

2021 – 2022 Additional Senate Estimates – February 2021

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

Lead/Support contact: Oliver Holm

SB21-000513

SUBJECT: NORFOLK ISLAND SERVICE DELIVERY AND FUNDING**Talking Points**

- The Australian Government has responsibility for delivering state-type services to Norfolk Island.
 - The Australian Government provides policing through the Australian Federal Police.
 - The Queensland Government provides health and education services.
 - Child and family wellbeing services, worker's compensation, ambulance and education support services are provided under contracts by private sector organisations.
 - Coronial and tribunal services are delivered by a statutory office holder.
 - A number of state-type services are provided through a Service Delivery Agreement with the Norfolk Island Regional Council, including emergency management, courts and legal services and port management.
- Information on the transition of state service provision from New South Wales to Queensland is in SB21-000514.
- The Australian Government has made significant progress since 2016 to improving infrastructure and delivering essential services to the Norfolk Island community.
- In the 2021-22 MYEFO, the Australian Government has provided an additional \$12.0 million for service delivery to Norfolk Island over four years from 2021-22. This increases total funding for essential services and infrastructure in 2021-22 to \$87.8 million.
 - The additional funding includes \$11.0 million for the continuation of child and family wellbeing services, and \$1.0 million for additional air freight services.

Services to Norfolk Island Program funding allocation (\$ million)				
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total Funding	67.6	44.8	44.6	44.6

Budget funding extracted from the Portfolio Budget Statements 2021-22. This does not include new funding received at 2021-22 MYEFO. Funding reductions in the forward years are due to some services only being funded for one or two years.

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Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

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SB21-000513

Key Issues

New funding provided in the 2021-22 MYEFO

The Australian Government is providing an additional \$12.0 million over four years from 2021-22, with ongoing funding of \$3.9 million per annum from 2025-26 to support the continuation of service delivery on Norfolk Island. The additional funding includes \$11.0 million from 2022-23 to 2024-25 for the continuation of child and family wellbeing services, and \$1.0 million in 2021-22 for additional air freight services, enabling three underwritten freight flights per fortnight in 2021-22.

Funding provided in the 2021-22 Budget

In the 2021-22 Budget, the Australian Government provided an additional \$18.7 million in 2021-22 to support the continuation of service delivery on Norfolk Island. This included \$15.6 million for the continuation of services including child and family wellbeing and education services, tourism and governance support, and \$3.1 million in new funding for the development of a port strategy, a review of water security, and additional health services.

Air Services

Norfolk Island's regular air passenger services and air freight services are underwritten by the Australian Government, and are currently provided by Qantas and Toll respectively. These services ensure that essential transport and supply links are maintained for the benefit and health of the Norfolk Island community and visitors.

Between 2012 and late January 2021, Air New Zealand provided passenger air services to Norfolk Island. In January and February 2021, COVID-19 outbreaks led to the suspension of the trans-Tasman quarantine free travel bubble. As an interim arrangement, the Government engaged Qantas to deliver replacement flights to Norfolk Island.

Sea freight

The continued availability of sea freight services to Norfolk Island is a key priority of the Australian Government. Norfolk Island's current shipping service is not meeting demand for sea freight, and voyages are heavily dependent on favourable weather conditions and vessel commitments elsewhere.

In 2021 the Australian Government facilitated additional freight barge voyages, in collaboration with the shipping company currently serving Norfolk Island (Neptune Pacific Direct Line (NPD)) and temporarily increased the frequency of air freight flights to six per month.

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The Australian Government continues to develop a Ports Management Strategy for the long-term infrastructure and management of Norfolk Island ports, and has commissioned a shipping expert to work with the Norfolk Island community to design a robust, end-to-end shipping supply chain. The aim of this project is to enable more regular and cheaper freight deliveries to Norfolk Island.

Background

Since 1 July 2016, Norfolk Island residents have had access to Australian Government support payments and services including Medicare, the age pension, disability pension, child support and Newstart Allowance (now Jobseeker).

Financial Information as at 31 Dec 2021

Program/Project Start Date:	1 July 2016					
Program/Project End Date:	N/A					
	2020-21 \$m	2021-22 \$m	2022-23 \$m	2023-24 \$m	2024-25 \$m	TOTAL \$m
Appropriation Budget	80.2	67.6	44.8	44.6	44.6	281.8
Less:						
Actual Expenditure YTD at 31 Dec 2021	60.6	30.4				
Total Committed Funds at 31 Dec 2021	0	19.1	2.5	1.4	0	23.0
Total Uncommitted Funds (balance)	19.6	18.1	42.3	43.2	44.6	167.8

Note: Committed funds relate to funds committed under a Funding Agreement, Contract or Program of Works where the Project, Profile and Conditions have been agreed to, or a formal offer has been made pending agreement, by the recipient.

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2021 - 2022 Senate Estimates - January 2022

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

Lead contact: Dr Oliver Holm

SB21-000514

SUBJECT: NORFOLK ISLAND STATE SERVICE TRANSITION**Talking Points**

- The Australian Government has responsibility for delivering state-type services to Norfolk Island.
- A new agreement with the Queensland Government to deliver state-type services to Norfolk Island commenced on 1 January 2022.
 - Service Schedules have been agreed for the delivery of education services and health support services.
 - Preparations are well under way for the first day of school, with students due to return to Norfolk Island Central School classrooms in February 2022.
- The necessary legislation is in place to support the delivery of Queensland services.
- The agreement with Queensland establishes an enduring partnership that will provide stability and certainty for the Norfolk Island community for essential service delivery.
 - It also allows for the extension of state services beyond health and education to provide rights and protections to Norfolk Island comparable with mainland Australia.
- Queensland is a strong fit to provide state services to Norfolk Island, with extensive experience in delivering high quality state services in remote and island settings.
- Queensland also has strong existing ties with the people of Norfolk Island through family, community, work and services connections.

Key IssuesTransition and service gaps

- The timeframe for transition in 2021 was truncated due to delays in finalising the agreement with the new state partner.
- Every effort has been made to minimise the impact of any gaps in services that may emerge in early 2022.

Education services

- Operation of the Norfolk Island Central School (NICS) has been transferred from the NSW Department of Education to the Queensland Department of Education.
- The majority of teaching positions have been filled, with a number of last year's staff taking leave from the NSW Department of Education to remain teaching on Norfolk Island, providing a level of stability to the students and school community.

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- The Australian Government signed a license agreement with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for the use of the NSW curriculum in 2022 and 2023. This will allow the current senior secondary cohort to complete the NSW Higher School Certificate (HSC).

Health support services

- The Norfolk Island Health and Residential Aged Care Service will continue to coordinate care for those seeking health services on Norfolk Island.
- Queensland Health and the Metro North Hospital and Health Service are providing advice and support to the on island health service.
- There will be a staged transition of services previously delivered by NSW. The current COVID-19 outbreak on Norfolk Island and in Queensland is likely to impact the timeframe for the transition of some services.

Legacy services

- There are services provided by New South Wales to Norfolk Island through arrangements preceding the formal agreement between the Australian and New South Wales governments in 2016.
- New South Wales advised the Australian Government in late 2021 that these services would also cease on 31 December 2021.
- Grandfathered arrangements have been agreed for some services, including housing of existing prisoners and completion of apprenticeships and traineeships that commenced in previous years.

Background

- The Australian Government is responsible for the delivery of state-type services and the management of essential infrastructure for local communities in the non-self-governing territories.
- On 1 July 2016, self-government was removed by a bi-partisan act of Parliament and the Australian Government assumed responsibility for the delivery of state-type services for Norfolk Island. To date this has been achieved through limited service delivery agreements with the NSW Government for direct management of essential education and health support services.
- The agreement with NSW expired on 31 December 2021.
- On 26 October 2021 it was announced that the Deputy Prime Minister and Premier of Queensland signed the Inter-Governmental Agreement securing Queensland as the new state partner for Norfolk Island.

2021 - 2022 Additional Senate Estimates - February 2022**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport****Lead/Support contact: Sarah Vandenbroek / Oliver Holm****SB21-000515****SUBJECT: NORFOLK ISLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL****Talking Points****Council dismissed**

- On 6 December 2021, following receipt of the final report of Commissioner Carolyn McNally (Commisisoner), the Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories dismissed the elected members of Council and appointed a Council Administrator.
- Mr Mike Colreavy has been appointed as Council Administrator until 2024 to continue with the Transition to Sustainability program addressing the Nexia and Grassroots audit reports' recommendations and the findings from the Public Inquiry into the Council.
- The Council's recently established Advisory Committees will ensure community involvement in, and visibility of, Council decision-making and strategic direction.
- This course of action will provide the best possible way to strengthen the operation, performance and sustainability of the Council and ensure it is able to serve the best interests of the local community into the future.
- The Australian Government is fully committed to achieving the best outcomes for the Norfolk Island community by pursuing an effective and sustainable local council in Norfolk.

Public Inquiry Report

- The Commissioner submitted her final report on the Public Inquiry into the Council on 4 November 2021 and the report is publicly available.
- The public inquiry report identified significant issues with the Council's financial and asset management and recommends wide-ranging changes and improvements to the Council's governance, financial performance, financial sustainability, and operations, systems and processes.
- The Government is committed to the good governance of Norfolk Island and ensuring the best outcomes for the Norfolk Island community.

Key Issues**Council dismissed**

Having regard to the findings in the Report of the Public Inquiry into the Council, and in accordance with the requirements under the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) (NI) (Act), elected members of the Council were dismissed on 6 December 2021 and Mr Colreavy appointed as Council Administrator for three years until 2024.

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SB21-000515

During the period of Interim Administration, Mr Colreavy submitted three written reports to the Minister outlining issues with the administration of the Council.

Under Mr Colreavy's interim administration, progress was made towards restoring the Council's proper or effective functioning. External Audit findings from the Nexia Sydney Audit and Grassroots Connections Australia Audit revealed significant issues with the financial sustainability of the Council. These audit reports are publicly available and findings have been prioritised for short, medium and long term priorities.

During the period of administration, the Australian Government will continue to provide financial support to the Council for immediate critical priorities.

Public Inquiry

The public inquiry into the Council concluded and independent Commissioner, Ms Carolyn McNally, provided the Government with her final report on 4 November 2021.

The public inquiry report identified significant instances where the Council did not manage its finances in accordance with the principles of effective financial and asset management.

Background

Applied laws

Many critical state-level services are delivered to Norfolk Island under an applied law regime. Under this approach, laws of particular jurisdictions are applied to Norfolk Island and become laws in effect on the Island, and administered by the Australian Government Minister responsible for territories.

Once applied, these are no longer state laws, but laws in effect on Norfolk Island.

Following the dissolution of the Norfolk Island Assembly, a council was established by application of the *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)* (LG Act) – under s255(1) and s256(1) of the LG Act, and as the Minister responsible, the Assistant Minister is empowered to issue a proclamation to dismiss the council and appoint an administrator.

The Administrator

The Administrator of the Council, Mr Michael Colreavy, has served in local government and financial management roles for more than 37 years, including 12 years as a council general manager and 20 years as a member of a council executive management team.

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SB21-000515

Mr Colreavy is currently also performing the role of administrator to the Balranald Shire Council. Given the part-time nature of these roles, it is possible to perform both council administrator roles at the same time.

Attachments

- Attachment A – Timeline – Norfolk Island Regional Council / DITRDC Events

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Back Pocket Brief – February 2022

TERR BPB1

NORFOLK ISLAND – PFAS

Key Points

- The Department continues to respond to the detection of elevated levels of per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) related to the historical use of firefighting foam at the Norfolk Island International Airport.
- The Department engaged Senversa to determine the nature and extent of PFAS impact and to assess the potential exposure pathways for people and the environment.
- Formal, face-to-face community information sessions were held on 18-19 Dec 19, 15-16 Jan 20 and 10-11 Mar 21.
- An expert team consisting of representatives from Health, Environment, Defence, Senversa and the Department were on island for the face-to-face updates to the community.
- PFAS advice and information is disseminated through a range of media.
- COVID-19 travel restrictions have, and are continuing to, delay the investigation, remediation and management schedule.
- In March 2021, on-island aspects of the investigation resumed, remediation and management works progressed and the preliminary reports, including the Preliminary Site Investigation Report, were publicly released and posted to the Department's website.
- Precautionary advice on the use of water in the Mission Creek catchment remains in place. Alternative water supplies provided to private property owners in the catchment will continue while the investigation process is ongoing.
- A PFAS treatment system was procured to process water from the bore at the Airport to meet Australian drinking water guidelines. The Department is working with the Norfolk Island Regional Council on the location, installation and commissioning of the system.
- The Department will clean Norfolk Island firefighting trucks in Q1, 2022, replacing the legacy firefighting foam containing PFAS with an approved foam.
- The Department commissioned the University of Queensland to undertake a PFAS Exposure Study (including a blood test) for current and former Norfolk Island firefighters. The study was completed and the final report provided to the study participants on 6 Dec 21. Due to the small number of participants (20), it may be possible to infer individual results, therefore, the Department will not publically release the report due to privacy and medical-in-confidence issues. Concurrently, the Australian National University completed and released a similar epidemiological study on behalf of the Department of Health for the townships of Katherine, Oakey and Williamtown.

Background

The field work for the second phase, the Detailed Site Investigation, was carried out by Senversa and a range of other specialists in March 2021. The team progressed investigation, remediation and management works and Senversa's detailed environmental investigation works were completed in January 2022 and the reports will be publicly released, through virtual media, in February 2022.

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NORFOLK ISLAND – PFAS

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TERR BPB2

NORFOLK ISLAND MATTERS WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

Key Points

- On 11 June 2018, Mr Albert Buffett submitted a complaint to the UN Human Rights Committee (the Committee) alleging Australia has violated a number of his human rights.
- The Australian Government submitted a response to the Committee on 31 July 2019.
- It is the general practice of the Government to not comment on matters while they are under consideration by the Committee.

Background*Complaint to the UN Human Rights Committee*

- Australia is a party to the First Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which allows individuals to make complaints against Australia about breaches of civil and political rights.
- Mr Buffett alleges violations by Australia of a number of his rights under the ICCPR, including: article 25 (right to take part in the conduct of public affairs through freely chosen representatives), article 1 (right to self-determination arising from his claim he is an indigenous inhabitant of Norfolk Island), article 27 (right to culture and language), and article 26 (discrimination on the grounds of language, political opinion and birth).
- The Attorney-General's portfolio is the lead on all engagement with UN treaty organisations and is responsible for handling the Government's response to this complaint. Any further questions should be directed to AGD.

Petition to the United Nations for listing as a non-self-governing territory

- In April 2016, Geoffrey Robertson QC, acting on behalf of the Norfolk Island People for Democracy (NIPD), submitted a petition to the Chair of the UN General Assembly's Fourth Committee requesting Norfolk Island be inscribed on the UN's list of non-self-governing territories.
- The UN list of non-self-governing territories identifies territories that the UN General Assembly deems to be "non-self-governing" and subject to a decolonisation process. Being listed as a non-self-governing territory would require Australia to submit information to the UN about its activities to support Norfolk Island's move towards self-determination.
- The Australian Government has not received any official notification about the Petition from the UN. As far as we are aware, the UN has not scheduled time to consider the petition.
- People from Norfolk Island have previously petitioned the UN for recognition as a non-self-governing territory (in 1977 and 1994) without success.

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TERR BPB 3

NORFOLK ISLAND CURRENT MATTERS

Telecommunications

- There are no plans to fund a submarine fibre-optic cable to the Island; however the Australian Government continues to monitor Norfolk Island's future bandwidth needs.

Biosecurity

- The 2020-21 Budget included funding over three years to augment the 2012 to 2014 quarantine survey. New targeted surveys will enable informed biosecurity decisions, promoting economic development while conserving Norfolk Island's unique environment.

Workers Compensation

- On 4 January 2021, Gallagher Bassett commenced the administration of the new workers' compensation scheme for Norfolk Island.
- The total contract is worth \$887,498 over a four-year term (2021-2024) with two renewable options.

Kingston Pier Channel Construction

- The project involves remediation works to the Kingston Pier prior to the dredging works.
- An Advisian team member and an additional sub-contractor, both QLD based, travelled to Norfolk Island late September 2021 to commence technical investigations on the pier.
- The data acquired from the technical investigations will feed into the design for the remediation strategy.

Emily Bay Water Quality

- Poor water quality in the Kingston area has been attributed to heavy rainfall mobilising contaminants, old and unmaintained sewerage and septic infrastructure and unrestricted livestock grazing.
- The Government has undertaken a number of actions to improve water quality, including:
 - building leaky weirs to reduce contaminated surface water entering Emily Bay; and
 - repairs and ongoing maintenance of septic tanks on Commonwealth property to prevent groundwater pollution.
- The Department is working closely with the Norfolk Island Regional Council and Parks Australia to progress both short and long term actions to improve water quality.

ANAO Report

- On 31 May 2019 the ANAO released a performance report on the Department's administration of the Norfolk Island reforms.
- As of 26 October 2021, the Department has implemented responses to all four of the report's recommendations.

Background**Telecommunications Infrastructure**

Internet and mobile telephony services on Norfolk Island currently rely on satellite backhaul connections. Most connections are through Norfolk Telecom and the National Broadband Network (NBN).

Internet bandwidth requirements on Norfolk Island are expected to increase over the coming years in line with global trends. The Government is monitoring the island's future backhaul needs.

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Norfolk Island Health Services

NI Multipurpose Health Service Facility

In the first half of 2021, site investigations were done on both the current NIHRACS site and the vacant land adjacent to the Norfolk Island Central School. In July 2021, the community and key stakeholders were consulted on potential site options for the new building. As a result of that consultation and following detailed analysis, the two preferred sites, being the current NIHRACS site and the vacant land adjacent to the Norfolk Island Central School, are now being progressed as options in the Detailed Business Case.

Kingston Pier Channel Construction Project

Community consultation on the Kingston Pier Channel project identified the impact the dredging works could have on the pier structure as an area of community concern.

Further investigations of the pier identified structural integrity concerns. These structural issues will be addressed prior to the dredging works going ahead.

In the week beginning 27 September 2021, Advisian and a sub-contractor travelled from Brisbane to Norfolk Island to undertake technical investigations of the pier, with a view to incorporate acquired data into a design for a remediation strategy.

Waste Water Management on Norfolk Island

The majority of Norfolk Island properties (80%) rely upon septic systems, with the remaining (20%) connected to the town sewer. A large number of individual septic systems are beyond serviceable life and have been built in areas that would not meet current standards, for example distance from bores and waterways. Overflow and seepage from septic systems results in contaminated ground and surface water flowing into the ocean.

Impacts of poor water quality

Poor water quality entering Norfolk Marine Park at Emily Bay after heavy rainfall events has a well recorded history. The run-off of waste water into the bay poses health, economic and environmental concerns. Emily Bay is the main swimming beach on the Island, it is important for community recreation, and is a popular tourist attraction that features heavily on tourism and promotional material.

The discharge of polluted water also poses a risk for the Norfolk's Marine Park's ecosystem health and marine species. The reef provides habitat for listed species under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth). In 2020, Parks Australia commissioned the Sydney Institute of Marine Science to monitor reef health in Emily and Slaughter Bay. A report released in September 2021 found that algal blooms in the water column, increased algal growth and coral diseases are all problems caused directly by contaminated water entering the lagoon. Coral disease outbreaks of both band disease and white syndrome were detected.

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The CSIRO has recently been commissioned by the Department to design and implement a water quality monitoring program for the Island. This will involve collection, monitoring and analysis of baseline surface and ground water quality. It will also involve the development of wastewater treatment targets specific to Norfolk Island to inform water quality management.

To respond to the recent pollution incidents, due to island wide causes, the Department has increased the frequency of sullage collection from septic tanks in Kingston. Repairs and maintenance works have also been undertaken to address known faults across the septic tanks in Kingston. Alarms have been installed across the system, to provide warning of potential hazards.

Response to ANAO Report

- The recommendations, Department's response and status are presented in the table below.

Recommendation	Department's response and status
That the Department establish suitable arrangements for the ongoing review of business plans and priorities, and establish milestones and timelines for future delivery of reforms on Norfolk Island, including securing a state-type services provider.	Finalised. Negotiations to engage a new state service partner for Norfolk Island were completed in 2021 with Queensland commencing service delivery on 1 January 2022. Future service delivery reforms will be negotiated with Queensland when the initial transition of health and education has been completed.
That the Department undertake legislative reform to apply the <i>Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013</i> (PGPA Act) to the Norfolk Island Health and Residential Aged Care Service (NIHRACS).	Finalised. The Department consulted with the Department of Finance and determined that it was not appropriate to apply the PGPA Act to NIHRACS.
That the Department establish a process to actively manage risks and integrate risk management for ongoing reforms.	Finalised. Risk management processes have been updated in line with the tools and processes recommended by the consultancy group Bevington.
That the Department develop and implement robust performance measurement, monitoring and evaluation strategies to assess progress and impact of the Norfolk Island reforms to service delivery.	Finalised. The Territories Division has adopted the monitoring and evaluation framework recommended by Bevington. This will support ongoing robust performance measurement and monitoring of the impacts of the reforms on service delivery.

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Back Pocket Brief – February 2022

TERR BPB11

NORFOLK ISLAND – SEA FREIGHT (INCLUDING WHS) ISSUES

Key Points

- Commercial sea freight services to Norfolk Island have not met demand for several years.
- Since 2019, the Government has underwritten air freight services and facilitated additional sea freight services to address freight shortages.
- The Government is working to provide alternate methods of unloading freight that increase the reliability of the freight schedule and address safety concerns.
- Details of the initiatives being progressed are currently subject to commercial sensitivities.
- The Government continues to develop a Ports Management Strategy for Norfolk Island including robust, long-term infrastructure and a sustainable end-to-end shipping supply chain. The aim is to enable more reliable, regular and cheaper freight deliveries to Norfolk Island.

BackgroundAvailability of sea freight

The continued availability of sea freight services to Norfolk Island is a key priority for the Australian Government. Norfolk Island's current shipping service is not meeting demand for sea freight. Voyages are dependent on favourable weather conditions and vessel commitments elsewhere.

Recently the number of freight voyages to Norfolk Island has been impacted by scheduled vessel maintenance, poor weather and other shipping commitments. This has led to shortages of essential supplies. There is a backlog of freight destined for Norfolk Island, particularly from New Zealand.

Currently only one ship (the Southern Tiare) delivers breakbulk freight to Norfolk Island, this has recently been temporarily supplemented by barge deliveries. Pallets and bulk items of freight are transferred to small lighter vessels that take the cargo to shore.

Several factors are causing insufficient and unreliable freight services:

- Norfolk Island's inadequate port facilities restrict vessel types, the amount of freight per vessel and conditions in which freight can be unloaded.
- The lighter vessels currently used to unload freight, do not meet modern safety requirements,
- Lighterage is time-consuming and expensive, and requires specialised crane equipment.
- Remoteness, harsh weather and a lack of suitable vessels make scheduling voyages complex.
- The market is small.

The Government's long-term goal is to provide appropriate infrastructure on the island to support a reliable, sustainable, cost-effective shipping service that meets freight demand.

Immediate actions

To alleviate the freight backlog, the Government has:

- Facilitated the provision of additional freight voyages using barges, in collaboration with the shipping company currently serving Norfolk Island, Neptune Pacific Direct Line (NPDL).
- Temporarily increased the frequency of air freight flights underwritten by the Government to six per month.

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Two promising medium-term solutions are emerging

The Department is working towards a medium-term solution that would allow Norfolk Island to receive cargo in containers (providing substantial benefits to safety of crew and security of cargo). Fully containerised cargo will require a number of landside infrastructure improvements including a wash down bay to decontaminate containers and storage facilities.

Interim landing at Cascade Port

Arup has been engaged to develop detailed designs for an interim landing at Cascade. An environmental assessment has been undertaken to support approval processes under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) and the *Planning Act 2002* (NI). The total cost of the contract with Arup is \$443,007.40 (inc. GST). Designs were confirmed through a peer review by Advisian at a contract cost of \$27,770 (inc. GST).

Should the landing be commissioned, it would be operational by mid to late 2022.

Container Transfer Vessels (CTVs)

CTVs are small vessels that can transport a shipping container from a ship or barge to shore, where it is transferred to land by a crane.

CTVs are commonly used in the shipping industry where port infrastructure is limited. The use of CTVs for unloading at Norfolk is being considered.

Proposed temporary landing in Ball Bay

The Norfolk Island Regional Council is considering building a landing at Ball Bay as an option to land freight barges. The permit for a previous temporary landing was in place from 20 June 2019 to 1 August 2021 to facilitate project cargo for the airport runway resealing project. NIRC sought a variation to unload and load one freight barge; the permit was granted under exceptional circumstances. A new landing in Ball Bay would require a new Australian Marine Parks permit.

A permanent, holistic shipping solution is in development

The Government continues to develop a Ports Management Strategy to support reliable and safe port operations in the longer-term. We are working with a shipping expert and maritime engineers to develop and implement a permanent, holistic solution to NI's shipping shortfall.

We will work closely with the Norfolk Island community to ensure that plans are consistent with the needs and long-term vision of the community.

The preferred solution will be implemented in collaboration with the Administrator, the Council, the Norfolk Island community, and the shipping industry.

Work Health and Safety

The Commonwealth has a statutory obligation under section 19 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the provision and maintenance of a work environment that is without risk to health and safety.

Given current compliance and safety concerns regarding Norfolk Island port operations, the Department will continue working with the Norfolk Island Regional Council, lighterage crews, stevedores, subject matter experts, Comcare and AMSA, to ensure the safest possible practices and equipment are adopted in alignment with legal requirements.

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Lead/Support contact: s 47E

Territories COVID Response

Talking Points

Vaccination Status

	(12+ Cohort)			(5-11 Cohort)		
	1 st jab	2 nd jab	Booster	1 st jab	2 nd jab	Booster
NI	1704	1725	1244 (72%)	103	0	0
CI	1288	1267	935 (75%)	87	0	0
CKI	473	453	395 (87%)	45	0	0
JBT	447	350	n/a	0	0	0

COVID Status

	NI	CI	CKI	JBT
RAT	559			
Confirmed Cases	89			
Discharged	77			
Active Cases	12			

IOT Updates

- COVID subcommittee meeting regularly to prepare for potential for WA Border opening
- COVID medication Sotrovimab arrived on island
- Good progress with booster and paediatric vaccines.
- New RAT test requirements (24hrs before and on arrival).

NI Updates

- Community transmission has started again in last 5 days
- EMT have develop road map to support Norfolk COVID Normal – close alignment with QLD restrictions with entry permit system and pre-arrival RAT testing.
- Lower uptake on booster vaccines – expect 300-400 less uptake than second dose.
- Communication strategy will continue to promote the boosters importance.
- EMT decided to now meet once a fortnight.

JBT updates

- There are currently multiple positive COVID-19 cases in the JBT. Exact numbers unknown.
- DITRDC arranged for the delivery of 300 rapid antigen test kits (RATs) to the JBT.
- WBACC has confirmed they are starting to procure their own RATs
- RFDS is currently in JBT with a focus on testing, vaccine boosters and vaccinations for children. Very low update for vaccine rates.

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Background

- Our external territories are extremely remote; their communities have large numbers of vulnerable citizens at risk of serious COVID related disease, supported by health services with limited capability to treat COVID patients. Therefore, the detection of positive COVID cases is critical to ensure the risk of community transmission is controlled as far as reasonably practicable.
- The health services have, until recently, been maintaining COVID screening practices through polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing.
- Given PCR testing capabilities on mainland were inundated over the Christmas period, the Department immediately procured 4700 Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) to ensure health services in these locations could continue performing COVID screening practices within these communities.
- Norfolk Island recorded its first positive COVID case on 30th December 2021. Since then 76 additional cases have been identified, however community transmission has been minimised through the availability of RATs, procured by the Department.
- Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands were too supplied RATs in anticipation of Western Australia opening its borders from 5 February 2022, increasing the risk of community transmission in those locations.
- 300 RATs were also procured to supply the vulnerable Wreck Bay Community a means of self-screening, who are also experiencing a COVID outbreak.
- Territories Division withheld 100 RATs to support border entry requirements for staff travelling to the external territories.
- Formalised systems have been adopted for staff travel requirements, including risk assessments, AS approvals and the issuance of RATs. Records of all RATs issued to staff for travel purposes will be maintained.
- Approx. 90% of communities on Christmas, Cocos (Keeling) and Norfolk Island, aged 12 and above, have been fully vaccinated against COVID 19 since September 2021.
- The Department, in partnership with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council and the Department of Health commenced a whole of community vaccination program in the Jervis Bay Territory in September 2021. The National Immunisation Register indicates approx. 80% of the community received two doses.
- The Department is now working with the same stakeholder group to ensure eligible persons receive boosters and the 5-11 year old cohort within the community have safe access to vaccines. It is anticipated boosters and first dose for eligible children will be completed 7-9 February 2022.