

Resilience, Self-reliance and Sustainability

A farewell message from George Plant

My appointment as the Administrator of Norfolk Island finishes at the end of this month. When first appointed, my objective was to view the role through the lens of what we could do to make our island home more resilient and self-reliant, in demonstrating that we have the people and ability to do things for ourselves and be sustainable locally and globally. How has that gone?



Most of my time has been spent on the Australian Government's, and in particular our Minister's, priority to restore democratic representation for Norfolk Island. With the community electing Chris Magri, Chelsea Evans and Alma Davidson and the formation of the Norfolk Island Governance Committee (NIGC), we have shown that *we have the people!* The contributions of community representatives have been a defining strength. Their consistent engagement with the community - whether across the table in formal meetings or at weekly sessions in the Supper Room - has ensured that local perspectives remain at the centre of our work. Representing a diversity of views is no small task and their efforts have been both substantial and



commendable.

It has been an honor chairing the committee and through many meetings it has shown resilience and ability to work through a unique task: designing a bespoke governance model for Norfolk Island. Most of the design has come from the community through these representatives, aided by excellent input from Rachel Welsh from the Queensland Government.

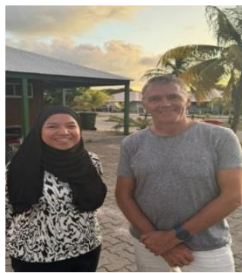
There has been an incredible amount of hard work done on the system, financial model and how to transition to the new model. The progress that the NIGC has made show we can make good decisions in designing a model that has the Australian Government as a respected partner. I am confident the final model can be sustainable and can overcome the complexity, uncertainty and mistrust that have plagued the governance of the island for years. I look forward to further community updates from the NIGC and the discussion and refinement that follows. While the work has at times been complex and the timelines ambitious, the trajectory is clear. Norfolk Island is closer than it has been in many years to a governance framework that reflects its unique identity while ensuring stability and sustainability.

There are many facets to resilience and establishing and strengthening the understanding of Norfolk across all levels of government has been one. Establishing a relationship with my counterpart Farzian Zainal in the Indian Ocean Territories has been important. While we are very different communities, we share many issues and together we can overcome them. Working with the Queensland Government both on the services it delivers to the island and in governance has shown a capable and willing partner that places a high regard on the community's perspective. Ministerial visits have reinforced the Australian Government's ongoing commitment to Norfolk Island.

Local vocational training has grown, allowing Islanders to gain qualifications without leaving the community. These programs strengthen the local workforce, support employers and build long-term resilience, self-reliance and sustainability. I hope I have helped with the strong backing from government partnerships, but the growth has been equally possible from the valued support from parents, employers, Norfolk Island Central School staff and providers such as Asuria.



Our community has made tangible achievements and it has been humbling to see how dedicated people can get things done: the establishment of a Country University Centre and the Board that runs this, the successful transition of students through the Queensland curriculum by NICS, making the island more energy self-sufficient by NIRC, production of a N'fuk dictionary by the language commission and the continued community hospitality to our visitors.



The work that Madeline Lawler and Diane Wall from RDA MNC in working with the community to facilitate the CUC establishment, the embryo transfer programs for both cattle and sheep, along with numerous studies and constant advocacy, supported by Australian Government funding, requires special mention. The enthusiasm and professionalism of the small RDA team have been a joy to work with.

Practical challenges have occurred. From being caught up in tariff wars to improving mail services through direct engagement with Australia Post, to navigating extreme weather events —ranging from drought to record rainfall— the role has required a combination of strategic reform, thinking-on-your feet and day-to-day problem solving.

Communication has also been a focus, with the introduction of new platforms, including a dedicated Facebook page, to ensure the community remains informed and engaged. You can find it by searching for “Office of the Norfolk Island Administrator.”

Therefore, as my term concludes, there remains work to be done, and I hope that the foundations laid over the past three years will support the next chapter in the Island’s governance.



These reflections are reminders that while governance reform is critical, the life of the Island continues through our people, events and shared sense of community. Whatever the future holds, our love of place means that we will not be going anywhere.



I extend my sincere and personal thanks to the Norfolk Island community, whose support, resilience, openness and willingness to engage have been essential. It has been a privilege to advocate on your behalf and to be a committed voice for locals.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the members of the Norfolk Island Governance Committee and our government partners, whose dedication, thoughtful contributions and perseverance have progressed this important work.

A very special and heartfelt thank you is also extended to my staff, who support not only the Office of the Administrator, but the Norfolk Island community every day. Their professionalism, commitment and quiet dedication are the backbone of the Office’s operations. Importantly, their work does not end with the conclusion of this term. They will continue to serve and support the community with the same integrity and care that has defined their contribution throughout.



I congratulate and wish my successor Fiona McKergow the best in her term, and I am sure the community will welcome her experience and support her as the new Administrator.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my wife Meliame and son Manaia along with the rest of my family for their unwavering support, understanding and encouragement during my time in this role.



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The Baton Comes Ashore: Norfolk Island in the King's Relay

The King's Baton arrived on Norfolk Island in April, following the commencement of its journey from Buckingham Palace on Monday, 10 March 2025. For the first time, every Commonwealth nation and territory received its own Baton to mark local celebrations, reflecting the inclusivity and shared heritage at the heart of the Commonwealth Games.

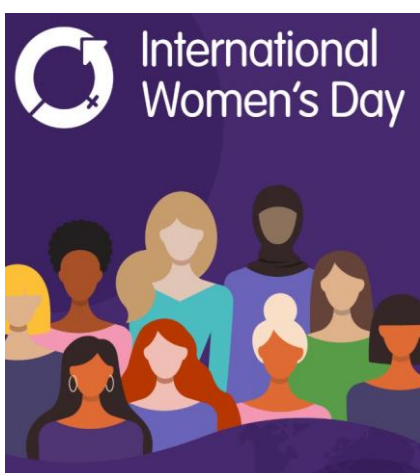
Government House welcomed representatives from Norfolk Island Amateur Sports, the Commonwealth Games Association and the local artists who contributed to the decoration of Norfolk Island's Baton. Guests shared insights into the creative process and how the design captures the Island's identity, storytelling and strong sense of community.

Norfolk Island has been an active member of the Commonwealth Games community since 1986, with athletes proudly representing the Island in sports including lawn bowls, shooting, archery and squash. This enduring connection highlights Norfolk Island's long-standing commitment to sport and its role within the wider Commonwealth.

With strong community support behind its athletes, Norfolk Island continues to participate proudly in the Commonwealth Games. Congratulations to all involved in welcoming the King's Baton and celebrating this milestone moment.



Celebrating Women, Community and Change on Norfolk Island



After an earlier weather postponement, Government House was pleased to welcome the Norfolk Island community for this year's International Women's Day event on Sunday, 22 March 2026. Led by Meliame Plant and the Women's Action Group Norfolk Island (WAGNI), the gathering celebrated the many ways women contribute to community life on Norfolk Island.

International Women's Day is an opportunity to come together, reflect and support positive change. This year's theme, "**Balancing the Scales,**" encouraged thoughtful conversation about fairness, opportunity and how we can support one another to build a more inclusive island community.

A special highlight was the involvement of young leaders from Norfolk Island Central School, whose assistance on the day reflected strong community spirit and the importance of including younger voices in these conversations. Guest speakers Shae Messina, Dr Michelle Sanson and Shae Wilson shared messages that resonated with many in

attendance. The event brought together women and men from across the island in an atmosphere of respect, connection and shared purpose.

It was a valuable opportunity to meet, reflect and recognise the important role women play in shaping Norfolk Island's social, cultural and professional life. Thank you to Meliame Plant, WAGNI, the guest speakers, NICS students and all community members who helped make the day a positive and meaningful occasion.



ANZAC Day 2026 on Norfolk Island — A Day of Remembrance, Community and Legacy

ANZAC Day remains deeply significant for the Norfolk Island community and on 25 April residents, visitors, veterans and young people came together to honour those who served and those who carry the ANZAC legacy.

The day began with a moving Dawn Service at Emily Bay, where the early morning stillness and rising sun created a powerful setting for reflection. Members of 230 ACU Norfolk Island stood proudly in uniform, representing the next generation of service.

Following the service, the community gathered at Government House for a breakfast hosted by the Administrator, Mr George Plant, Mrs Meliame Plant and the Lions Club, providing a welcome opportunity to connect and reflect. The mid-morning march and service at the Cenotaph brought the community together again for wreath-laying, hymns and remembrance, with the Last Post marking a moment of shared stillness.

This year's commemorations were further enriched by the presence of Keith Payne VC AM, whose visit was warmly welcomed and served as a powerful reminder of the enduring bonds formed through service. The day concluded with the ANZAC Day Luncheon at the RSL Memorial Club, followed by live entertainment and the traditional game of Two Up, celebrating camaraderie and community.

A heartfelt thank you to the Norfolk Island RSL Sub Branch for their continued dedication in delivering such a meaningful ANZAC Day.

Lest We Forget.



ANZAC Day 2026 pictures courtesy of 230 ACU – Norfolk Island

🌟 Did You Know?

Queensland's Annual Service Delivery Report for Norfolk Island

Each year, the Queensland Government releases a **State-Level Service Delivery Report** outlining the services delivered to Norfolk Island over the financial year.

The **2024–25 report** highlighted several significant achievements, including:

- Implementing the Custodial Services Schedule, enabling Queensland to deliver custodial services to Norfolk Island prisoners.
- Facilitating delivery of regional specialist and support services at Norfolk Island Central School, addressing teaching and learning needs of staff and students.
- Supporting NIHRACS to achieve accreditation from the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS), contributing to the quality and safety of healthcare services provided to the Norfolk Island community.
- Registering and supporting 11 new training contracts, enabling apprentices and trainees to gain skills and start or shift their careers in key industries on Norfolk Island.
- Signing the TAFE Queensland Service Schedule, formalising training and related services to be provided by TAFE Queensland for Norfolk Island.
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You can find the full report on the department's website:

<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2024-25-annual-report-queensland-service-delivery-to-norfolk-island.pdf>