

To Commonwealth Grants Commission  
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Re: Review of the Financial Capacity of Norfolk Island

I do not believe a successful review of Norfolk Island's current position and future wants and needs can be made from outside Norfolk Island.

What is appropriate for Norfolk Island must be decided from within. The long-term impact of introducing a foreign law can only be assessed by those with a thorough knowledge of Norfolk Island.

Nobody can understand Norfolk from just a few visits. I have lived here for over seven years and am still learning about Norfolk.

We have a history of 'experts' spending a few days studying Norfolk, listening to the 'vocal minority' and producing a report or article which is then used to judge and/or change Norfolk.

A few examples of this lack of understanding are:-

The Acumen Alliance Financial Advisory Report – states that they carried out 'detailed analysis' and have a 'clear understanding' yet they used a rate of 10% for Liquor License Fee calculations (4.5.1 Financial Position –Liquor Bond) when the correct rate is 6%, an error of 66%.

This report is now used as one of the reasons for the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads' New Governance Arrangements.

On Channel Nine's "Sunday" programme 27/06/04 the following statements were made:-

“SENATOR ROSS LIGHTFOOT, JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE EXTERNAL TERRITORIES: People on the island know who murdered Janelle Patton. No question that they know. It's very, very hard to penetrate that husk of silence that surrounds Norfolk Islanders when they want to protect their own.

SENATOR ROSS LIGHTFOOT: There is evidence that serious crime has not been resolved because of the culture of silence.”

Recent events in that murder case do 'question that they know'!

This is the same Joint Standing Committee that stated that people on Norfolk lived in fear.

I have lived in rural NSW, inner Sydney, the highlands of Papua New Guinea and East Java. Nowhere have I felt safer than on Norfolk.

In an article in the Sydney Morning Herald's Good Weekend Magazine, 'Queer as Norfolk' by Frank Robson, it was stated that there was a tradition of shaving women's

heads and urinating on them. Even a cursory look at the Norfolk population would not reveal many 'bald' women, or women hiding the tops of their heads.

In an article in the Sydney Morning Herald 26/08/2000, titled The Newly Wed or the Newly Dead, Ben Hills, (a Walkley Award winner) lamented that his holiday was spoiled because the wind did not drop below 30 knots and he could not get fresh trumpeter tails at any restaurant during his week-long stay. He watched trays of fish being unloaded at the pier on a daily basis.  
Nobody goes fishing in 30 knot winds!

The current review of the Governance of Norfolk Island has set alarm bells ringing that we are about to get more of the same.

The proposal by the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads that " All Commonwealth laws being extended to Norfolk Island unless there is a specific reason for not doing so in particular cases" shows a lack of understanding. My understanding of the process is that laws are generated or changed in response to society's needs. I cannot recall any situation (in democratic societies) where a suite of laws are imposed on society and then someone decides which laws are not suitable.

Labour laws are a simple example. Many people work more than one job. This is because many jobs are not fulltime, thus a number of jobs are required to make up a full week of work.

If Australian tax law is introduced, a higher amount of tax would be paid each week by a person working a number of jobs than a person in one job. I acknowledge they would get a refund at year-end.

Current Norfolk law requires a minimum payment for callouts of one hour, compared to Commonwealth requirement of four hours.

The list is endless.

Norfolk Island is "da bas side orn earth". Nobody has the right to change that.

Yours sincerely

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