

## Self-governance fails on Norfolk Island



Norfolk Island is increasingly reliant on handouts from the federal government and its self-governance should be repealed, a parliamentary committee has reported.

The Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories tabled its report, “Same country: different world - The future of Norfolk Island”, making eight recommendations to improve the island’s economic future.

The committee recommended improving infrastructure, enhancing existing tourist products and services and developing new ones, as well as complementary industries.

Committee Chair, Luke Simpkins (Cowen, WA), said economic and governance reform have long been a topic of discussion.

“Norfolk Island is effectively bankrupt and self-governance does not best serve the residents of the island.

“The evidence tells us it is time for change. That change, while challenging, will allow for economic viability and prosperity into the future. This is what must be done for the people of Norfolk Island,” he said.

A road map devised by the federal and local government in 2011

recommended that islanders start paying mainland taxes in return for benefits. Even with such a change, the loss of the island’s semi-autonomous status appears inevitable.

The tiny community was settled by ancestors of the Bounty mutineers in 1856 and increasingly relies on federal government funding. The report says it is an ‘unfortunate economic reality’ that the territory’s model of self-governance, established 35 years ago, has failed the island’s 1,800 residents.

Mr Simpkins says the committee is aiming to ensure residents have the same opportunities as the rest of the country.


“At the moment, we’ve got all sorts of economic problems there and we just want what is best for the people,” he said.

The full report is available at [www.aph.gov.au/jscncet](http://www.aph.gov.au/jscncet) ■

### LINKS

 [www.aph.gov.au/jscncet](http://www.aph.gov.au/jscncet)

 [jscncet@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscncet@aph.gov.au)

 (02) 6277 4355

## Social media acknowledged in the Chamber

The rapid growth of social media is shaping the way in which Members communicate, in much the same way as the internet and email changed the way they interacted with their constituents.

This is one of the findings in a Procedure Committee report that examined the current regulatory framework regarding the use of electronic devices and the way they are being used by Members in the House.

Issues such as the potential impact on order in the Chamber, respect for the role of the Chair, and the likely status of comments made by Members on social media were examined during the inquiry.

Committee Chair, Don Randall (Canning, WA), said Members can now reach mass audiences instantaneously from their places in the Chamber, and while many Members have adopted this new technology with enthusiasm, they need to be mindful of the rights of others and the need to uphold the dignity of the House and its formal proceedings.

The first recommendation relates to a Privileges and Members’ Interests



## NEWSFEED



Committee publication, which provides practical guidelines for Members on issues encountered by them in their correspondence and records, including their status. The Procedure Committee recommended that expansion of these guidelines to address communications made by Members using electronic devices would be advantageous.

The second recommendation is focused entirely on the use of electronic devices by Members in the Chamber, Federation Chamber and committees and proposes that the House adopts a resolution which:

- permits Members' use of electronic devices in the Chamber, Federation Chamber and committees, provided that use of any device should avoid interference or distraction to other Members, either visually or audibly, and should not interfere with proceedings – in particular, phone calls are not permitted and devices should be operated in silent mode;
- devices are not permitted to record the proceedings (either by audio or visual means);
- communication on social media regarding private meetings of committees or in camera hearings will be considered a potential breach of privilege;
- use of devices should be as unobtrusive as possible and should be directly related to the Members' parliamentary duties; and
- notes that communication via electronic devices, whether in the Chamber or not, is unlikely to be covered by parliamentary privilege; and reflections on the Chair by Members made on social media may be treated as matters of order just as any such reflections made inside or outside the Chamber.

The committee received five submissions to the inquiry along with informal feedback from Members. The full report can be found at [www.aph.gov.au/proc](http://www.aph.gov.au/proc) ■

## LINKS

[www.aph.gov.au/proc](http://www.aph.gov.au/proc)

[Procedure.Committee.Reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:Procedure.Committee.Reps@aph.gov.au)

(02) 6277 4670

## AFP and telecommunications targeting online crime

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) says that criminals are constantly looking for opportunities to exploit technology in order to commit crime.



BLOCKING OUT: Online crime.

Should agencies be able to obtain assistance from the telecommunications industry when upholding Australian law in the fight against online crime?

The House Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications is currently investigating the use of subsection 313(3) of the Telecommunications Act 1997, which provides Commonwealth, state and territory agencies with the ability to block access to certain websites.

The AFP uses section 313 to block websites which contain the most severe child sexual abuse and exploitation material. When a user attempts to access one of these sites, they are blocked with a page that provides certain information, including reasons for the block and contact details for any dispute.

Other Commonwealth agencies have also used section 313 to prevent the continuing operation of online services in breach, or potentially in breach, of Australian law, such as online fraud.

Committee Chairman, Jane Prentice (Ryan, Qld), said the committee's inquiry is focusing solely on the use of the subsection for the purpose of disrupting illegal online services.

"The committee is looking at which government agencies can make requests

under the subsection, and what level of authority they should have to make such requests," said Ms Prentice.

"Importantly, we are also focusing on the characteristics of illegal or potentially illegal services that should be subject to such requests, and the most appropriate transparency and accountability measures that should accompany such requests."

Acting Deputy Commissioner Close Operations Support and AFP Assistant Commissioner, Kevin Zuccato, said that online crime is not like traditional crime.

"If I am investigating cocaine importations, I am looking at South America and leveraging off my colleagues in the US. If I am looking at heroin, I am in Asia... but with this type of activity, it could be anybody, anywhere. In a lot of instances, that can be a very sophisticated operation coming out of Russia or it can be a rudimentary set-up coming out of some kid's home in Cooma," Assistant Commissioner Zuccato said.

In its submission to the inquiry, the AFP said that an appropriately senior level of accountability and oversight when using the subsection should be in place, in order to maintain public confidence that blocking powers are being used proportionately and appropriately. ■

## LINKS

[www.aph.gov.au/pjcis](http://www.aph.gov.au/pjcis)

[pjcis@aph.gov.au](mailto:pjcis@aph.gov.au)

(02) 6277 2360