



Norfolk Island People for Democracy Ltd.

NORFOLK ISLAND LEGISLATION BASED ON LIES

Norfolk Island People for Democracy today called on the Federal Parliament to urgently suspend the implementation of the provisions of the *Norfolk Island Legislation Amendment Act 2015* when parliament resumes this week, because its passage had been based on lies about the governance and administration of the Island under self-government.

In April 2015, the then Chief Minister of Norfolk Island issued a detailed statement listing a wide range of matters on which the then Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development (Hon Jamie Briggs MP) had misled the parliament about community services and programs provided by the Norfolk Island Government. Regrettably, the misleading of parliament has been compounded by the repeating of many of these lies by the new Minister (Hon Paul Fletcher MP).

One key example is the contention that “Norfolk Island is the only place in Australia where Australian citizens do not receive social security benefits.” This is completely false. Since shortly after the introduction of self-government in 1979 and continuing to the present time, all permanent residents of Norfolk Island including Australian citizens (and, unlike the mainland situation, citizens of other nationalities) have been eligible to receive social welfare benefits at levels comparable with those paid on the mainland. These are delivered on eligibility criteria established under the *Social Services Act 1980 (NI)* which include testing of incomes and not assets. Substantial numbers of current beneficiaries will lose all or part of their pension payments under the Commonwealth proposals due to take effect in July 2016. The information

given to federal parliament on this matter was false.

Minister Briggs also lied when he told parliament that there had been no substantial investment in public infrastructure “since the 1970s.” The Norfolk Island Government comprehensively demolished this claim, listing 17 key areas of administration where there had been substantial and ongoing investment in public infrastructure. For example, at the time of self-government almost all roads on the Island were unsealed and in poor condition. By 2015, all but a few minor tracks were sealed and the Island had a network of 140 km of sealed roads. The Minister’s statement to federal parliament was a lie.

The two Ministers and the Norfolk Island Administrator wrongly claimed in May 2015 (and have continued to repeat their false assertions) that the majority of Norfolk Islanders supported the abolition of self-government and a takeover of administration by the Commonwealth, based on what they called comprehensive consultation. This claim is false.

At a democratic referendum conducted on 8 May 2015 under legislation originally introduced by the Federal Parliament in 1964, almost 70% of voters rejected the Commonwealth’s approach to changing governance in Norfolk Island. One of the first acts of the Commonwealth after abolishing Norfolk Island’s parliament was to repeal the *Referendum Act 1964* to ensure that there could not be another public vote on the Commonwealth takeover.

Many other examples could be cited of lies and misrepresentations by Ministers and officials which strongly influenced the decision of Federal Parliament in May 2015 to end 36 years of self-government in Norfolk Island, the only instance in the history of the Commonwealth of Nations where a democratically elected parliament has been abolished.

Given that the decisions of the Federal Parliament were based on false information, we call on the members of both houses to urgently suspend the implementation of the provisions the *Norfolk Island Legislation Amendment Act 2015* and to require the Minister to immediately commence a process of

genuine and detailed consultation on future governance for Norfolk Island with the entire community, not with just a few hand-picked and unrepresentative individuals, as has been the case to date.

18 April 2016

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