



THE GOVERNMENT OF NORFOLK ISLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

Dialogue with the Commonwealth to continue

Norfolk Island Chief Minister David Buffett said today that a new phase of dialogue with the Commonwealth has commenced.

An important part of the renewed dialogue was a meeting which was held on Friday 9th June between the Hon Jim Lloyd, Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads and Members of the Legislative Assembly.

At the meeting, the Chief Minister supplied information to Minister Lloyd on forward planning by the Norfolk Island Government and on initiatives taken since his last visit in February, when he announced proposed changes to Norfolk Island governance.

Mr Buffett said that details were given of the Governments' strategic plan ("Norfolk Island – the Future"), the main elements of which are:

- Reinvigoration of the Norfolk Island economy;
- Structural reform; and
- Constructive dialogue with the Commonwealth.

Minister Lloyd was provided with a summary of the main actions taken to return the Revenue Fund to surplus, to improve air services and to ensure long-term arrangements for reliable services and growth in visitor numbers.

Details were supplied on other actions to restructure the public and private sectors and to stabilise revenue through the introduction of a broad-based consumption tax (the Norfolk Sustainability Levy).

"I indicated the willingness of the Norfolk Island Government to engage in a process of dialogue over the proposed governance changes, while pursuing views which might diverge from those of the Commonwealth as clearly and forcefully as necessary", Mr Buffett said. "We also indicated that we will visit Canberra to meet with Minister Lloyd and senior departmental officials for further discussions by the end of this month".

Mr Buffett said that while Minister Lloyd had made the Commonwealth's position clear, he hoped that the dialogue process would allow for divergent views to be expressed and for the establishment of clearer areas of agreement and progress toward mutually agreed outcomes.

The Chief Minister said that he understood that there would be a new pamphlet circulated next week by the Commonwealth through Norfolk Post. He stressed that the publication was to be issued by the Commonwealth Government and did not necessarily represent the views of the Norfolk Island Government.

“I am confident that we have begun a process of engagement with the Commonwealth in relation to the important issues which are under consideration”, Mr Buffett said. “We must now move forward to seek outcomes which will be of benefit to all members of the Norfolk Island community”.

David Buffett
Chief Minister

9th June 2006