

26 April 2010

The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee
National Capital and External Territories
House of Representatives,
PO Box 6021,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

email jscncet@aph.gov.au

Ideas for the Future Economic Viability of Norfolk Island
Australian Naval Base located on Norfolk Island.

The economic viability of Norfolk Island is slowly but steadily declining. If the status quo is maintained then, long term, one of two scenarios would occur. Either 1) Norfolk Island would slip into irreversible debt and the Australian Government would be obliged to step in, bringing with it the full Australian system of taxes and benefits, including the dole, or 2) Norfolk Island would continue to muddle along and the island's infrastructure would slowly but surely deteriorate. With the assistance of the Commonwealth we must find a way to arrest the decline. This requires some thinking outside the box.

My proposition is that the Commonwealth Government should sanction the establishment of a naval base on Norfolk Island. A harbour should then be built at Cascade to service the ships based at Norfolk Island. From a layman's perspective the island would appear to be an ideal location for the strategic positioning of an Australian naval base and would, I believe, have great appeal for the naval personnel based here.

The construction of the harbour and the base would greatly assist the Norfolk Island economy. The construction phase would provide a boost in employment and, long term, the increase in population would provide the extra stability needed for the island's ongoing sustainability.

Norfolk Island's only industry is tourism. In a declining market influenced by the global recession there has been increased pressure on the tourist industry. With a broadening of the economic base this pressure would be reduced and would allow the industry to concentrate on providing quality service to our visitors rather than having to continually discount in an effort to achieve numbers, without due regard to the bottom line.

For the concept to succeed we would of course need full community support and it would be essential that the personnel stationed on Norfolk, their wives and children, integrate into the local community thus ensuring that the base did not become an enclave. Norfolk Island would become their home during their posting, not just a port of call. It is a wonderful environment in which to raise a family. There is an excellent school; there are plenty of sporting clubs and facilities, a beautiful beach, a movie theatre and the safest place on earth in which to bring up children.

To my knowledge this idea has not been researched and I have no information to indicate that the Australian Defence Force would embrace the concept. So I put forward the proposal solely from the viewpoint of the joint benefits that would accrue to both the Australian and Norfolk Island Governments and therefore to both communities. I submit this for your consideration in the interest of Norfolk Island - a very special place.

Yours sincerely,
Ian Anderson