



THE GOVERNMENT OF NORFOLK ISLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

Update on governance discussions with the Commonwealth

Chief Minister André Nobbs said today that good progress was being made on governance issues in discussions between himself and the Commonwealth Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Bob Debus MP. Mr Nobbs said that on Friday 9th January he had held another one-on-one teleconference with Mr Debus, and he was pleased that there was substantial agreement about what were the most significant issues and on the process to be followed. During the conversation, Mr Debus acknowledged receipt of the comprehensive submission from the Norfolk Island Government and Legislative Assembly sent to him late in December, and indicated that he wished to incorporate it into the next phase of discussions.

The Chief Minister said that it had been agreed that there would be a further teleconference in the next 1-2 weeks, to be followed shortly after that by a face-to-face meeting in Canberra. Mr Debus had explained that he wished to finalise a proposal for consideration by the Australian Government by around the end of February.

“I am grateful to Minister Debus for making himself available for these personal discussions on the future of governance in Norfolk Island”, Mr Nobbs said. “We generally agree that there is scope for fine-tuning and improvement in the legislative framework and in accountability and transparency measures. Much progress has been made in these areas, and I am confident that we can achieve outcomes which will both meet the expectations of the Commonwealth and benefit the entire Norfolk Island community”.

Minister Debus has confirmed to the Chief Minister that Norfolk Island is eligible to apply for certain Commonwealth infrastructure and nation building funding programmes, and has instructed his officials to provide the Norfolk Island Government with details to enable applications to be prepared. Minister Debus stressed that funding decisions under such programmes are competitive and are based on the merits of all applications, so that there is no guarantee that any or all Norfolk Island applications will succeed. However, Mr Nobbs welcomed the advice that Norfolk Island was eligible to apply, especially in light of the effects of the global financial crisis on tourism throughout Australia and in world markets.

Mr Nobbs said that he would continue to update the Norfolk Island community regarding progress in the governance discussions.

André Nobbs
Chief Minister

9 January 2009