

NORFOLK



ISLAND

THE GOVERNMENT OF NORFOLK ISLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

Availability of sand and sand substitutes

The Minister for the Environment, the Hon Stephanie Jack MLA, has acknowledged community concerns about the availability of sand for the building industry and other uses in Norfolk Island.

“As the community is aware, particularly those who have been seeking sand for specific projects, it has been somewhat difficult to get”, Mrs Jack said. “This resulted from a temporary freeze on sand extraction imposed in December 2004 by the Administration after public concerns raised about sand operations close to the cemetery”.

Mrs Jack said that the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage had also expressed a view that the extraction of sand near the cemetery might disturb the palaeontological record that could exist in the sand and as such cause an impact on a matter of national environmental significance. On the other hand, the consulting archaeologist to KAVHA considered that there would be no concerns as long as sand was not removed from a depth of greater than one metre.

The Minister said that there was a range of issues which needed to be balanced in the public interest to ensure that sand extraction was managed in a sensible way. It was clear that sand remained important to the building industry, while there were also considerations of environmental protection and public amenity to be taken into account, along with the recently raised archaeological and palaeontological concerns.

Mrs Jack said that the Government was pursuing several options for providing sufficient sand through managed extraction, while also actively encouraging use of substitute materials. In the immediate future, sand will be made available for purposes where there is no suitable substitute, such as for plastering and for use in mortar for block or rack wall construction. She said that it was important to minimise the use of sand, so the potential for using crusher dust as a substitute should be considered.

The Minister announced that in recent weeks the Administration of Norfolk Island had been researching a range of alternatives that might replace sand for a range of uses including as fill for underneath water and septic tanks and swimming pools.

Mrs Jack said that a major island business currently produced a by-product from the rock crushing process that might prove suitable as a replacement product for sand. As well, crushed glass was being actively considered and testing would be carried out to establish whether it

could be a feasible sand substitute, together with the possible uses and proportions which might be involved.

Stephanie V Jack
Minister for the Environment

18th March 2005