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15 July, 2003

BY MAIL

Senator Ross Lightfoot
Chairman
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Department of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Dear Sir,

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories inquiry into Governance on Norfolk Island.

Thank you for the opportunity to address your Committee. It is indeed timely that your Committee visit our island to examine the issue of Governance. Your inquiry's reference to examine the ability of the island to run essential pieces of infrastructure to maintain a viable and sustainable community here is critical to the island's future.

The island's community is generally motivated and hard working and as can be seen with respect to tourism quick to grasp opportunity when it arises. The creation of opportunity however often entails making difficult decisions from which we cannot escape running into the people who are adversely affected by these decisions in the Supermarket. This is a particular problem of small communities further exacerbated here by our history, culture and family ties. I provide this as background, Norfolk is a difficult place to govern locally. This is said as background to help you understand why the Norfolk Island Government has failed in many infrastructure areas, such as not been able to secure a continuing supply of crushed rock for the last five years. A basic infrastructure requirement for which the only lacking resource is the determination to govern and make a decision.

The other major infrastructure impediment for the island is adequate port facilities for the discharge of sea cargo. The island finds itself in the situation, over two hundred years after settlement, reliant upon two jetties constructed after decisions of convict commandants! These facilities have been recognized in previous Grant Commission reports as being totally inadequate at the time of self Government and in need of federal resourcing.

In this submission I'm suggesting that more than federal funding is required to address this major impost on the islands cost structure. I have been advocating since 1998 the construction of a low-cost jetty at Ball Bay to help alleviate the frequent delays we experience in the discharge of cargo from ships. We need the Federal Government to champion the concept of improving harbor facilities on the island and provide assistance to the Norfolk Island Government in making the necessary decisions to do so.

Similarly to the debacle the island has experienced over supplying crushed rock, the issue has been around for a long time with the first plans for a jetty on the Ball Bay site prepared over a hundred years ago. The need to make a decision on this project is now urgent as the Kingston Jetty has been undermined and will have to be closed for a considerable period of time when undergoing repairs. The proposal that has been with the Norfolk Island Government and the Minister for over twelve months is a modest incremental plan to build a modern jetty at a tested Ball Bay site. The equipment to undertake the task is already on the island and the skills involved available locally. What is missing is the determination and direction to take a decision and govern in order to fix an age-old problem.

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Date Received:.....	16/7/03
Secretary:.....	<i>[Signature]</i>

July 15, 2003

I hope that your inquiry has more than the ability to report on these issues and will take up the challenge to assist in resolving them.

I am at your service on this matter and would gladly meet further or supply you or your committee with any further information.

Sincerely,

Peter W. Woodward

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*attached photo of a temporary jetty
in Ball Bay used to import heavy
machinery.*

