



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Communications

Norfolk Island state services

Partnership with Queensland to deliver state services

June 2021

BACKGROUND

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring stable service delivery, strong regulatory frameworks and comparable rights and protections for the Norfolk Island community through long-term arrangements for provision of state-level services.

WHAT IS CHANGING?

The Australian Government and the Government of Queensland have committed to negotiating an enduring partnership for the delivery of state-type services to Norfolk Island.

Once an Intergovernmental Agreement is signed, the essential health support and school education services currently delivered by the New South Wales Government will transition to the Queensland Government. Additional state services that are not currently delivered on Norfolk Island will be introduced over time.

WHY DOES NORFOLK ISLAND NEED A STATE TO PROVIDE SERVICES?

State or territory government involvement is necessary to provide the legal and regulatory frameworks that support and underpin the delivery of essential services.

WHY ARE SERVICES CHANGING FROM NSW TO QUEENSLAND?

The current arrangements with NSW are expiring. The Australian Government is committed to establishing ongoing arrangements to provide Norfolk Island with comparable services, rights and protections as communities on mainland Australia, and Queensland has agreed to an enduring comprehensive partnership that will deliver benefits to the Norfolk Island community.

HOW WAS QUEENSLAND CHOSEN AS THE NEW STATE PARTNER?

The Australian Government considered a range of options for the delivery of state services to Norfolk Island, which would achieve the best outcomes for the community, including different states and territories, along with options to partner with the private sector for some services.

Queensland brings relevant capability and expertise to Norfolk Island service delivery. It has experience and demonstrated capability in delivering state services to remote communities and is supportive of partnering with the Australian Government to extend services beyond health support and education over time.

This new agreement also builds on the existing family and work connections between Norfolk Island and Queensland. An enduring partnership will deliver mutual benefits for all parties.

PLANNING FOR TRANSITION TO A NEW STATE SERVICES PARTNER

The continuity of essential services during transition is a key priority and the Australian Government will work with the Queensland and NSW Governments and the community to plan a smooth transition of services.

The Australian Government and Queensland have agreed the following principles for the new partnership:

- Services are delivered at a standard equal to, or above, current standards, considering the factors unique to Norfolk Island
- The Australian Government will meet the full cost of transition
- The parties will ensure the continuity of services
- The parties will engage the community in service delivery design where appropriate and aim to minimise disruption in service delivery
- The parties recognise the mix of roles and dependencies across services, including those provided by Council, community groups and other non-government organisations.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR THE COMMUNITY?

This agreement will mean stability for the community through an enduring partnership that will provide access to long term state service delivery arrangements.

The Government will continue to focus on delivery of the range of services, legislative and regulatory frameworks that apply on Norfolk Island. The Norfolk Island Act currently allows for the laws of NSW to apply, with most NSW law being suspended with the exception of those relating specifically to education and health. Amendments to the Act, introduced in 2020, allow for the laws of other states, such as Queensland, to apply.

The community will, over time, have greater access to services and extended protections through a comprehensive legislative regime.

WHAT ABOUT THE NORFOLK ISLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL?

Norfolk Island Regional Council has an important ongoing role in the governance and administration of the Island.

The establishment of a new partnership for the provision of state legislation, regulation and services is unrelated to the current temporary suspension and interim administration of the Council, and the Public Inquiry proceedings. Relevant Queensland legislation will only be applied following exploration, negotiation, planning and agreement of the parties.

NEXT STEPS

The Australian Government and Queensland are committed to establishing an Intergovernmental Agreement and service schedules in the coming months that will govern the partnership relationship and focus on getting the best outcomes for the Norfolk Island community.

Throughout the second half of 2021, the Australian, Queensland and NSW Governments will carefully plan the transition of services in consultation with the community to minimise disruption.