

Hello, I am writing to you about an issue that is important to me and I believe important to all people on Norfolk Island. I am currently a resident of Norfolk Island, but have two contacts - one that works for the Commonwealth Government at the Department of Infrastructure (recently in their Norfolk Island branch) and the other in the Premier's Department of the NSW government. They have confirmed to me a very worrying development in the ongoing changes the Commonwealth is making to the island.

During the recent visit by the then Minister, I was made aware of several discussions that were held by the senior members of the department, where they were confidentially discussing that all services currently provided to the island by the NSW government will stop, and that the ACT government will need to be asked to come in and provide services instead. I spoke with my contacts in the departments and they confirmed this.

Also the issue is actually far more serious than the Commonwealth has let us know. Some of the worrying parts of this confidential plan include:

1. The Commonwealth does not want the NSW government to continue providing services as they think it costs too much and that the NSW government is too difficult to work with.
2. The ACT government have not agreed, or even begun to look at, how they might provide services.
3. The Commonwealth currently has no plans for how the ACT government would provide services. After 3 long years of implementing NSW services they now want to change.
4. The Commonwealth has no plans to consult the community on this significant change anytime soon.
5. Key people on the island, such as the council general manager and the new executive officer to the administrator, have been purposely kept in the dark while these plans are developed.
6. If ACT government were to provide services many aspects of the island would change.

A few parts my contacts mentioned were: a. Staff on the island employed by the NSW government would likely lose their current jobs. b. The school system would need to change to meet ACT standards which would affect staff and students. c. The laws on Norfolk Island may have to change to be consistent with ACT laws, otherwise how can ACT government services be provided in an environment with NSW laws? d. The council may not be required to provide many of the services they provide now as it is unlikely the ACT government would need their services as they could use their existing ACT government staff. e. The health service would have to change to work with ACT Health processes and standards. What should be very

worrying for the community is the current state of the ACT Health Department: <http://www.abc.net.au/.../government-promises-health.../10220580> <http://www.abc.net.au/.../canberra-hospital-risks-los.../9668670> This is the department the Commonwealth want to come in to run the health service.

Apparently the plans the Commonwealth have are so badly developed that they don't have any answers to these questions yet.

My contacts also confirmed that, just like in 2015, the Commonwealth have a team based in Canberra confidentially working on this plan and they have been told that all plans and discussions are confidential and not to be discussed with, or released to, the Norfolk Island community.

The Commonwealth doesn't want this becoming public until they know what they're doing or have some plans in place. I for one find this completely unacceptable. After all the changes the island has gone through since 2015 such significant changes should be discussed openly with the community.

I'm writing to you as I'm hoping you, through your channels, could raise awareness of this important issue with the community and the Commonwealth Government. I am hesitant to provide my personal details as I believe identifying myself will make it easy to work out the identities of my contacts, however if you were to raise this issue and request confirmation or denial of the matters I've raised, it would force the Commonwealth to address these issues. Emails to the Minister's office and department would also force them to address these issues too.

There are a number of questions that the Commonwealth should immediately answer:

1. Is there a team in Canberra working on the transition of services from the NSW government to the ACT government?
2. What plans, if any, are currently in place to manage such a transition?
3. What changes would this mean for the island community? What would happen to the health service? To the school? To policing? To people employed in these services?
4. What is the timeline for the transition of services to the ACT government? When should the island community expect this?
5. When will the community be consulted about any changes?
6. Will the Commonwealth agree to regular community meetings (at least every 3 months) to discuss the change to ACT government for services to the community?

My contacts said that if the Commonwealth's responses are vague or dismissive, to state that an FOI request could be made on all Commonwealth department emails,

documents and meeting minutes that discuss the change of services to the ACT government, of which there are apparently many.

I am sorry I don't have any internal department documents to prove this issue I'm raising, however getting those out of the departments is very hard. I am though happy for you to mention this letter in any commentary and to quote any of the issues and key questions I mention above.

I for one want answers from the Commonwealth, however if I were to ask publicly it would risk identifying my contacts, who have said can provide more information on this worrying development as it continues.

I have shared this information with the following people/groups as I believe all residents on the island have a right to know what the Commonwealth is now working on: *The Norfolk Islander *Norfolk Island Regional Council *Norfolk Island People for Democracy *Norfolk Online News *Norfolk Island Health and Residential Aged Care

Service Paper copies of this letter will be arriving over the coming days to those people/groups listed above however if you could forward on this message to them earlier it would be very useful.

I hope that you might be able to raise these issues with the community, the Commonwealth and the Minister so that islanders can be kept informed and not excluded from major changes to the island.

Sincerely, Concerned Resident