

## Background Brief

### 3.04 Australian Government Key Achievements on Norfolk Island since 1 July 2016 (as at 30 October 2018)

#### Public order and safety

- Norfolk Island Regional Council (NIRC) councillors were elected in May 2016 using the electoral model applied in NSW for local government elections. A new electoral roll was compiled for this election, ensuring the process delivered a valid and transparent result. NIRC operates under the mature governance and accountability framework of the NSW *Local Government Act 1993* (NI).
- The Australian Government has been modernising laws in Norfolk Island to protect children, women and all other residents against criminal violence and other illegal acts. The changes offer the Norfolk Island community the same protections under the law which are offered on mainland Australia. Specific changes include:
  - Modernising child welfare legislation to ensure a more streamlined and effective handling of emergency situations and of matters that need to be considered by a court.
  - Modernising aspects of the Norfolk Island Criminal Code.
  - Introduction of modern domestic and personal violence laws, and complementary police powers to support the enforcement of those laws.
  - Improvements to court procedures to protect vulnerable witnesses giving evidence in court and to strengthen sentencing rules.
- A number of improvements to the justice system have been made to support better justice outcomes for the community, in particular:
  - The appointment of Federal Court judges to the bench of the Supreme Court of Norfolk Island.
  - Appointment of an experienced magistrate to the role of Chief Magistrate of the Court of Petty Sessions.
  - The engagement of the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions as the prosecuting body for criminal matters in the Norfolk Island courts and as counsel assisting the Coroner in coronial matters.
  - The selection and appointment of lay magistrates to the Court of Petty Sessions for a three year term, working under the supervision of the new Chief Magistrate.
- The Norfolk Island Police Force (NIPF) has been bolstered with additional resources. The total number of NIPF members has been increased to five sworn officers who bring significant expertise in community policing, investigations and working with vulnerable witnesses.

- Upgrades are being made to secure communications infrastructure at the police station to enhance privacy and protection for the Norfolk Island community. These measures complement improvements made to local police and court powers, the appointment of a Norfolk Island Supreme Court Judge and Chief Magistrate, and the engagement of the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions as the island's independent prosecuting authority.

## **Economic development**

- The Australian Government's investment of \$16.9 million to extend and upgrade the Cascade Pier is complete and the pier opened for use from 21 April 2018.
- The upgrade has lengthened the pier by 24 metres, raised the deck by 1 metre, strengthened the pier foundations and provided for a boom dock hydraulic crane to launch and retrieve transfer boats carrying loads of passengers. This means cruise ship passengers can embark and disembark easily and safely in a variety of weather.
- Almost \$5 million is being invested in passenger transfer vessels for Norfolk Island, which are scheduled for delivery by mid-2019, to allow more opportunities for cruise ship passengers to disembark and tour Norfolk Island.
- The Australian Government continues to underwrite the air services between Norfolk Island and mainland Australia to provide a regular and reliable link for residents and tourists.
- The removal of passport requirements for domestic travelers means Norfolk Island is now a more attractive destination for the 45 per cent of Australians without passports.
- The 2016-17 financial year had the highest number of overnight visitors to Norfolk Island for the last decade and the 2017-18 financial year is projected to have strong tourism numbers.
- Recognising that tourism is central to small business prosperity on Norfolk Island, the Australian Government is partnering with the Norfolk Island Regional Council (NIRC) to increase visitor numbers and income generated from tourism activities. Over the next two years the Australian Government will provide \$776,000 to NIRC for tourism promotion.
- The government is delivering the NBN on Norfolk Island, with over 520 residents now connected to the Sky Muster. Sky Muster is providing internet bandwidth capable of supporting video conferencing, streaming video and cloud-based business applications.
- The recent inclusion of Norfolk Island in the Regional Development Australia network will provide a significant opportunity to support growth in the Norfolk Island economy and encourage increased investment. A Regional Investment Officer position has been established to work closely with local businesses and NIRC to help create local jobs, attract business investment and grow the economy. As at November 2018, Regional Development Australia are recruiting to replace the inaugural holder of this position.
- The introduction of a new streamlined planning approval pathway for significant public infrastructure projects of benefit to the Norfolk Island community.

## **Housing and community services**

- A Norfolk Island Child and Family Wellbeing Team has been established to deliver practical services to improve the safety and support of women, children and families on Norfolk Island. The unit provides integrated and coordinated services for children and families, in partnership with the community, police, health, education and relevant agencies.

## **Health**

- Like all other Australians, the Norfolk Island community has access to Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme with a sustained and significant increase in residents visiting doctors and allied health services. The 2015-16 monthly average GP visits before reforms commenced was 509; the 2016-17 average jumped to 821 visits per month; and in 2017-18 was 1005 visits per month.
- The Australian Government has invested over \$2.3 million to upgrade the health service building on Norfolk Island. Upgrades have delivered more reliable power and water supply, improved disability access and addressed work health and safety concerns.
- \$1.4 million has been invested in new medical equipment, including a digital mammography imaging unit, a new digital general x-ray machine and sterilising equipment.
- The introduction of the Norfolk Island Patients' Travel Accommodation and Assistance Scheme (NIPTAAS) ensures Norfolk Island residents can travel to the mainland to access specialist medical or surgical treatment. NIPTAAS covers the cost of the flight to the mainland to see a specialist and provides subsidies for accommodation and travel while seeking medical treatment.
- \$1.2 million was allocated in the 2018-19 Budget for the preparation of a business case for redevelopment of the health facility through construction of a new Multipurpose Service Unit (MPS) health facility through a co-design process.

## **Heritage and Culture**

- Conservation funding for the Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area (KAVHA) increased almost three-fold in 2018-19 to \$1.9 million, in comparison to the previous two financial years. This increase was underpinned by a study on the economic needs and potential of KAVHA.
- An interpretation plan for KAVHA has been funded to identify ways to further preserve and promote the unique culture and heritage of Norfolk Island and its Pitcairn community.
- A study of safety hazards at the KAVHA site has been undertaken, and funding has been allocated in 2018-19 to projects which help ensure the safety of workers and visitors to the site. Scoping is also underway to address structural safety hazards to protect a number of the iconic heritage buildings on Norfolk Island.

- A Cultural Landscape Management Plan has been developed for KAVHA to guide its practical management, conserve its significant cultural and heritage values, improve visitor experiences, and ensure it remains an integral part of the local community. The plan considers complex issues such as water, vegetation, livestock and traffic management. The community will be consulted on specific proposals in the draft plan in early 2019.
- A total of \$0.5 million has been invested in capital works projects at the KAVHA site since 1 July 2016. This includes infrastructure upgrades which protect the important heritage buildings and facilities. Activities have included upgrades to plumbing, electrical and septic systems, asbestos remediation and the reconstruction and resurfacing of the cemetery entry road. A further \$1.5 million is budgeted for capital works projects in 2018-19.
- Recognising KAVHA's value as a tourist drawcard, promotional activities have included installation of a large sign in the airport baggage collection area, publication of an updated Visitor Guide and establishment of the [kavha.gov.au](http://kavha.gov.au) website to improve communication.

## **Education**

- Norfolk Island Central School received over \$3.5 million in capital upgrades, mainly focused on repairs to school buildings and overdue maintenance. The project also included upgrades to school buildings, new classroom furniture, improved water quality, replacement of the ICT infrastructure and upgrades to the plumbing and electrical systems.
- A new satellite dish was installed at the school to provide improved systems access to the NSW Department of Education for delivery of additional aspects of the NSW curriculum.
- More education services are being delivered at the Norfolk Island Central School as a result of legislative changes that took effect in March 2018. This means school students on Norfolk Island are now receiving services similar to those provided in NSW government schools, such as learning support programs and access to distance education.
- In 2017, the Banyan Park Early Learning Centre received \$899,900 in funding over two years, as part of the Building Better Regions Fund Infrastructure Projects Stream. The project will upgrade the island's major education and care facility with new classrooms, landscaped outdoor area and extended undercover play areas. The centre will be well placed to become an approved child care centre, which will allow eligible families to access the government's fee relief payments for child care.

## **Social protection**

- Norfolk Island residents have access to Commonwealth support payments and services including the age pension, disability pension, child support and Newstart allowance – to ensure Australians living on Norfolk Island have access to the same social safety services as other parts of Australia.
- As of March 2018, there were 221 residents of Norfolk Island receiving the aged pension, 117 recipients of the Family Tax Benefit, and 58 people receiving other disability, youth, income support or parenting payments.

## **Child and Family Wellbeing**

- The Department has procured the services of the Non-Government Organisation Key Assets to provide supervision and direction to the Norfolk Island Child & Family Wellbeing Unit. Key Assets commenced providing services on 30 July 2018.
- The Department, in conjunction with Key Assets, has implemented a series of Policies & Procedures related to the provision of Child & Family Wellbeing Services on Norfolk Island.
- The Department has established the Norfolk Island Child & Family Wellbeing Advisory Group. The group is chaired by the Deputy Secretary for Territories and Regions, and provides advice, guidance and support to the Department in regard to the wellbeing of children and young people on Norfolk Island.

## **Interim Child Care Fee Relief through Banyan Park**

- A transfer of \$250,000 of administered funding from the Department of Education and Training to the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development & Cities has provided Norfolk Island families who have children at the Banyan Park Early Learning Centre (Banyan Park) with child care fee relief for the period 2 July 2018 to 31 December 2018.
- As at the end of September 2018, 28 children at Banyan Park were receiving child care fee relief with an average subsidy level of 77%.
- A new building for Banyan Park has been commissioned to be built in early 2019 via a grant from the Building Better Regions Fund. This will allow Banyan Park to cater for an increased number of children and make life easier for parents on Norfolk Island.
- The Department has procured the services of a mentor [REDACTED], to assist Banyan Park to continue to work towards the requirements under the National Quality Framework to be an approved child care centre.

**Sensitivities:** Nil

**Attachments:** Nil

