

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

Report on the visit to the Indian Ocean Territories

Chair: Senator Louise Pratt

# Paradise postponed

## —A new vision for Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands—

The National Capital and External Territories Committee today tabled its report on its visit to the Indian Ocean Territories in October 2012. The visit was an opportunity for the Committee to engage with the people on Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands about matters affecting their communities, and the report reflects the broad ranging nature of the discussions held on the islands.

The report makes twenty-five recommendations concerning matters of governance, economic development, environmental management and a range of local issues. The report recommends that the Australian Government formulate a vision or strategic plan, in direct consultation with the island communities, for the future of the IOTs, including:

- Better governance and administrative arrangements
- A greater degree of administrative autonomy
- A commitment to the funding and implementation of existing strategies
- A focus on the needs and aspirations of the island communities.

The report also recommends, as a matter of urgency, that the Australian Government commit sufficient funds to give effect to the recommendations of the Expert Working Group on Christmas Island, which identified a range of threats to the island's unique ecology.

Other recommendations include: developing an economic strategy for the IOTs, reconsidering the granting of new mining leases within the context of funding environmental programs; implementing strategies for the development of tourism; facilitating the reopening of the Christmas Island Casino; upgrading mobile telephone services; improving road funding; and reviewing freight services. In addition, the report makes a number of recommendations affecting local issues on the islands.

Committee Chair, Senator Louise Pratt, stated that: "The Joint Standing Committee has had a long interest in the welfare of the communities on Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. We share, with the communities, a sense of frustration that many of the issues we are reporting on today have been the subject of other reviews which have not been implemented. The Government needs to make a greater commitment to the future development of the islands. It also needs to be more responsive to local circumstances and more flexible in its management of this unique jurisdiction."

**For media comment:** please contact the Committee Chair, Senator Louise Pratt, on 0448 264 129

**Copies of the report** can be obtained from the committee's webpage at [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House\\_of\\_Representatives\\_Committees?url=ncet/regaustr10-11/report.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ncet/regaustr10-11/report.htm)

or by contacting the secretariat on (02) 6277 4355, or by email at [jscncet@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscncet@aph.gov.au)