

P.O Box 251
Norfolk Island
7 April 2010

Submission in response to the Exposure Draft Territories Law Reform Bill 2010

To:

Members of the Joint Standing Committee

It has been a frustrating few years for the Government and the people of Norfolk Island since Jim Lloyds' announcement in December 2006 regarding changes to Governance arrangements in Norfolk Island.

More so it appears, for those in Canberra that wish to bring us, the people and Government of Norfolk Island into line - to pool us with the Nation - to normalise us and eliminate the issue of difference - to govern Norfolk Island, as other communities of similar size - to create a better understanding - all with little regard to our unique existence - a task all too difficult, given our achievements of the past 31 years - our inherent ability to resolve, multi task, persevere and overcome.

It is no surprise then, that any proposed reform will only ever be achieved with stealth and in haste, with amendments made to the Governance arrangements in Norfolk Island and in order to do so, must remove the democratic rights of those that call a place home. Constitutional change without explanation or consultation can only be regarded as, a devolution of democracy.

The Exposure Draft Territories Reform Bill 2010, supplied to the Norfolk Island Government by officials of the Attorney-General's department, appears to do just that.

During an official meeting with Brendon O'Connor along with three other Norfolk Island residents while on his visit in December 2009 we each discussed our concerns and made clear our support for self governance in Norfolk Island. During the course of our discussion I stated the following; quote, 'Minister Lloyd's announcement regarding changes to Governance arrangements caused great concern on Norfolk... the Norfolk Island Act is non negotiable.' Mr O'Connor's response was - that he was not interested in making changes to our governance arrangements as we were best placed to make our own decisions and went on to make it quite clear, that the only way the Norfolk Island Government could access funding through the Commonwealth Grants Commission, was to contribute into the ATS.

My concerns regarding the Territories Law Reform Bill 2010 include the fact that there are no drafts of the proposed regulations accompanying the Bill to change laws that will have far reaching effect on the community of Norfolk Island's self governing status. The Bill just proposes solutions for which there are no problems.

I object in the strongest possible terms at reform in any form that lacks explanation and rationale; that lacks adequate and balanced consultation and proposes the removal of democratic freedom. The Exposure Draft Territories Law Reform Bill 2010 proposes just that for the people of Norfolk Island.

Must we continue to justify our existence with Australian Government officials on their visit after visit, in order that report after report reflects the circumstances and wishes of this community and that our Government is performing and delivering.

Simon Bigg
Fifth generation Norfolk Islander

