



The Hon Jamie Briggs MP

Assistant Minister for Infrastructure
and Regional Development
Member for Mayo

PRD ID: MB15-000259

Dear Norfolk Island Resident

Today, the Australian Parliament passed the *Norfolk Island Legislation Amendment Bill 2015* and associated Bills, providing a solid foundation for a stronger and more prosperous Norfolk Island.

Passage of this legislation marks the beginning of the journey towards reform. I recognise that the reforms represent significant change for residents and remain committed to working closely with the community throughout the transition process.

I would also like to allay any concern that reform will come at the expense of Norfolk Island's customs and culture. Fundamentally, the reforms are about delivering certainty and sustainability for Norfolk Island and are essential to preserving Norfolk Island's rich culture and history for generations to come.

What does the legislation achieve?

The legislation passed today will give Norfolk Island residents access to Medicare and social security payments from 1 July 2016, along with a range of other programmes. Norfolk Island will also enter the mainstream taxation system at the same time.

The legislation also allows for the transition of the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly to a Regional Council. The Regional Council will be elected by residents in the first half of next year, and will be responsible for all local issues from July 2016.

Until the Regional Council is formed, a Norfolk Island Advisory Council will be established in mid-2015 to represent the community. This group will be charged with representing the full spectrum of community views and will provide advice directly to me throughout the transition process.

As a first priority, I will ask the Norfolk Island Advisory Council to consider the following key issues.

1. The Norfolk Island Regional Council model.
2. The transition of Norfolk Island Administration staff to the Norfolk Island Regional Council
3. The phasing in of state law, keeping in mind the need to prioritise economic development, community safety and sustainable government while responding to the unique circumstances on Norfolk Island.

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...What happens now?

First, urgent action is needed to support economic development through investment in productive infrastructure. This work is already underway, and the Australian Government has engaged WorleyParsons to develop a Norfolk Island Roads Strategy and design the Cascade Pier upgrade. In addition, experts have also been brought on board to advise on the upgrades to Norfolk Island's mobile telephone network necessary for the delivery of a 3G service capable of voice, text, data, multimedia messaging and video calls.

Improving Norfolk Island's road network and upgrading the Cascade Pier is critical for community safety as well as economic and tourism development. The Australian Government has committed \$13 million to complete the upgrade of the Cascade Pier. In addition, a further \$13.5 million has been set aside for infrastructure and I intend to announce new priority projects over the coming months, following consultations with Advisory Council and the Administrator.

Tax, social security, Medicare and other federal programmes and services will commence on 1 July 2016. I understand that you will have immediate and ongoing questions about what these changes mean for you, your family, and the community. To ensure a smooth transition over the coming year, a range of measures are being put in place to share information and consult on the detail of the reform package.

As you would be aware, work is well underway to establish an Australian Government Information Centre in Burnt Pine. This Centre will provide a one stop shop for confidential advice on taxation, social security and other matters. Additional advice on the reforms is currently available from the Norfolk Island Reform webpage at www.infrastructure.gov.au.

To assist in transitioning the Norfolk Island Administration to the Regional Council, I intend to engage an Executive Director who will have overarching responsibility for the Norfolk Island Administration, Hospital Enterprise and other government bodies. The Executive Director will work collaboratively with existing staff to build the capacity of the Administration, and with the community in shaping future service delivery. I will be seeking a person with extensive local government experience as well as experience working with remote and regional communities to fill this important role.

How can I get involved?

The success of the reform process will depend on the continued engagement of the local community and I would strongly encourage you to contribute to the process. A number of issues have already been raised in relation to pension entitlements, asset testing, the minimum wage and costs to business. These matters will all be carefully considered through the transition process, taking account the Australian Government's intention to normalise the delivery of Government payments and services.

Further consultations will be undertaken around other matters such as consumer protection, workplace health and safety and the introduction of the minimum wage. I would expect for example, that the transition of the minimum wage would be phased in over time to ensure that there is no adverse impact on business, and in consultation with the community through the Advisory Council.

I acknowledge that residents have genuine concerns about what the changes will mean for them, their jobs and businesses, and the community. As these changes are implemented, I will ensure that we keep the community informed, that we continue to seek your feedback, and that we make adjustments where necessary.


The Norfolk Island Advisory Council will be established to represent the full spectrum of community views and I would strongly encourage residents interested in representing their community to put forward a nomination for the five-member Advisory Council. Nomination and declaration of interest forms can be downloaded from the Norfolk Island Reforms webpage, and submitted either to the Administrator's Office or to NorfolkIslandReform@infrastructure.gov.au by 22 May 2015.

However, the Local Advisory Council is only one element of the Australian Government's commitment to provide strong local representation on Norfolk Island. From 1 July 2016, local residents will also be fully represented at the federal level by Australian Capital Territory Senators, and will vote within a single electorate within the Australian Capital Territory.

I am committed to working with you, the Advisory Council, and once elected, the Regional Council to build a better and more prosperous future for Norfolk Island.

Yours sincerely

All the best,



Jamie Briggs

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