



**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE
NATIONAL CAPITAL AND EXTERNAL TERRITORIES**

Inquiry into the Territories Law Reform Bill 2010

MEDIA RELEASE

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Chair: Senator Kate Lundy

NORFOLK ISLAND LAW REFORM

Federal Parliament's External Territories Committee has commenced an inquiry into the Territories Law Reform Bill 2010. The Bill amends the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* to implement significant reforms aimed at improving governance structures and strengthening accountability mechanisms for Norfolk Island. In relation to Norfolk Island, the Bill proposes the following key governance, financial and administrative reforms including:

- prescribing a process for selecting and dismissing a Chief Minister and Ministers, as well as determining their roles and responsibilities;
- establishing a no-confidence motion process for the Chief Minister;
- allowing the Norfolk Island Administrator to access a greater range of advice when presented with Bills for assent under schedule 2 of the Norfolk Island Act;
- allowing the Governor-General and the Minister responsible for Territories to take a more active role in the introduction and passage of Norfolk Island legislation;
- establishment of a customised and proportionate financial framework which provides for the responsible management of public money and public property, preparation of budgets, financial reporting, annual reports and procurement;
- the appointment by the Commonwealth of a Commonwealth Financial Officer for Norfolk Island should this be required;
- the appointment of the Commonwealth Auditor-General to conduct audits of the Norfolk Island Administration's financial statement;
- amendments to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal Act which will confer on the AAT merits review jurisdiction for specified decisions under Norfolk Island legislation;
- amendments to the Freedom of Information Act to apply that Act to Norfolk Island;
- the Commonwealth Ombudsman will assume the function of the Norfolk Island Ombudsman under Norfolk Island legislation; and
- Norfolk Island public sector agencies will be required to adhere to the Information Privacy Principles in the same manner as Australian government public sector agencies.

The Bill also amends the *Christmas Island Act 1958* and the *Cocos (Keeling) Islands Act 1955* to provide a vesting mechanism for powers and functions under Western Australian laws applied in the Indian Ocean Territories.

The committee is expected to report by 11 May 2010 and will accept submissions (preferably by email) until Wednesday, 7 April 2010.

The Territories Law Reform Bill 2010 and further details about the inquiry are available on the committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/ncet/index.htm or by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4355 or emailing jscncet@aph.gov.au.