

Responses to inaccurate statements in the *Norfolk Island's major problem is DIRDC* report by Chris Nobbs – June 2018

Reference	Page	Statement	Response
Executive Summary	6	Act immediately to delay the introduction of Modern Award System (MAS) on Norfolk Island until an analysis of its effects on the Island's economy is carried out and the results made available publicly	<p>The start of the Modern Awards provides Norfolk Island residents with the same rights and obligations as other Australians. Most businesses were well prepared for the introduction of the modern awards on 1 July 2018.</p> <p>The extension of Australia's workplace relation system to Norfolk Island is a significant change for local business on Norfolk Island that's why the Australian Government supported a sensible, phased transition, starting in 2016, to assist employers to get ready. The Australian Government consulted with the community in arriving at the transitional arrangements for phasing in of the Fair Work Act to ensure local businesses have sufficient time to adjust.</p> <p>The Australian Government will continue to monitor the Norfolk Island economy following the introduction of the modern awards from 1 July. The Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities and the Department of Jobs and Small Business are progressing a comprehensive assessment of the local economy which is expected to be completed by the end of the year.</p>
Executive Summary	7	Undertake a thorough cost benefit analysis of medical and health services for Norfolk Island given its severely isolated location, focusing in particular on the possible return of hospital services on the Island and the reopening of the operating theatre	<p>Part of the challenge in maintaining an operating theatre in a remote location is attracting and retaining doctors who are qualified to perform surgery and have enough opportunity to practice their skills and maintain their registration. This is a challenge in many regional and remote Australian communities. The previous Norfolk Island Government decided to close the operating theatre at the hospital in 2014, following an accreditation survey undertaken by The Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS) on the Norfolk Island Hospital Enterprise (NIHE). The accreditation survey recommended that some services, including surgery, cease immediately.</p> <p>Since the Australian Government took responsibility for delivering health services on Norfolk Island on 1 July 2016, addressing the recommendations of the accreditation survey and delivering services in accordance with modern Australian healthcare safety standards has been of the highest priority.</p>

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			<p>Norfolk Island is not alone in facing challenges with the delivery of modern health services and many remote locations rely on medical evacuations. Medical evacuations and health services on Norfolk Island are funded by the Australian Government.</p> <p>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 will cover the cost of the flight to the mainland to see a specialist and provides subsidies for accommodation and travel while seeking medical treatment.</p>
		<p>Increase the efficiency of NIHRACS service provision by providing an alternative management structure and involving shared responsibility between the Commonwealth and Norfolk Island</p>	<p>The Norfolk Island Health and Residential Aged Care Service (NIHRACS) was established as a multipurpose service providing acute care including emergency services, residential aged care, as well as primary and community care services. There are a number of specialists that currently visit NIHRACS including a Psychiatrist, Orthopaedic surgeon, Endocrinologist, Orthodontist, Urologist, Geriatrician, and Sonographer. Additional positions including a Social Worker and Diversional Therapist have been employed to strengthen the care available to Norfolk Island patients and aged care residents.</p> <p>NIHRACS is funded by the Commonwealth and works in partnership with South Eastern Sydney Local Health District to improve patient journeys, increase consultation liaison services, support the delivery of outreach health services and provide training and development opportunities. The Norfolk Island Community and Clinical Consultative Committee includes two local community members who advise how to best work with the community to ensure that decisions, investments, and innovations are person centred, efficient, locally relevant and aligned to local care experiences and expectations.</p>
		<p>Initiate a broad inquiry – not restricted to DIRDC and open to public participation – to determine an improved development model for Norfolk Island's future (taking cognisance of the evidence provided by Sinnewe and co-workers)</p>	<p>The problems with the sustainability of the previous governance model on Norfolk Island have been well canvassed and the community were consulted extensively in the lead up to the 2016 reforms and had ample opportunity to contribute their views.</p> <p>The previous Minister wrote to Norfolk Island residents following a visit in March 2014 noting that almost everyone he met during that visit believed that things need to change. The Minister sought the community's views on the best ways to deliver real changes to make a difference, including the identification and promotion of economic</p>

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			<p>opportunities, best delivery of essential services and best governance model for the future</p> <p>There have been a number of reports prepared that cover economics on Norfolk Island.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2006, the Department commissioned the Centre for International Economics (CIE) to prepare a report on the effects of an extension of all Commonwealth legislation to Norfolk Island (this is referenced on page 10 of the report). • In 2014, the Department commissioned the CIE to prepare a follow up report on the same issue. • SGS Economics and Planning was engaged in 2015 to formulate a Norfolk Island Economic Development Strategy. The report outlined a number of indicators to be monitored to show economic development success on Norfolk Island.
		Acknowledge the unique position and needs of islands in the Australian local government system	<p>The Norfolk Island Regional Council received an increased operating budget of \$8.3 million in the 2018-19 budget. Extra funding has been allocated in recognition of the increased costs and wider range of services the Council provides due to the Island's remote location.</p> <p>The Western Australian Local Government Grants Commission estimated how much the Norfolk Island Regional Council would likely receive if calculated under the Western Australian Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs) methodology.</p> <p>Each year the staff of the WA Local Government Grants Commission calculate the FAGs for the Indian Ocean Territories (Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands) as per the Service Delivery Agreement between the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development and the State of Western Australia.</p>
		Increase the transparency of all process involving the Commonwealth and the people of Norfolk Island in order to increase trust in these processes	<p>All community members are encouraged to contact the Administrator, Mr Eric Hutchinson, as the Australian Government representative on Norfolk Island. Eric's door is always open, and anyone interested in the Australian Government programs and services should contact his office.</p> <p>As part of a commitment to consulting with the Norfolk Island community on proposed legislative changes a Legislation Consultation Framework was released by</p>

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			Administrator Eric Hutchinson on 9 May 2017, and future legislative changes on Norfolk Island will be consulted on in line with this framework.
		Re-introducing the ability of the Norfolk Island Regional Council to approach relevant Ministers directly for advice; as was previously the case for the Norfolk island Government	The Administrator, Mr Eric Hutchinson, as the Australian Government representative on Norfolk Island. Eric’s door is always open and he meets regularly the Council.
		Assisting the Norfolk island Regional Council to develop a series of relevant economic indicators to monitor the time course of the island’s economy	<p>SGS Economics and Planning was engaged in 2015 to formulate a Norfolk Island Economic Development Strategy. The report outlined a number of indicators to be monitored to show economic development success on Norfolk Island.</p> <p>The Economic Development Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identified opportunities to diversify and broaden Norfolk Island’s economic base by utilising local experience and the existing skill base of persons on the Island; ○ Identified private investment opportunities in current and emerging industries such as tourism, heritage and cultural precincts, cottage industries, agriculture, and aquaculture; ○ Determined the infrastructure investment opportunities to improve access by tourists and enhance supply chain connectivity; ○ Developed an action plan identifying key short and long-term projects, including costings, to underpin the Economic Development Strategy for Norfolk Island; ○ Identified barriers to tourism, investment and increased local production and brand development, and strategies to overcome them.
Lack of support for locally determined initiatives and needs	12	Medicinal Cannabis – Given the Island’s severe isolation, biosecurity status and climatic conditions, commercial research showed that this could be very valuable crop for the Island. On two occasions (2014 and 2015) the Norfolk Island Government issued separate licences under Norfolk Island law to Australian companies to import to, cultivate and	The licence to export cannabis issued under Norfolk Island law was undertaken without an established regulatory framework to support the proposal. This put Australia in contravention of its obligations under the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961.

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		<p>harvest cannabis in, and export cannabis from, Norfolk Island. On both occasions the licence was cancelled by the Norfolk Island Administration on instructions from Canberra (Hardgrave, 2014a; Adams, 2015 a & b).</p>	<p>The proponent licenced by the Norfolk Island Government had not adequately consulted with the Department of Health on their proposal and could not demonstrate it had the approval to export cannabis to the destination country.</p> <p>The 2015 proposal was also inconsistent with Australian Government biosecurity and border control legislation.</p>
		<p>International communications cable – During 2016 Norfolk Island was given the opportunity of connecting to a state of the art undersea trans-Pacific fibre optic telecommunications cable. The 15,000km cable being installed by the New Zealand-based consortium Hawaiki Cable, connects Australia, New Zealand, American Samoa, Hawaii, and mainland USA, and includes stubbed branching units to facilitate future connections to New Caledonia, Fiji, and Tonga. The cable route passes within 90km of Norfolk Island. Hawaiki Cable offered a number of options to Norfolk Island to connect to the cable network, from a completed connection (\$15million USD) to a stubbed branching unit to facilitate future connection (\$2 million USD). With the final splice and all cable station installations now complete, the Hawaiki cable system is due to enter service in June 2018.</p> <p>From Norfolk Island's point of view, a submarine cable connection would have provided state of the art Internet connectivity offering benefits to business, tourism, education, remote access, and online medical services, all vastly superior to the quality offered by satellite-based options and providing a quantum leap in technology likely to be of generational significance. Linking with Norfolk Island's underutilized cable station at Anson Bay, an undersea telecommunications cable would feed directly into the island's existing infrastructure and help modernize Norfolk Island's extensive but aging land-line and mobile networks. (Howard, 2016; McDonald, 2016).</p> <p>The NBN Sky Muster geostationary satellite system, to which Norfolk Island has been assigned dedicated capacity by the</p>	<p>The Australian Government is investing in improving broadband services on Norfolk Island through NBN Co's Sky Muster satellite network. Sky Muster satellites are optimised for broadband and are among the highest capacity internet-providing satellites ever built, with the second satellite launched successfully on 6 October 2016. From June 2018, over 520 residents were connected to the Sky Muster.</p> <p>The Hawaiki Cable proposal has a significant cost – around \$15 million capital. At this price, it will deliver less than a quarter of the capacity that Sky Muster was already providing on Norfolk Island. Increasing capacity to match Sky Muster would require a substantial amount of additional operational funding each and every year.</p> <p>Norfolk Island's relatively small population would make it extremely difficult to recoup these costs and the Hawaiki cable would only be able to operate with a significant and ongoing subsidy from the Australian Government.</p> <p>The Government welcomes commercially sound investments in international submarine capacity but is not proposing to fund Norfolk Island's connection to the Hawaiki cable. The Norfolk Island Regional Council, at its meeting on 28 September 2016, also agreed not to support the Hawaiki proposal using its own funds or borrowings.</p>

	<p>Australian Government – although being well-suited to minimal broadband Internet access to remote Australian homesteads – is not designed to meet the complete spectrum of telecommunications needs of a geographically concentrated and tourist-centric community such as Norfolk Island. For example, professional opinion has it that NBN Sky Muster cannot provide international connectivity for Norfolk Island's telephone or mobile networks, nor sufficient capacity to cover the needs of the Norfolk Island Airport and Central School, nor provide for the requirements of emergent applications such as telemedicine and cloud services.</p> <p>Despite urging by the NIRC, all offers by Hawaiki Cable were declined by Minister Nash.</p>	
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