



NORFOLK ISLAND COUNCIL OF ELDERS



Norfolk Island People for Democracy

Australia finally reveals its decision for taking over Norfolk Island in 2015

'Disengage the Pitcairn culture on Norfolk Island'

Last week, with the receipt of a series of documents gained under freedom of information (FOI), the Norfolk Island People for Democracy (NIPD) and the Council of Elders (COE) learned for the first time the truth behind Australia's 2015 takeover of Norfolk Island.

For years we had speculated over the reasons for the takeover, especially given that the publicly stated reasons were so obviously false. Now the Australian Government department responsible for orchestrating and instigating the 2015 takeover, the Department of Infrastructure, Regional development and Cities (DIRDC), has unwittingly revealed the truth in one of their briefings to new federal Minister, Sussan Ley MP.

***'The preamble was repealed from the NI Act by the Australian Government in 2015 as it was considered to be a necessary step for cultural inclusion, and disengagement of the Pitcairn stronghold and cultural exclusion that had previously occurred.'* DIRDC 2018**

Aside from their disgraceful intention to extinguish the influence of the Pitcairn culture, the suggestion that Norfolk Islanders did not embrace cultural inclusion is not only demonstrably false but offensive to all of us. We also learned more about some of the methods used by DIRDC to achieve their goal of disengaging the Pitcairn culture. Here is how DIRDC described NIPD to the new federal Minister, Sussan Ley MP, just prior to her visit to Norfolk a few months ago:

***'The group [NIPD] is primarily composed of Pitcairn Island descendants and represents a minority of views on the Island – up to 30 percent depending on the specific issue'.* DIRDC 2018**

For the record, NIPD's list of registered supporters is independently verified and audited by a practising legal professional. Our registered supporter base includes the overwhelming majority of Norfolk Island people and includes Norfolk Islanders who can trace their own heritage back to more than 28 different countries across the world, all of who have come to respect and share in the kindness, community and caring of the Pitcairn culture on Norfolk Island.

Despite DIRDC's prior actions, NIPD and COE have always tried to create the right environment to have meaningful discussions regarding our future, and we had hoped that their retrograde behavior would have changed after Dr Chris Nobbs released his damning expose of their actions, but not so. It is now clear that their discriminatory, unlawful and dishonest actions on Norfolk Island have become cultural and endemic within the department.

It is time DIRDC, indeed the entire Australian Government, realised that an attack on the Pitcairn culture is an offence against all Norfolk Islanders, irrespective of our heritage – and it is time for Australia and Norfolk Island to finally commit to genuine negotiations regarding a democratic governance model for Norfolk Island that is consistent with International law and the rights of the Norfolk Island people.