

THE GOVERNMENT OF NORFOLK ISLAND

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The Norfolk Island Government would like to identify that the inclusion of chapter 7 paragraphs 7.1-7.40 pages 114 – 125 of the Inquiry into the Territories Law Reform Bill is considered to be inappropriate as it is outside of the terms of reference and was based on unsubstantiated and misleading information.

Examples of this are as follows-

Chapter 7, paragraph 7.6 page 117, indicates that no risk assessment was completed prior to the eradication of Argentine Ants on Norfolk Island.

The Norfolk Island Government has committed over \$100,000 to the eradication program with the Commonwealth Government providing \$20,000. Prior to baiting a full assessment is conducted to ensure that accidental baiting of native fauna is reduced and harm to the residents on Norfolk Island is limited.

Chapter 7, paragraph 7.8 page 117, states that there was an indication of “serious levels of faecal matter”

The report upon which this statement was founded was completed by a University student (not a suitably qualified expert in the field) as a component of a diploma being undertaken. No independent checking of the tests was conducted and the area tested was restricted to approx 30% of Norfolk Island.

Chapter 7, paragraph 7.10 pages 117 and 118, states that “it can however prove beyond reasonable doubt that the source of contamination is from raw human effluent”.

This statement is unfounded and speculation at best without proper expert assessment. The NI Government is aware that some groundwater is not suitable for potable use and signage has been place for some time to warn the residents of this issue. The main area of testing for the report cited in chapter 7 paragraph 7.8, page 117 was in the vicinity of one of the areas which has warning signage identifying that the ground water is not potable.

Chapter 7, paragraph 7.19 page 120 and 121, identifies that there are no protocols in relation to the Workers Compensation Scheme.

This is in fact incorrect the Norfolk Island Workers Compensation Scheme has detailed and legislatively based requirements as to how to deal with compensation cases. Norfolk Island does not have individual case workers for the small amount of recipients of Workers Compensation, due to limited resources. It is protocol however that decisions in regard to recipients of Workers Compensation, are made by Norfolk Island Medical Officers who are employed by the Norfolk Island Hospital Enterprise. In addition if required, visiting specialists provide assessments.

If there is no access to a visiting specialists or the recipient declines to be assessed, the recipient is flown to the mainland to a medical practitioner of their choice for assessment at the cost of the Norfolk Island Administration. In addition the Workers Compensation Legislation provides for a broader variety and longer term payments than Australian compensation schemes.

Chapter 7, paragraph 7.26 page indicates that the “income received under Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) disability pensions on the mainland and in other countries is exempt from treatment as income...”

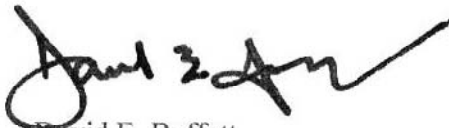
This is in fact not the case the DVA disability incomes are exempt income in Australia for the purposes of taxation, however under the Social Security Act are deemed to be income. This policy is very similar to the Norfolk Island position except Norfolk Island does not have income taxation.

Chapter 7, paragraph 7.29 page 123 it states that the Norfolk Island Government did not respond to correspondence from the Hon. Alan Griffin MP stating that the Australian

Government supports amendment to the Social Services Act 1980 (NI) to exempt veteran disability pensions from that Act's income test.

This is entirely false, the Minister at the time did reply to the Hon. Alan Griffin MP with letter stating that Government's position. The letter was dated 25th March 2009.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David E. Buffett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David E. Buffett
Chief Minister