

Welcome Message

Since commencing on Island, I have met many welcoming members of the community, and they all have one common view - what a privilege it is to live on Norfolk Island. I cannot dispute this, but I also acknowledge that it is a privilege that comes with many challenges. As with any community, not everyone agrees on the solution to the challenges they face, and I have certainly heard a range of strong and differing views in my first two months. I look forward to hearing from the community about their priorities, practical and realistic solutions that they would like to see, or the wide variety of issues being raised.

Being present for **Bounty Day**, with its historic cultural, spiritual and sporting events, was definitely a great way to start my tenure as Administrator of Norfolk Island. Experiencing first-hand the tight-knit community and cultural focus of all the families was a great pleasure, as was being able to enjoy the generous picnic hospitality. For those who came to Government House to have a cup of tea and biscuit and were able to stop to have a chat and introduce themselves – thanks. Next year we will ensure there are more biscuits for those that missed out.

It feels like a lot has happened in June and July. On 30 June, I chaired my first **NIGC** meeting with another meeting planned for September. All members of the NIGC are actively engaging to develop clear guidance on the transition pathway forward that delivers a bespoke model of governance for Norfolk Island underpinned by primary legislation – an outcome that reflects the aspiration of the community.

The **re-appointment of Liz Unkles** as Manager of NIHRACS was welcome news. Having such a capable and competent leader in place to continue to build the capability and capacity of NIHRACS is important. I enjoyed attending the **Health & Wellbeing Expo** on 7 August 2026. It was a great opportunity to listen to the various stall holders about their approach to innovative

ways of delivering and supporting services in a remote and remarkable place.

A constructive and engaged **KAVHA Advisory Committee (KAC)** meeting occurred on 27 July. In the lead-up to the meeting, I reached out to all the KAC members individually, as I was keen to hear their perspective and understand what they see as the important or priority issues for management of KAVHA. A common theme in those discussions was the complexities of risk management and reinvigorating the community's understanding and input on risk priorities, mitigations and management options.

I was very pleased to welcome **Senator the Hon Murray Watt, Minister for Environment and Water**, on his first visit to Norfolk Island on 5-6 August, accompanied by **David Smith MP**. Their visit was a great opportunity to engage on Norfolk Island's marine park, cultural heritage and unique environment while also highlighting some of the accompanying challenges associated with managing these important assets in an integrated way.

I have also welcomed the in-depth briefings I have received from: **Regional Development Australia** on the recent Waste Forum, food-security-focused initiatives and broader programs aimed at supporting the community; the **Reef Health team** on the status of Emily Bay and the reef ecosystem; **Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet** on QLD government's role in working with the Commonwealth to deliver services; **Australian Bureau of Statistics** on the bespoke approach to the Census and the **Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry** on their successful Avian bird flu HN5 desktop exercise.

Many individuals and representatives from the active networks and community-led initiatives operating across the island have also reached out to me. I value these engagements, and a shout out to all those I have met from **White Oaks, QUOTA, Probus, Business Council of Norfolk Island, the Community Garden, Restoring the Bounty** team and its hardy volunteers, the **Youth Council**, the **NATS** very successful Theatre Festival, those hardy Solstice Swimmers, and finally all those lovely ladies that attended the recent Club L event.

Yours respectfully until the next newsletter.

Fiona McKergow



Restoring the Bounty

On Friday 3 June, I joined many members of the community to hear about the remarkable progress being achieved through the \$3.8 million **Restoring the Bounty** project. Delivered by the Norfolk Island National Parks team and a dedicated restoration crew over the past 18 months, the project is a wonderful example of what can be achieved through expertise, commitment and practical action on the ground.

The results are impressive. The project is on time, under budget and exceeding its benchmarks and expectations, with 16,763 plants already in the ground and a further 5,000 still to come. It is not often that a project focused on threatened species can show such visible and encouraging progress so quickly, with improved habitat and endemic species already beginning to naturally reclaim restored sites.

A sincere thank you to Jamie, Hannah and Molly the Kelpie, who guided us down the slopes to the Coffee Site on Saturday morning. They generously answered our many questions and took the time to share their knowledge of Norfolk Island's native flora and fauna, the challenges posed by pests, and the ground-breaking propagation work helping to protect and restore this special environment. Thanks also to Jamie and Eric and the rest of the Restoring the Bounty team who spoke at length to Minister Murray Watt and David Smith on the project and its success – and helped them get their hands dirty by planting a tree.

Nature's Bounty Gallery Opening

I had the pleasure of attending the official opening of Nature's Bounty, a beautiful collection of works by Sorrel Wilby that celebrates the natural beauty of Norfolk Island.

The gallery is a lovely space, and Sorrel's work captures so much of what makes this Island so special. I was also touched by Sorrel's dedication of the gallery to Agnes Hain, "in recognition of her enduring spirit and tireless devotion to the people and heritage of Norfolk Island". It was a generous, thoughtful tribute and a reminder of the many people whose care and commitment have helped shape this community.

If you have not yet visited In the Wild, I warmly encourage you to call in. It is well worth taking the time to enjoy both the artworks and the story behind the reimagining of this space for the community.

Community morning teas

Over the past two months, I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to meet with a range of community groups and to learn more about the many people who contribute so generously to life on Norfolk Island. I joined Probus for its regular monthly meeting and was warmly welcomed by a diverse and engaging group, with the added pleasure of sharing morning tea. I was also pleased to accept an invitation from the White Oaks Committee, where I enjoyed good company, plenty of laughter, some very entertaining activities, and lovely conversation over a cup of tea and cake.

These informal opportunities to sit with people, hear their stories and see community connections in action are an important and valued part of my role. Having a chance to sample the range of baked good at these gatherings is a real bonus and has become a very enjoyable part of my introduction to the Island.

At the beginning of June, I met with the President of Quota, Ms Maureen King QSM, and Lorraine and learnt much more about the association and the quiet but remarkable work it undertakes across the community. Many families have benefited from Quota's support over many years, often delivered without any expectation of recognition. It reinforced to me how volunteerism is a core value and part of the way of life on Norfolk Island, given freely with no expectation. I look forward to joining as many of the monthly gatherings as I can.

I also had the pleasure of meeting many of the volunteer sitters that support the Government House Open Day and understand how valuable these Open Days are for the charity groups that support the Island's community. The warmth, commitment and engagement by all the sitters are a reminder of the many generous people who quietly contribute to passing on vignettes, stories and facts about the history of Government House and its surrounds, and its place on the Island.

Together, these groups reflect the kindness, generosity and strong sense of service that sit at the heart of Norfolk Island's community life.





Bounty Day on Norfolk Island

Being part of Bounty Day on Norfolk Island was a real privilege and a wonderful early opportunity to experience the strength of family, heritage and community at the heart of this special day. From the commemorative events and procession to morning tea at Government House and the community picnic, it was clear how deeply Bounty Day is valued across generations.

While it seems quite a while ago (the last two months have flown by) I do want to thank everyone who joined me for morning tea and biscuits at Government House following the special 170th anniversary events. It was lovely to meet so many new faces, and if I missed the chance to say hello personally, I look forward to doing so at another opportunity.

Next year, we may need to ask James to make a few extra biscuits, particularly for the young ones who assured me they were needed for the important task of rolling down the slope.

I was also grateful to be included in the community's Bounty Day grand picnic, where I had the chance to meet more people, hear what Bounty Day means to them, and enjoy generous Norfolk Island hospitality and cuisine.

The Bounty Beauties performance was a highlight (and I hear their visit to Rarotonga was a massive success). What a talented group of young women – it was impossible not to smile seeing the youngest dancers on Bounty Day joining in as the next generation proudly steps into these important cultural traditions. My sincere thanks to Alma and her family for the invitation and fine cuisine. A special mention must also go to Jeremy for his fried fish, which did set a new global benchmark for me. I look forward to continuing my very important research around the island to see whether Jeremy's really is the best.

In the lead-up to Bounty Day, I was also honoured to receive a beautifully crafted Norfolk Island hat from the Norfolk Island Community Arts Society, made by master weaver Wayne. My thanks to Greg, Rebecca, and Donald for hand-delivering such a meaningful gift with such a perfect fit.

Their visit was also a valuable opportunity to learn more about weaving styles, cultural traditions and the importance of Polynesian dance as a vibrant expression of Norfolk Island's heritage. I was proud to wear the hat on Bounty Day and appreciated the care, skill and thoughtfulness behind it.



A positive step towards local democracy

Many in our community will be aware of Minister McBain's recent announcement regarding an election to establish a Transition Assembly on Norfolk Island.

This is a welcome and tangible step towards restoring local democracy and reflects the strong advocacy and ongoing work of the Norfolk Island Governance Committee's community representatives. Since the announcement, constructive discussions have continued, with a focus on providing more information to the community, answering questions, and finalising recommendations for the Assembly's operation.

While a statutory Assembly will require future legislation, the Transition Assembly presents an important opportunity for locally elected leaders to refine and finalise the governance model that will help inform future legislation.

As we look towards elections, I encourage those who are focused on Norfolk Island's future and committed to positive change to consider standing for election. This is an opportunity to help shape the next chapter of local democracy and contribute to the future of our community.

Senator the Hon Murray Watt and David Smith MP visit

Senator the Hon Murray Watt, Minister for the Environment and Water, and David Smith MP, visited Norfolk Island recently, and it was a pleasure to host the Minister at Government House during his visit.

The Minister's program focused on the Norfolk Island Marine Park, environmental stewardship, heritage conservation and community engagement. Accompanied by myself, he toured the Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area (KAVHA), gaining insight into the site's World Heritage values and the challenges of balancing heritage, environmental protection and community interests.

A highlight of the visit was a constructive meeting with the Norfolk Island Fishing Association regarding the proposed expansion of the Norfolk Island Marine Park. Members welcomed the opportunity to speak directly with the Minister, who emphasised the importance of hearing local views as part of the decision-making process.

The Minister also discussed efforts to improve water quality and protect Norfolk Island's marine environment, planted trees in the Norfolk Island National Park, and met with stakeholders to discuss strengthening the Island's resilience to avian influenza (bird flu).

I thanked Minister Watt for taking the time to meet with local organisations and community members, noting the value of direct engagement in ensuring Norfolk Island's perspectives are heard and understood at the national level.

Did You Know....

15 July was International Youth Skills Day, which was a great time to reflect on what skills the next generation have, and might need, to navigate a changing world and uncertain future. As a self-declared luddite, I know my young adult children have a wealth of skills I don't have. I have also observed they have a diminished skills set in other areas – like interpreting the cursive handwriting script of their teachers, doctors, and their grandparents (like the Diary of John Buffet now on display at the Pier Museum). I attribute this to the fact that they are of the “i-generation” [iPhones, iPads ...and “I want”] and uptake of digital devices.

15 August was International Youth Day and also QUOTA's anniversary (and my mum's special cake-day – so a happy birthday to all those who will celebrate an August birthday!)

