

“YOU ARE NOT ALONE – YOU HAVE RIGHTS – IT IS ABOUT THE WISHES OF THE PEOPLE”

This was the key message that the Norfolk Island community was given by Gary Russell JP, National Vice President of the United Nations Association of New Zealand, at the open community forum held last night at the Paradise Hotel. His Honour the Administrator and the Chair of the Advisory Committee were formally invited to attend the meeting.

Gary came to Norfolk at the invitation of Norfolk Island People for Democracy (NIPD), at his own expense, to educate the NIPD team, and the community, on the work of the United Nations; and to discuss options for NIPD to achieve its goal to have Norfolk Island listed as a non-self-governing territory with the United Nations. The standing ovation from the 120 plus attendees at the conclusion of Gary’s talk was testament to how well his message – “You are not alone – You have rights – It is all about the wishes of the people” was received.

It was extremely interesting to hear Gary talk of his involvement in peace building activities over the years including in Europe with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in the Pacific.

It was certainly a fitting tribute to the passion Gary brought to the meeting, speaking both on the work of the United Nations, and on behalf of the Norfolk Island people, their culture and traditions, their beliefs, their history and their rights to self-determination, that Gary was presented with a Norfolk Island hat so beautifully woven and donated by Greg Magri. Attendees would have left the meeting feeling inspired and encouraged to step forward with confidence in undertaking the journey to be listed as a non-self-governing territory and attain their right to an act of self-determination through the United Nations.

Readers may not be aware that this is not the first time that Norfolk Island has commenced a journey to the United Nations and the Report–“Norfolk Island, Australia & the U.N.” - presented to the United Nations Association of Australia Federal Executive by John Bulbeck, Hon. Federal Media Officer in 1978 provides excellent background on that journey; a journey that was interrupted by the granting of limited self-government by Australia through the passage of the Norfolk Island Act 1979.

Of particular interest in the report is the recognition in 1978 that, quote - “Norfolk Island is at present quite clearly a non-self-governing colony of Australia. No challenge to that reality on moral, legal, political or sociological grounds is sustainable”; and that Australia has no justification for continuing to claim that Norfolk Island is part of metropolitan Australia and therefore not subject to Australia’s obligations to the United Nations about non-self-governing territories.

The Report further speaks of the need for recognition that “Australia has firmly committed itself to the internationally recognised principle of self-determination. Australia practices this through its own Constitution. It is clearly inconsistent for the Federal Government to continue to refuse this right to the people of Norfolk Island.”

With the removal of the Norfolk Island Parliament in June 2015 it is again being argued that Norfolk Island is “a non-self-governing colony of Australia”; and accordingly Norfolk Island People for Democracy are now proceeding under the accepted international protocols to be listed as a non-self-governing territory with the United Nations.

Norfolk Island People for Democracy extend the hand of friendship to Gary Russell JP and thank him for taking the time to visit our shores. Gary’s next invitation is to speak at the Human Rights Organisation to be held in Texas USA 27th October!