover, the handing-down of skills from generation to generation gives a continuity that assists social cohesion, gives self-esteem and confidence, and places a community on a strong and sound foundation.

Unfortunately, none of these things can be factored in to the balance sheets of the bureaucrats, but we hope that they will take note of these cultural aspects of the 'Norfolk way' before they endanger them by paternalistic over-government. Many Norfolkers fear that placing us in a position of dependence or reliance on welfare, subsidies and hand-outs will weaken those qualities that have enabled us to be self-reliant, and bound us together as a community.

UNHAPPY CHRISTMAS II

Christmas island residents have only enjoyed permanent residency status on their island since the early 1980's. Because of the lack of past security and stability and the diverse ethnic mix on the island, it has been a challenging task for the Shire government and the

people of Christmas to develop a greater degree of social cohesion and a spirit of community enterprise and self-reliance. They have both the *will* and the *goodwill* to work towards these goals. However they feel they are obstructed and frustrated every step of the way by remote-control and unaccountable Governments operating from Perth and Canberra. The Christmas Islanders say that their self-esteem and confidence is continually eroded by lack of consultation and sensitivity to their real needs.

The following situations, which have occurred on Christmas Island, could well occur on Norfolk Island if we hand over the reins.

The Commonwealth, responsible for health on the island, has built a modern new hospital.

However:

*All pregnant women must travel to Perth or another large mainland centre for the birth of their babies, something which has negative cultural, social and financial impacts for families.

*Up-to-the-minute equipment at the hospital is idle or under-utilised because of staffing, maintenance and indemnity issues.

*Although the Commonwealth guarantees a medivac service, it does not guarantee a supplier, and delays of 24 hours or longer can occur in obtaining a provider, with potentially fatal results.

*In 2003, the Health Service proposed shutting the hospital at night "to improve community health services!" and to keep within the budget. They were actually told it was NOT a funding issue!

Some other examples of a bureaucratic and irrelevant government:

*The Commonwealth is funding a combined public and community library. However instead of being able to purchase books, they are loaned and freighted in boxes from the W.A. State Library Service, an expensive exercise

*In 2002, the Administrator advised that a helicopter was to be permanently located on the island, and a hangar was built. The helicopter was involved in one search and rescue mission, then removed from the island never to return.

*A newly constructed Recreation Centre, designed and located without the involvement of the community, and far more sophisticated than is needed by a population of 1500, will cost the community \$750 000 per annum to run and maintain. The then Minister Wilson Tuckey told the islanders "You're going to get this Recreation Centre whether you like it or not!"

*A temporary Immigration Detention Centre was built...again without consultation... on a site that had been set aside for a Waste Transfer Station, which impacted severely on waste minimisation strategies and wasted much time and money.

*Against the expressed desire of the islanders, the Commonwealth refused a Casino licence to a Korean company, thus denying them the opportunity to experience the positive financial and

employment benefits of this private investment.

*Business and Agriculture Support services available in West Australia are NOT available to territory residents. In fact, all legislation relating to the ability of a company doing business on the island to actually register itself on the island has been repealed

*The Commonwealth owns most of the land on Christmas Island, including that occupied by temples etc, and by calling all its building activity "public works", considers itself exempt from planning consideration or approval.

*Meanwhile, while the Shire has use and access to land and buildings required for its service provision, it has no title to them, meaning it has no assets.

*Christmas Islanders vote in the Federal electorate of Lingiari, which is in the Northern Territory!

We have built a strong and enterprising community here on Norfolk Island, with a high level of service provision that is geared towards our real needs.

Do we really wish to place this at risk?

UNHAPPY CHRISTMAS

It is not easy to draw comparisons between Norfolk Island and Christmas Island. Although both are external territories of the Commonwealth of Australia, and have a similar population, the background, history, culture, economy and ethnicity of the two differ greatly.

Even the aspirations of the two communities differ. Most Christmas Islanders were happy to become Australian citizens, because they believed it would mean an end to the racism, discrimination and poor conditions they had been living under previously. Unlike most Norfolk Islanders, they actually accept the Canberra "mantra" about "the rights and obligations of all Australian citizens."

What we do have in common is an intense disappointment with the lack of respect and understanding that DOTARS and the Commonwealth Government displays in dealing with our island communities or addressing our *real* needs and problems.

The government model that was imposed on Christmas Island was a "Local Government" model, with a 9 member Shire council. State type functions are outsourced to the West Australia government, who in turn often outsource them to private contractors. West Australia law "applies" to Christmas Island unless special exemptions are made, but the Christmas Island Shire is not consulted in either of these areas. They have very little input into anything other than their municipal responsibilities.

"Our Future in Our Hands" is a submission from the Christmas Island Shire to the *Inquiry into Governance Arrangements in the Indian Ocean Territories* in August 2005. It makes frightening reading, as we learn how time and time again, the efforts of the Christmas Island shire to govern for their people is frustrated and obstructed, while Canberra and DOTARS ignore their real needs and renege on commitments.

We read of things like:

"discriminatory practices of a Government that is still paternalistic but becoming less benevolent as time goes by"

"the beneficial normalisation of the island in the 1980's has given way to a policy aimed at making Christmas Island like a community on the mainland. 'Treat alike' has become 'Make the same' "

"Colonial style decision making....is largely unaccountable. Decisions are paternalistic; that is, they are for the community's 'own good' whether they like it, or understand it, or not."

"the Commonwealth has done effectively very little to involve, engage or facilitate the community in its own economic development."

"lack of access to advice and resources to develop community capacity."

"We have a vision for ourselves...we live here. You don't....You have so little understanding about us. You deny our past, we live with it. You make decisions about our future, but leave us to experience the effects of your decisions" (to Minister Lloyd during protest about "No Casino Licence")

"The community suffers from consultation fatigue and has become cynical about the potential of any inquiry to deliver outcomes or benefits."

"Overall, Government decisions have undermined the economic development of the Island, particularly the ability of the community to be more self-sufficient."

"The Commonwealth...wants the island to be dependent on it, provides fillips via capital works instead of long-term sustainability measures, places its own strategic interests above that of the community, and provides lip service salves in any effort to create a perception that it is doing something, when in fact it is doing very little.....the community is left to fight over the tidbits offered like mendicants."

Those Norfolkers who trust that coming under greater Commonwealth control will solve the island's problems or give greater social and economic security to us either as a community or as individuals should think again. This 274 page report can be accessed at

www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/ncet/iotgovernance/subs/sub010

It may not be a case of going forward, or even sideways like the crab.....we may well go backwards if we do not learn a lesson from the Christmas Island story.

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

Anyone coming to Norfolk Island for the purpose of doing a survey, a report or an investigation should have some obligatory reading beforehand.

They should take some time to read "The Lord of the Rings" by Tolkien, or even Narnia series by C.S. Lewis, where they write about another world which is very different to one we are used to. As you read these books, you are expected to shake off your preconceived ideas and value systems, and accept a whole new set of realities. You stop making comparisons with your own normal existence, you stop making judgments using the old set of parameters, and in doing so, you discover a whole new world of possibilities.

These may be fantasies, but even in the real world, believe it or not, there are individuals, communities and even nations that do not need to be judged by the average Australian standard of what is good and right.

And Norfolk Island is one of those places.

One would hope that Mr Alan Morris from the Commonwealth Grants Commission was starting to get that impression at the public meeting last night. Yet again, Norfolk is to be measured against *comparable* communities within the Australian system on the delivery of services and capacity to raise finance.

It is very hard to convince Canberra that there is no such thing as a comparable community, because apart from our geography, remoteness and relative isolation, the people of Norfolk Island have a history, ethnicity, and culture that is *indisputably* distinct from that of Australia.

About the only concession Canberra has made is an acknowledgement that "Norfolk Island's economy has evolved separately from that of Australia"(from the leaflet NORFOLK ISLAND-ensuring a stronger and sustainable future).

Can they not understand that our values, our way of interacting and dealing with one another, our aspirations and expectations are all a product of a completely separate and distinct beginning and background? I am not just referring to the wonderful Pitcairn tradition on which the island "way" is based, but to the values of those people and families who have come to join this community and have put down their roots and made a strong commitment to the prosperity of the island and the well-being of its people.

I was so proud of the Norfolkers who put questions to the Grants Commission chairman last night. The issues they raised were pointed and relevant, and they were articulated clearly with intelligence and perception. It was not about control or conservatism or

resistance to change. It was about securing the future of the island for Norfolkers, not Australia. And it was about ensuring we retain those good things that have made us a strong, vibrant community right up to the present day.

Some of the concerns raised were:

*Why spend money on new and modern infrastructure that a small community cannot be expected to maintain or staff adequately?

*Why suggest that our financial viability and capacity is inadequate when it is Australia that has passed legislation that specifically blocks revenue raising initiatives of the Norfolk Island Government and community?

*How can you get a true picture of a community when you cannot factor in cultural attributes?

*Wouldn't it be more productive to select 100 Norfolk Island residents at random, and assess their level of satisfaction with the current level of facilities, infrastructure and services?

*Why is there such a tight time frame for all these investigations and inquiries?

*Isn't our current economic downturn only a symptom of another problem that could well be solved with Australia's help?

It must be strange to address a large group of residents who are NOT asking for more services, facilities, welfare, handouts.

But that is the way we are.

We are different.

LIKE IT OR LUMP IT

Those who have taken the trouble to contact the Commonwealth Department responsible for Norfolk Island will probably have been receiving replies and acknowledgements to their emails, letters and submissions.

When I began this 'blog', I submitted the web address to the Minister's office, and was hopeful that it would be read.

Today I received an acknowledgement from Mr Richard Magor, the Secretary of the Norfolk Island and Northern Territory Section of the Territories Branch of DOTARS (Department of Transport and Regional Services.) When you think about it, we are way down the ladder in terms of relative importance in matters of government over there, and one wonders if the Minister will actually lose much sleep over our problem in the scheme

of things.

Although Mr Magor's reply to me was over a page, and was quite courteous, and I was thanked for "contributing to the wider debate on the proposed changes" there was no assurance that my views were being conveyed to the Minister himself. One can only hope.

Basically the letter went over the same old ground about the TWO possible models of future governance arrangements, and the wish for community input during the process of developing the detail etc. etc. etc.

Many of us are being reminded of the days when we were told by our parents

"You can eat your vegetables or you can stay in your room....now you choose."

No compromise or alternative or real right of choice on our part. In other words, like it or lump it.

When will the Commonwealth get the message?

We do not want either of the models!

We do not believe you have a right, moral or otherwise, to force them on us against our will!

We do not believe that either will be beneficial to us or solve our current difficulties!

We believe that if either model is adopted, regardless of the detail, we will lose far more than we may gain!

We should be very clear on this.

Do not be encouraged by statements about consultation with the Norfolk Island Government and community. Canberra intends to be totally in control of the agenda for these discussions and consultations. By all means speak up about your concerns, but unless this community is heard with a very loud voice, we will need to explore other avenues to assert our right to decide these matters for ourselves.

Meanwhile, Mr Magor has said in his email:

"General questions and answers about issues on which the Australian Government has developed an approach will be posted on the Department's website in the near future at

http://www.dotars.gov.au/terr/norfolk/governance_arrangements.aspx

(There is an underscore between "governance" and "arrangements")

It is to be hoped that we are able to demonstrate to the Commonwealth Grants Commission, which is currently conducting an inquiry into the island's financial capacity,

that constitutional changes are not what we need to improve our economic well-being. And let them know that we have the will, the skills and resources, with a little bit of help, to continue on the self-government road.

The Grants Commission is holding a public meeting tomorrow evening (Thursday) at 6 p.m. downstairs at the South Pacific Hotel.

THE HUMAN FACTOR

I have lived on Norfolk Island for close to 40 years. I do not envisage myself ever leaving, because it is my adopted home.

In that time, I have learnt to admire the spirit and character of the Norfolk Islander.

I would not presume to describe a "typical" Norfolk Islander, or to patronise them by putting them into a neat little category or box. They cannot be stereotyped like that. The personalities are as diverse as you would find in any community.

There is, however, a set of community values and a culture that a visitor may catch a glimpse of, and a longer term resident may come to know a little better. It is a set of values and a character that Canberra may have underestimated, or failed to take into account.

They are very proud of their community and their history, and rightly so. Even in their relative isolation, they have made an excellent job of managing their affairs for the good government of the island and its people. Ever since the days of John Adams, when he sought to teach his people a Godly, just and honest way of living and dealing with one another, this community has been at the forefront of any western nation in developing a sound set of community values. Values such as caring for one's own, taking responsibility for one's own actions and well-being, and working hard for what one needs or wants.

As people who have always known how to cut the coat according to the cloth, they are appalled at the potential waste of money and resources they will see if Canberra tries to provide what they have competently provided for themselves up until now.

I have seen many good leaders in this community, but I have rarely seen one who was at all power hungry and inclined to get up on a soapbox and rally people behind him or her for some cause. But that does not mean that they are not reacting with strength and vigour when they see an injustice such as Norfolk has been threatened with. That is why I believe Canberra has underestimated the will of people here to hang on to what they cherish.

They are not afraid of change, and have seen much of it over the years. It took a fair amount of faith to make the move from Pitcairn to Norfolk in 1856, and the resilient and

adaptable spirit is still very much present today. But the change must be productive and beneficial *for Norfolk Island*.

It is so encouraging to see a strong grass-roots response to the current situation, and much of this is being led by younger people with a strong commitment to keeping Norfolk a place that they and their children can continue to be proud of. They do not want to lose the strong work-ethic, or the resourcefulness or the high level of self-sufficiency that characterises them.

I mentioned the "Have Your Say" forum. Today, there was another forum on Norfolk Radio, with 6 people in varying age groups discussing which way they would like to see Norfolk progress. There was a range of views, but the discussion proceeded with typical Norfolk good humour. There was discussion on Option 1, Option 2, Option 3, and even Option 4. The views were expressed clearly, with intelligence and perceptiveness, and above all with some passion.

I have said it before, but I believe that passion is what we need now.

I did not need any convincing of the fact, but listening to that forum told me that the future of Norfolk Island is in good hands. This situation is actually bringing out the best in the people of the island.

I would like to tell the young people...don't give up and feel it is useless doing anything....we are relying on you.

I know the Canberra machine appears a bit like a juggernaut rolling mercilessly on. Already we have the Grants Commission here, when they think we will have barely had a chance to gather our thoughts together, let alone develop a strategy or plan of action. Whatever your views about the island's future, Canberra's tactics are unjust and undemocratic.

Your fathers and grandfathers made a difference when we were threatened in a similar way thirty years ago when the Nimmo Report suggested solving the Norfolk "problem" by absorbing us into mainstream Australia. It was a grass-roots movement, and gave the Council of the day hope and encouragement. The same thing can happen now.

HAVING OUR SAY

I HAVE LIVED HERE
DON'T WANT TO SEE

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What will happen to the

My main concern is the  
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Funnily enough, as you move around Norfolk Island, you do not actually hear a great deal of discussion about Australia's plans to alter Norfolk Island's constitutional status.

In the first day or two after the Minister's announcement, a departmental officer was heard to comment that we must be happy with the proposals, because she had not seen any banners or demonstrations.

Maybe she thought she was back in Australia, but things work rather differently here on the island.

First of all, you would have to allow for the shell-shock that most of us experienced. Many described a feeling of intense, almost physical anxiety, stomach churning, loss of appetite and sleep, depression. It took a few days to get that under control.

Even those who had access to the Minister during his visit were told in no uncertain terms that the proposals were not negotiable in their basic form, although the detail would be open for consultation. However, as we were not actually given much detail, there was very little basis for constructive discussion.

Then you must remember that this is a small community...fewer than 2000 people. I myself would not describe it as "closely-knit" or "clannish", terms journalists love to use. However, we do live and work and socialise alongside each other all the time, and we need to accommodate and manage situations where there is going to be a diversity of views. There would be a distinct tendency to avoid political or controversial topics in most situations where a group of people are gathered together, lest it give rise to uncomfortable or resentful feelings. That is part of the courteous nature of the Norfolk people.

There have definitely been plenty of one-to-one discussions, and more relaxed interchange in cases where you know the others feel just like you do. Frequently, visitors have come out openly and asked "How do you feel about it?" Even then, one would be cautious in stating a view if others were present.

We do have good access to our Legislative Assembly members, but unfortunately most of them know very little more than we do. And not everyone is comfortable with a Letter to the Editor. The minister made it clear he would welcome views and submissions being directed to his department, and no doubt many have done this.

However, it was greatly welcomed when NAG (Norfolk Action Group), which is a forum for people to state their views on Norfolk affairs, and convey these views to the government here, decided to hold a HAVE YOUR SAY forum over two days in Rawson Hall.

Booths were set up for different areas of possible discussion - e.g. taxation, environment, social welfare etc., and there were sheets of butcher's paper for us to write our views. As each sheet was filled, it was taped to the wall. It was good to read the views of others, and gave food for thought.

The comments were, of course, anonymous, but one senior gentleman, who loves this island dearly and is one of our "national treasures", asked if he should sign his name. They said he did not need to, but he insisted "But I want to!!" If you wished, you could write on a card and place it in a box. Some people brought prepared written views. Various information sheets were placed around in prominent positions, such as a list of types of Australian taxes. At one end, there was a "worry wall" (or "wailing wall") on which you could pose questions or express general concerns.

I attended the forum on two occasions, and each time there were some government ministers and assembly members taking the opportunity to listen, talk, ask questions, and read what people were writing.

It was an extremely positive and constructive activity, and a large number of people took advantage of the chance to ask questions, state concerns, read how other people were feeling, or generally let off steam.

N.A.G. will now collate the responses, and make them available for the Assembly and the Minister and his Department. In view of the fact that we are not to be allowed to express our views or accept/reject the proposal through fair and democratic means, this may have been the only real opportunity for Norfolk Island to have its say.

## **OPTION THREE**

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There is no doubt that some hard decisions need to be made on Norfolk Island. The demands of the modern world and a 21st century society, plus the desire of Norfolk Islanders to maintain the good quality of life and reasonably high standard of living they NOW enjoy, means that our N.I. Government needs to re-think its revenue-raising and spending strategies.

This is no different to what every individual, household, small business, corporation, organisation, local council and state or Federal Government needs to do regularly. Sometimes small modifications are needed, and at other times more radical strategies are needed.

Norfolk Island is at the latter stage.

The Commonwealth Government has stepped in, and laid on the table two broad options "for the future governance of Norfolk Island to ensure future sustainability."

**OPTION 1** "A modified self-government model with greater powers for Australian Government Involvement."

*This model does nothing to address Norfolk's economic situation. In fact, because the Minister has said it will include taking away our control of Customs, it will take away our largest revenue earner. And because it will also include local residents and businesses paying at least some Australian taxation, it is difficult to imagine how we can possibly be better off economically than before!*

**OPTION 2** " 'A local government model' where the Australian Government could assume responsibility for state-type functions."

*Presumably this would losing many of our other current revenue raising methods, and being forced to pay land taxes, something that would be disastrous for a community where many people are asset-rich and cash-poor, and where the ability to pass on land to our children as part of their heritage is extremely important to local families.*

### **Could we please have Option 3?**

The detail could be worked out after a sound and thorough process of consultation with Norfolk Island Government and people, but it should at least contain measures to fix the actual problem, without changing our constitutional status and threatening our heritage and way of life.

Among other things, it should include

1. Retaining autonomy at least at current levels.
2. Exploring improved ways of raising revenues on Norfolk Island.
3. Sharing information and expertise as a genuine measure of help to the island e.g in

formulating a G.S.T.

4. Dealing with obstacles that Australia constantly places in our way which make it hard for us to "get on with things." e.g. tedious and unproductive Senate inquiries

5. Doing those things which it is in Australia's power to do to help us with the airline problem, something which the Minister recently washed his hands of.

6. Help us to give a boost to our only viable industry...tourism...so we can "help ourselves."

7. Grant us reciprocal Medicare arrangements such as are enjoyed by other non-Australian places.

8. Restore the availability of RAAF Medivac flights.

9. I have not listed *grants and loans*. We are not asking for handouts, but it would certainly be nice to have access to some of the money that Australia hands out to other Pacific island to buy their goodwill. They could *buy* our goodwill for far less than it will cost them to annexe us into their tax/welfare system.

If Australia did make some money available, it should be for those things *we* know we need. Things like an all-weather breakwater or improved wharf facilities at Cascade, or roads which are Commonwealth property. It should not just go to things Australia regards as *their* heritage and which give them kudos, such as the Kingston penal settlement ruins and the Kingston wharf.

### **We should all be thinking about OPTION 3.**

It is unproductive to focus on the detail of The Minister's two options. The broad principle is wrong. Canberra is forcing constitutional change on us in the guise of assisting our financial sustainability.

## **COMING IN FOR THE KILL**

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You might wonder why Norfolk Island is not delighted that Australia is wanting to come in and help us with problems they feel we are currently experiencing in our economy, our tourism and our infrastructure. It would seem a very neighbourly thing to do, an expression of goodwill between Australia and the island territory it has oversight of.

Canberra says it is coming in to help us *before* we face the insolvency that their "indisputable" reports say that we are heading for. Funnily enough, no one has ever been given the *opportunity* to dispute their view, and they have no intention of canvassing any other opinions, least of all ours.

It has become apparent, from listening to the experiences of those who met and spoke to the Minister during his visit, that our current problems have very little to do with the

decision to annex Norfolk Island. The whole thing has been carefully considered and in the planning for a very long time, and the whole thing is well set in concrete, and the only flexibility will be in the smaller details.

We have been given two options....

\*a modified self-government model with greater powers for Canberra and the imposition of Australian taxes and benefits, and all Commonwealth laws being extended to Norfolk Island.

\*a local government model.

They say we are to be consulted widely about the detail, but there is no plan to offer us any other option.

One wonders, when the only difficulty they have been able to pinpoint is a current economic one (and we are still solvent), why the solution should be to change the whole government model, and to take away our responsibility for one of our biggest revenue earners, which is Customs.

What Canberra sees is this:

We have a downturn in tourism, which was exacerbated by the problems being experienced by the airline servicing the airline from Australia. This was a commercial business issue, not of our making, but the airline problems were leading to public relations issues and loss of confidence by travel agents. Before the problem got worse, our own government foreclosed on the airline, and has itself ensured a maintenance of flights since that time. It will take time to re-establish our market, but we have a great product here on the island, and we will succeed.

**Instead of helping us with the airline issue at a government level, Canberra is taking advantage of the anxiety of those in the tourist industry and moving in for the kill.**

Since the very beginnings of self-government, Canberra has reneged on commitments, failed to consult properly with our government, moved the goalposts in the progression of transfer of powers to us, and failed to compensate us for an infrastructure that was handed over to us in an unsatisfactory state in the first place. And now it is all our fault, even though the model they gave us was probably doomed to fail in the first place.

**So now they say we cannot manage, even though their demands were unreasonable, and their genuine assistance non-existent.....and are moving in for the kill.**

In recent years, we have been overwhelmed by repeated inquiries, commissions, ministerial visits. They have listened and consulted, so they say, but they have always given greater weight to the anecdotal views of a handful of disenchanted individuals than

to the views of our government or the results of repeated referenda. In fact, one senator on the Senate Standing Committee actually accused us of manipulating referendum results and intimidating voters, which is laughable.

These inquiries (by senators with no guaranteed qualifications in these areas) have also been critical of our services and infrastructure, comparing them unfavourably to what they know (or think they know) of urban Australia. They have tried to convince people that they are deprived of their proper rights and services, and have sought to undermine confidence in our own government.

**And now, with grand promises of giving us things that no rural community in Australia enjoys, they are moving in for the kill.**

Canberra has commissioned economic reports that highlight potential problems with continuing to raise sufficient revenue to govern the island using our current revenue base. No one questions this. But the island has faced obstruction from Canberra in exploring other revenue bases.

When a GST was proposed, assistance was sought in developing the concept from both Australia and New Zealand, because of their experience. At first NZ happily agreed, but then they were apparently 'warned off.' Canberra then proceeded to send over a tiny delegation for a whole two days, and that was the sum total of their assistance.

Canberra has also been very lukewarm with help to progress other revenue raising options such as Internet Gaming and Offshore Finance Centre.

There is no intention to help us canvas any other options either. Canberra's stand is non-negotiable.

**They say our government model is financially unsustainable...they have brainwashed many people into believing it without proper evidence, and are moving in for the kill.**

One of the bigger drains on our finances is health. Because of our isolation, we need to provide a level of service that is superior to that of a country town with reasonable access to a medical facility in a larger urban centre, or enjoying the services of the Royal Flying Doctor. I have already written about our excellent medical and support facilities, more than adequate for a small place. We have a Government Healthcare levy, which acts as a safety net after \$2500 of expenses, which means that one can actually "self-insure" for the initial amount and be better off than they would be in a private health fund.

But our health service is costly, pharmaceuticals are not subsidised, and the government insurance scheme can be strained if there are a number of serious medical emergencies or costly long-term medical problems.

The RAAF used to provide a medical evacuation service, which was written off to

"training." In recent years, this service has been completely withdrawn by Australia. Original plans to provide Norfolk Island residents with reciprocal Medicare arrangements (such as are enjoyed by many other independent countries) were withdrawn nearly 20 years ago.

Even suggestions that our own Healthcare levy be paid into Medicare to give us access have not been taken up or pursued.

Yet we have still managed up until now.

**Yet Canberra is trying to tell us we have an inferior health system, and is moving in for the kill.**

There is currently some disenchantment in some sections of the community with our own government. Much of this is over issues with no bearing on our economy or anything else Canberra has chosen to highlight. You will always get dissatisfaction with the current government, and Canberra knows that.

**Yet Canberra is going to capitalise on the discontent and move in for the kill.**

And the last straw is the Kingston pier, which Canberra (who owns it) has decided to restore at enormous cost, putting it out of action for many months. Our pier is our lifeline. We have another pier, in far worse condition, which can only be used if the seas and weather are right. It cannot be used during our prevailing winds. Currently a cargo ship has been out there waiting a fortnight to unload. This sort of thing greatly adds to the freight costs and cost of living here. The money so magnanimously allocated could have repaired Cascade pier, helped towards an all-weather breakwater, or developed wharf facilities in the much more sheltered Headstone area.

Meanwhile, we are inconvenienced, and more than that, we are being financially crippled by Canberra's action. One cannot help thinking it was all part of the plan.

**A perfect time to move in for the kill?**

## **WHAT DO WE HAVE TO LOSE?**

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Someone suggested that one way of assessing the potential effects of economic and governmental changes that Canberra means to impose on Norfolk Island is to ask oneself the questions:

"What is worth keeping about Norfolk? What are the things I hope are not lost?"

Now the fact that so many of us have reacted to Canberra's announcement with a sick feeling must mean that it goes right to the heart and essence of our love of and commitment to this island. But it is not always easy to put it into words.

Our understanding of what makes this place so special to us probably differs somewhat from person to person. Much of it is about intangibles, emotions, loyalties, relationships,

inherited values, traditions, even comfort zones. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to quantify these things for the economic rationalists of Canberra.

I will try to put it into words from my point of view. I should explain that I am not a Norfolk Islander, but have lived here for 40 years, and have a Norfolk Islander husband and 5 Norfolk Island offspring. I feel no loyalties to anywhere but this island.

\*I love the fact that I can feel really proud of being a part of this island, proud of what this community has achieved in 217 years from uncertain beginnings. I love the fact that the Norfolk people are strong and resilient, that they pride themselves on being self-reliant, adaptable and resourceful, sorting out their own problems and meeting the needs of their own people with fairness and justice. I am proud of the fact that they have done this for over 2 centuries, even though they are isolated, and have received very little constructive help or understanding or recognition of their aspirations from outside powers and authorities.

\*I love the relatively low level of red tape and bureaucracy we have to deal with. The paperwork involved in being part of the Australian system of taxes and benefits would be almost as bad as the financial constraints it would place on us. It is wonderful to be part of a community where "cash in hand" is simple and legal, where bartering and returning of favours is common.

One of the worst features of what Canberra wants to impose on us is the negative effect it would have on small business, and small business is the lifeblood of this community.

\* I love the opportunity to live in a "small government" situation, where you live and work alongside your government representatives, where laws and policies are tailored to meet small island requirements, with the emphasis on people's needs and not the need to fuel and maintain an oversize economy and government structure. We are already in danger of losing this with the requirements Canberra has been imposing on us to bring our laws and policies into line with those of mainland Australia.

\*I love being away from the mainstream, being isolated, and forced to rely on your own resources. It makes this community more creative, resourceful, imaginative and focussed. It is good to be different. And although we may be isolated in terms of distance and geography, I believe the world comes to us here, and we enjoy many of the benefits of living in a cosmopolitan community.

\*I love being in a place where, when someone is in trouble or need, the community rallies round with enormous generosity, and sustains and supports those people. A place where you give a young person a job, even part-time, because you know there is no dole. A place where you are more than a name or a number or "that lady who lives on the corner", and people care what happens to you, and the "Inasmuch" ethic is strong. Our facilities and

infra-structure may not always be ultra-sleek and modern, but there is real caring and individuals matter. I don't even mind the "small-town gossip" because at least it means people are interested in you.

\*I love living in a place where there is very little ostentation and show, glamorous street frontages, or pomp and show. A place where you are not conscious of the "haves and have-nots", because nearly everyone enjoys a good quality of life, and even those who have money choose to live modestly and quietly, and use their resources to make the community a better place.

\*I want to keep our own quarantine, customs and immigration. If I buy or import something, I know this community will get some benefit from my purchase. If I have fruit and vegetables, I know they are fresh, naturally ripened, and full of goodness. If someone comes to live here, I know that they will have come on our terms, and that we should be able to choose the sort of people who will enhance our community, and not try to change it to resemble the place they have left.

\*The natural environment on Norfolk is very special to me. I love the semi-rural landscape, the natural beauty, the lack of high-rise and big development, and the respect the Norfolk Islanders have for their land and landscape, and their desire to have something worthwhile to hand on to their children and future generations.

\*I do not want the Norfolk spirit or culture to be squashed or devalued. I love the traditions, the language, the food, the celebrations. I love both the Polynesian and the British heritages. And above all, I love the sense of fun and humour.

\*Although I know we cannot turn back the clock, I want Norfolk Island to stay relatively simple and uncomplicated. I want it to remain laid-back, unhurried and relaxed. I want it to remain a place where we can work hard for the things that really count, and forget the rest.

*The more I think about it, the less convinced I am that Canberra's plans will (as described in their brochure) "mark a turning point for the future of Norfolk Island and the well-being of its people."*

## **ETHNIC CLEANSING - BY STEALTH?**

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I was cautious about using the term "ethnic cleansing", because I did not want to belittle the very real physical suffering, homelessness and alienation that has been experienced by hundreds of thousands of people in places like the Sudan and other countries in Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East, and in Germany during World War 11. No doubt almost every

Australian would wish to dissociate themselves from any attitude or value system that would make the rights of one ethnic group of less importance than another.

There is also a recognition of the fact that, although it was the Bounty descendants from Pitcairn Island who were given Norfolk Island as their homeland, there has been a continual process of new people joining the community since 1856. Some have married into Island families, others have come to enjoy the special character and lifestyle of the place, still others have seeking business and economic activities, or opportunities to utilise and exercise special skills not available in the local community. Many of these people have burned their bridges behind them, become very much a part of the community, and there are a number of non-Pitcairn families who have been here for some generations.

For this reason, I try to avoid using the words "Norfolk Islander" and try to say "Norfolker", and refer to that special Norfolk Island character and culture as "the Norfolk identity" or "the Norfolk way"( a term we hear quite a bit now.) That is not to say that the very special Pitcairn heritage, and the attitudes and values that have come with it are not still responsible for much of what makes this island unique.

Over the past couple of decades, we have seen an erosion and watering down of this Norfolk identity. I do not mean the changes that have come with more intermarriage with non-Norfolk Islanders, or the changes that have come about with improved transport and communication links with "the mainland." I refer rather the steady and insidious "Australianisation" that has been forced on us over a period of time.

No doubt, border control issues played a part(and still do), and in the early Eighties, many Norfolk Islanders were forced to face the fact, for the first time, that if they were to apply for a passport, it must be an Australian one. Many older islanders were born citizens of Norfolk Island, and had no concept of being anything else, although they valued their close association with Australia..and New Zealand too, for that matter. When passports became necessary, and no Norfolk Island passport was possible, many became Australian citizens almost "by default." There were also a number of Norfolk Islanders and Norfolk people who held New Zealand citizenship, and at first this was no problem. A smaller group of Norfolk people held citizenship in other places, such as Great Britain and the United States. Indeed, many had migrated to Norfolk Island direct from those places, and had not even considered they were migrating to Australia.

Then there came a requirement from Canberra that enfranchisement and voting rights should only apply to people from the British Commonwealth, and our American friends at least needed to consider taking out dual citizenship.

Then more and more frequently, we began hearing from Commonwealth officials and government representatives the line about Norfolk people deserving to enjoy the same

rights as all *other Australians*. It seemed to mark a definite trend and shift in official policy, and it led to several undesirable things

1. A move by Australia to bring us into their electoral system. A local referendum made it clear that we did not desire this. Nevertheless, we given an *optional* right to vote either in a Canberra electorate, or in an electorate with which we had a close association (the latter applying mainly to people here for a short term.)

2. Moves to give any Australians who were residing on Norfolk Island the same electoral rights on the island as they would enjoy back in Australia. Once again *against the expressed wishes of the Norfolk people* it was decided that any Australian residing on the island would be entitled to vote in local elections after just 6 months. Not only was this a far shorter period of qualification than would apply to any immigrant into Australia, but it threatened to cause a shift in the delicate balance of views and voting on local issues, because these people had not had nearly enough time to understand local issues or the candidates standing for election.

3. Disenfranchisement of any resident who did *not* hold Australian citizenship. It is true that no one already on the electoral roll would be taken off, but any non-Australian citizen was disqualified from standing for election, and thus became a second-class citizen of Norfolk Island. At the time, even some of our Legislative Assembly members were non-Australians, and had to take out citizenship to stand for re-election! In some cases this affected people who had lived on the island for decades, and some who had been born here. Even some Norfolk Islanders, who perhaps held New Zealand citizenship, and had lived away from the island for some years, returned home to find they had no right to participate in the local electoral process.

Meanwhile, there were increasing numbers of visits from Canberra officials, bureaucrats, and government ministers paying lipservice to their respect for our local culture and heritage. However, it became clearer and clearer that they merely regarded us as another part of "multicultural Australia." They had, and still have, **no** concept of Norfolkers as being a people with a completely separate history, a people who had *never* chosen to *migrate to or settle in Australia*. We did not want them to include us into their patronising welcome to other ethnic groups to become a part of their Australian melting pot of cultures. I recall one occasion when representatives of the Maori people returned the island to receive back the "patu" that had been given to Gidley King by their predecessors. It was a very special dawn ceremony at Kingston. The then Parliamentary Secretary in the Dept. of Territories, Warren Snowdon, spoke most condescendingly about Australia respecting and wanting to preserve our culture in the same way as it did the Aborigines. A

bit of a worry.

Now in more recent times, there has developed another trend in Canberra's tactics. This has come with a steady and consistent undermining and criticism of the ability of our government to provide the sort of infrastructure, services and facilities "that should be enjoyed by Australians." For instance, more than one Inquiry (and there have been plenty recently) has referred to our hospital as "third world." They know that mentioning health is sure to have an emotional appeal. True third world communities would be staggered! In fact, prior to the South Pacific Mini-games, which the island hosted in 1999(?), our medical facilities were inspected by officials from other Pacific islands, and they regarded them as a whole as far superior to those they enjoyed back in their own home islands.

This current Canberra plan, if allowed to be carried out, will almost complete our "homogenisation" into the Australian scene. Even if it does bring economic and material benefits...and we doubt that it will.... it will lead to the erosion, even loss of a very special identity and way of life, and threaten the spirit of a unique community that Canberra obviously regards as an irritating anomaly.

**Do Australians really think that their culture, their heritage, their "way" is superior to that of the people of Norfolk Island?**

If they only thought about it, we could hold us up to the world as the "jewel in their crown" instead regarding us as a thorn in their side!!

## **GOOD INTENTIONS?**

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Hon. Robert Ellicott . He is a man for whom I have enormous admiration and respect. A truly honourable man.

Back in the 1970's, the then Labor Government commissioned a Royal Commission into Norfolk Island Affairs. Sir John Nimmo was put in charge of this Royal Commission. This method of inquiring into the island was perhaps a better way than the Senate Standing Committees to which we have been subjected recently, as hopefully, the Commissioner did not have a bias and an "agenda", and hopefully was less influenced by the Canberra bureaucracy and Government policies.

Nevertheless, Sir John Nimmo did recommend that Norfolk Island be absorbed into Australia, with even less of a say in their own affairs than they had already been enjoying...and that was only an Advisory Council, presided over by an Australian appointed Administrator.

By the time the Nimmo Report was being considered, there was a change of Government in Australia, with the dismissal of the Whitlam Government and the election of a Liberal

Government under Malcolm Fraser. There was certainly a big break in continuity of governance and policy on the Federal level.

This gave some hope to Norfolk Island, where a strong grass-roots movement had begun among the Norfolk Islanders in reaction to the threat to their heritage and identity as a separate people.

Canberra adopted a somewhat cautious approach, and the new Minister for Territories, (Sir) Robert Ellicott, when speaking to Norfolk Island people about their aspirations would always preface his remarks with "My government believes.." or "My government's policy is..."

It soon became apparent that when you heard these words, you knew that his private view differed somewhat from the official one. Even then, he personally felt that Norfolk Island, historically, morally and constitutionally, had a greater right to a say in its own affairs, and that government at the hands of a Canberra bureaucracy was inappropriate for a small island with a unique and separate heritage, history and culture.

Sir Robert Ellicott has made it clear that he still holds this view.

To his credit, back in the latter part of the 1970's, Sir Robert began a process of intensive, open and productive consultations with the people of Norfolk Island and other interested parties, resulting in the Norfolk Island Act of 1979. The Act gave the island an elected Legislative Assembly of 9 members, and a tiered arrangement of powers.

There were some areas where the Norfolk Island Government was to have complete control, some areas which were to be decided by Norfolk Island, with Australia having powers of veto, and some areas where the Commonwealth would retain control. The plan was to gradually increase the area of responsibility that were placed in the hands of the Norfolk Islanders....or so we believed.

The plan was accepted and acted upon in good faith. It would be true to say that the grass-roots movement fighting for self-determination, mainly in the form of the Society of the Descendants of the Pitcairn Settlers, had encountered a degree of local opposition, and there was some polarisation of pro-Australia/pro-Norfolk Island feeling, many feeling the two could not be reconciled, a perception persisting to this day. There was, however, a general acknowledgement that the views of the Norfolk Islanders and Bounty descendants should, as a matter of principle, hold more weight and command more respect than those of shorter term residents, with loyalties to Australia and New Zealand.

Even though there were some who desired a closer relationship with Australia, there was a reasonable level of optimism about the island's ability to gradually assume more self-government, fuelled no doubt by the goodwill, integrity and encouragement shown by the truly honourable Sir Robert. We also believed that Canberra was ready and willing to

support us along the path, in no lesser way than they would be advising and supporting their Pacific neighbours.

We were wrong.

If only we had a crystal ball at the time, we would have gone about it differently, and ensured that there were safeguards, and that the Commonwealth could not act unilaterally to alter the arrangements and block the continuity of the progression towards greater self-determination.

Even as little as two years ago, celebrating the 25th anniversary of self-government, the Australian representatives were paying lip-service to the concept, but it was starting to become very apparent that they were only waiting for the right opportunity and time to "move in for the kill", as it were.

That time is now.

## NOT HAPPY MINISTER

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I have some admiration for Minister Jim Lloyd. He did have the courage to come here and face up to this community when he made the announcement about the Commonwealth Government's plans to strip Norfolk Island of self-government, and rule us from Canberra. Moreover, he stayed for four whole days, and met people, even met *with* some individuals and groups, attended a number of functions, which were no doubt pleasant and informative.

He seems a reasonably genial man, and is no doubt fairly well-liked. He may even have some very fair and reasonable private views about Norfolk Island, which are not necessarily his government's line.

I suspect he went back to Canberra quite happy with his visit. I suspect he heard what he wanted to hear.

The visit certainly gave him the opportunity to develop skills as a master of spin.

The visit was extremely well orchestrated. I suspect that even the Cabinet leak prior to his visit may have been planned, so that when we did get to hear the announcements, couched in vague and honeyed terms, on the radio, the initial reaction was "Oh, that is not so bad really."

That was how I reacted. Then that night, I woke up suddenly, sat up in bed, and thought "How dare they!" when I realised that the issue was not in the detail of the proposals, which had been couched in vague terms and were to be followed by a "consultation process." The issue is that the Australian government should unilaterally decide to strip us of something that had been established by the Norfolk Island Act 26-7 years ago, and which was meant to allow Norfolk people to decide their destiny for themselves.

Wherever the Minister went, he was friendly and personable. He said what a special place Norfolk Island was and spoke of how this move was designed to keep us as a strong and vibrant community. He made a number of promises, depending on who he was speaking to.....a better health service at the hospital, student allowances at the school, an Aged Care Unit when addressing the Senior citizens. Unashamed bribery really. He was also careful to say what a great reception he had at the venues he had been visiting previously. This was intimidating for anyone who had thought about presenting a negative view. The minister should realise that Norfolk people are, for the most part, very respectful and polite. They will speak up if they have something to say to you that you will like or find positive. They will not use a pleasant social occasion..and there were plenty of those...to bring up difficult and unpleasant issues.

So he really only got input from those who said what he wanted to hear. Although I know he got a different message from our government. But he dealt with that in his own mind. He told us, at a gathering which I attended, that our own government ministers were not getting out and listening to people like he was.

Which is not only unfair and unethical, it is rubbish. All our MLA's are only a phone call or an email or a short drive away. And many of them we mix with in the community all the time. And if they have not yet had a chance to listen to all the varying views of the community about these proposed changes to our economy and governance, it is because they were dropped like a bombshell less than a week ago.

We have had a number of referenda which have made it quite clear how this community feels about Australian interference. But Canberra ignores and discredits the results.

I would be quite prepared to accept it if a new poll showed an increased acceptance of the idea of being part of Australia. But it appears the Commonwealth Government's stand is non-negotiable, and there are no plans to seek our approval or permission.

Yes, the Minister may be happy, on the basis of some anecdotal evidence, but he can not begin to imagine some of the anger, hurt and sense of betrayal he has left behind.

## **AT WHAT COST**

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Australian taxpayers should be very concerned. Taking over Norfolk Island may cost you a great deal of money. If you are concerned about massive amounts of money being poured into Aboriginal affairs, and into Cocos and Christmas Islands territories, without much evidence of improving quality of life and standard of living for those people, then you should be asking questions about this latest turn of events.

We are being promised great improvements in our infrastructure and delivery of services

this week, as the Minister seeks to sell his package. Some of these improvements would be nice to have, but they do have to be paid for. No doubt the plan would involve us contributing through Australian taxes. That only makes sense. We are used to paying for what we enjoy. Up until now, we have paid for almost *everything*. And because we are a small place, with a limited population (fewer than 2000), we have kept our wants modest in accordance with our *real* needs. We have done our housekeeping, and paid for what we can afford.

The changes will have a massive spiralling inflationary effect, and the Australian Government will receive very little from us in return for what they will need to spend. And we will not necessarily be better off.

Some examples.

Many of our temporary personnel, such as doctors, teachers, bank managers, Administration personnel such as legal counsel, receive a salary somewhat equivalent to what they would get in Australia, but without income tax being deducted on what is earned here. Even allowing for a higher cost of living, it is an attractive package, and enables us to select good candidates by merit. If these people are to be required to pay Australian income tax, we will need to offer extra incentives and perks to attract quality applicants to these positions.

At a senior citizens gathering yesterday, Minister Jim Lloyd promised an up-to-date Aged Care Facility. Our present one, which only has a handful of patients, is part of our 22 bed hospital, and uses the same staff and facilities. It is a very rational and sensible way of doing it. The doctors are always close at hand. The elderly enjoy seeing the comings and goings of people to the doctor, the baby clinic and the dentist, and many call in to the seniors Ward to say hello. The hospital Auxiliary extends its help and assistance to this part of the hospital with various comforts and furnishings.

A new purpose built Aged Care home would probably be in a quieter, but more isolated and lonely place. It would need all its own staff, and catering and cleaning services for a start. It would be far more costly to run, and also costly to those wishing to use the facility. And none of this would necessarily result in a better level of *care or caring*.

Childcare is another case in point. We have a number of daycare places, small numbers, modest facilities perhaps, but caring, happy, healthy and friendly places. The charges are modest, giving greater access to all. Under an Australian Social Services regime, there will be childcare subsidies. The facilities will be required to register, and to do this will no doubt need to carry out massive upgrades to meet mainland standards that are not necessarily appropriate for a small island community. The centres will cost more to run, the government will pay out big amounts of money, and the parents may well still pay out

more ...without necessarily getting a better level of real *caring* for their children.

These are only three scenarios, barely skimming the surface.

Big city and suburban solutions for small island problems can be expensive and ineffective. We know best what we need, and we do not need to be strangled and crippled by demands and policies of big government, who think any need can be met by throwing money at it.

If we are forced to surrender the measure of independence and trust we have enjoyed up until now, you can be sure the feeling of many Norfolkers will be "Let us get everything out of Australia we can, to make up for what we have lost." You see, you will have taken away our pride in managing for ourselves, sorting out our own problems, taking responsibility for our own needs and actions, caring for own own people.

A recent Senate Standing Committee noted that Australia spends more than \$60 million on Christmas Island (where there is 60% unemployment) while Norfolk Island has been operating on a self-generated budget of closer to \$20 million (with almost no unemployment.) The information was actually used as a criticism that we were not meeting our commitments to our people! No pat on the back for resourcefulness and good management.

The minister's visit, with his entourage, the glossy brochure, the functions held to sell the Commonwealth's proposals.....all this would have been an expensive exercise. But it was nothing to what it may cost Australians in the future.

## 2 About Me

**Name:**Mary Christian-Bailey

**Location:**Norfolk Island

I am primarily a creative and family person. My passion is creative textile work, and I am a collector of anything that can be used to embellish fabric! Born in England, I have lived on Norfolk Island for 40 years. My husband is a descendant of Bounty mutineers, and we have five adult children. We are very proud of our heritage, and love belonging to this very beautiful and historical island. Our home "Devon" is a rambling 1920's home on seven acres which includes lovely a natural woodland. Two sons also live and work on the property. We are very much involved in community affairs. We grow for the fledgeling Norfolk Island Coffee Industry, and run Poll Hereford cattle on our property "Simon's Water." We own a tourist accommodation, but are retired from active management. Much of our spare time is spent helping out our family and sharing good times with them. Three sons live on Norfolk Island, one son lives in Sydney, and our eldest, a daughter, lives in New Zealand with her own two girls. I love being able to share and interact with the rest of the world via the net!