



Australian Government

# Norfolk Island reform update



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## Message from Administrator

Since the recent successful visit of Territories Minister Paul Fletcher, work has continued on a range of outstanding reform initiatives to assist businesses and the community prepare for 1 July 2016 and beyond.

Important changes have been made to federal election and enrolment arrangements for eligible Norfolk Islanders, as well as further arrangements for social security access.

Changes have also been made to the *Norfolk Island Act* and relating the definition of Australia for the purposes of many Commonwealth laws, including key pieces, such as the federal employment framework.

Following a range of meetings with Employment and the Fair Work Ombudsman in August 2015, the announcement of a phased transition of the Australian workplace relations system under the *Fair Work Act 2009*, will allow both employees and employers prepare for changes.

The Australian Parliament is currently considering new Legislative measures which focus on improving services and addressing long-standing issues of public sector governance and sustainability which have faced the Island's economy.

Locally, there have been many expressions of interest from a range of businesses interested in participating in the three-day Foundations of Governance Course, hosted by the Australian Institute of Company Directors in early April. I will soon announce further opportunities as part of the small business and private sector skills development, which the Australian Government is funding.

***The Hon Gary Hardgrave***



## Progressing legislative reform for Norfolk Island

In March 2015, the Australian Government announced a reform package for Norfolk Island. As part of this package, the Government committed to extend mainland tax, social security and other Commonwealth payments and programs to Norfolk Island.

The first tranche of reform legislation extended Australian social security, immigration, health and taxation arrangements to Norfolk Island from 1 July 2016, ensuring Australian citizens on Norfolk Island have the same rights and responsibilities as Australian citizens on the mainland.

The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development consulted broadly with other Australian Government agencies to identify further legislation which should be extended, or which should be excluded from extending, to Norfolk Island. The results of these important discussions are contained in the Territories Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 (Territories Bill).

The Territories Bill makes consequential amendments to some Commonwealth legislation to allow its extension and transition to Norfolk Island, including access to social security arrangements for eligible New Zealand citizens living on Norfolk Island.

The package of Bills continues the Australian Government's commitment to provide Australian citizens on Norfolk Island with the same rights and responsibilities as those in other parts of Australia.

The Territories Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 can be found at [www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Bills\\_Legislation/Bills\\_before\\_Parliament](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/Bills_before_Parliament) and a link is available at [www.infrastructure.gov.au/norfolk-island-reform/](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/norfolk-island-reform/)

## Changes to *Federal Electoral Act*

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is responsible for maintaining an impartial and independent electoral system for eligible voters. This is achieved through conducting federal elections and referendums, as well as maintaining the Commonwealth electoral roll.

The AEC also provides a range of electoral information and education programs and activities, and I am advised will be engaging directly with the Norfolk Island community following Royal Assent of the amendments to the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* and the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984*.



Changes to this important piece of legislation will require eligible persons living on Norfolk Island to enrol and vote in federal elections and referendums from 1 July 2016.

Strengthened federal representation, as well as having a local voice through the Norfolk Island Regional Council, provides residents with improved representation and participation in the democratic process which other Australians follow.

New electoral enrolment claim forms will need to be completed and will be available soon.

Information about the Australian Electoral Commission can be found at [www.aec.gov.au](http://www.aec.gov.au)

## Workplace relations arrangements confirmed for Norfolk Island

The Department of Employment and the Fair Work Ombudsman have provided the following information.

The Australian Government is committed to strengthening Norfolk Island's economy and the implementation of the workplace relations framework is a vital part of this.

We have sought the views of Norfolk Island residents on the best approach to transitioning to the national framework. The strong message received was that residents would prefer a phasing in of the framework over at least two years.

The Australian Government has heard this message and the approach being taken involves a three-stage transition of the federal workplace relations system under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Fair Work Act).



This approach involves extending the provisions of the *Fair Work Act* – including the National Employment Standards, the registered organisations framework and the enterprise bargaining framework - from the day of commencement of the legislation on Norfolk Island.

**Subject to the passage of the legislation through Parliament, it is intended that from 1 July 2016, the *Fair Work Act* will apply to Norfolk Island.**

From **1 July 2016**, Norfolk Island employees will be entitled to 85 per cent of the National Minimum Wage - that is, currently around \$14.70.

From **1 July 2017**, the Norfolk Island the minimum wage would then be increased to 100 per cent – the current National Minimum Wage is \$17.29.

From **1 July 2018**, Modern Awards (wages and conditions) will be extended to Norfolk Island.

There will, therefore, be a two-year gap between the introduction of the National Minimum Wage and the application of other entitlements under Modern Awards to Norfolk Island to support businesses transition to the new arrangements.

This approach puts all Norfolk employees on a pathway to parity with minimum wages received by mainland employees immediately, with complete parity with the mainland achieved in two years.

It also provides business owners with time to adjust to an increase in the minimum wage rate and a full year before the full minimum wage would apply to Norfolk Island.

Whereas award conditions will not be a requirement until two years after commencement, it would benefit employers and employees to become familiar with the terms and conditions under their relevant award as soon as possible to prepare for the transition to the full national framework.

The Fair Work Ombudsman can provide advice to Norfolk Island businesses and employees on the Fair Work framework including which particular award would apply to them.

Further information on the national Workplace Relations framework for Norfolk Island is available at [www.fairwork.gov.au/norfolkisland](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/norfolkisland)





## National Employment Standards

From the date of commencement of the *Fair Work Act*, workplace relations on Norfolk Island will be underpinned by the National Employment Standards.

These are 10 minimum employment entitlements which have to be provided to all employees.

The national minimum wage and the National Employment Standards make up the minimum entitlements for employees in Australia.

An award, employment contract, enterprise agreement or other registered agreement can't provide for conditions which are less than the national minimum wage or the NES.

### The 10 minimum entitlements of the National Employment Standards are:

1. A maximum standard working week of 38 hours for full-time employees, plus 'reasonable' additional hours.
2. A right to request flexible working arrangements.
3. Parental and adoption leave of 12 months (unpaid), with a right to request an additional 12 months.
4. Four weeks paid annual leave each year (pro rata).
5. Ten days paid personal/carer's leave each year (pro rata), two days paid compassionate leave for each permissible occasion, and two days unpaid carer's leave for each permissible occasion.
6. Community service leave, leave for jury service or activities dealing with certain emergencies or natural disasters. This leave is unpaid except for jury service.
7. Long service leave.
8. Public holidays and the entitlement to be paid for ordinary hours on those days.
9. Notice of termination and redundancy pay.
10. The right for new employees to receive the Fair Work Information Statement.



## Employment visit



Officers from the Fair Work Ombudsman and the Department of Employment will again be visiting Norfolk Island in April 2016.

This will provide an opportunity to talk through the process with residents and provide advice on how employers and employees can prepare for the alignment of the Norfolk Island workplace relations framework with the national system.

## Claiming payments from the Department of Human Services

There are a number of payments and services you may be eligible for from 1 July 2016.

The Payment Finder is a way for you to learn more about our payments and services. You can use it for yourself or for someone else.

Simply visit [humanservices.gov.au/paymentfinder](http://humanservices.gov.au/paymentfinder) and answer some questions about your circumstances.

Online estimators provide an estimate of your payment amount and compare payments based on your personal circumstances. The online estimator will calculate:

- Centrelink payments, including pensions and allowances;
- family assistance, including Family Tax Benefit and Child Support;
- child care fee assistance; and
- compensation impacts.

You will need to confirm your identity when you lodge a claim for a payment. We will not be able to assess your claim without confirming your identity, so make sure you have the correct documents to support your claim.



For more information about confirming your identity, visit [humanservices.gov.au](http://humanservices.gov.au) and search 'confirming your identity'.

For more information about the department's payments and services, call its information line on **+61 3 9250 9100**, Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 5:30 pm.

International call charges apply, including calls from mobile phones, which may be charged at higher rate.

You can call this number from the Australian Government Information Centre at no charge.

## 'Are you ready?' week is approaching!



'Are you ready?' week will be held on Norfolk Island from **14 to 18 March 2016**.

Staff from the Australian Government Department of Human Services, including Financial Information Service (FIS) Officers and social workers, will be on island to help you get ready to lodge claims and to answer any questions you may have.

During 'Are you ready?' week you'll be able to:

- get help to create a myGov account;
- learn more about confirming your identity, the income and assets tests and the supporting documents you'll need to lodge a claim;
- attend a FIS seminar for useful information about financial issues and how to make informed decisions about your financial situation;
- book a confidential appointment with a social worker if you're experiencing a difficult time in your life. Social workers provide counselling and support, as well as information if you're unsure how to access the right assistance; and
- find out more about Medicare and Child Support services.

Visit the Australian Government Information Centre or call **23465** to book an appointment with a social worker or for a FIS seminar.



## Update – Medicare and Bulk-Billing

From 1 July 2016 Medicare benefits will apply to eligible services on Norfolk Island.

To be eligible for Medicare you will need to complete a Medicare enrolment application. Applications will be available on island prior to 1 July 2016.

For more information on Medicare go to the Human Services website at [www.humanservices.gov.au/medicare](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/medicare)

### Bulk-Billing

The choice about whether to offer Bulk Billing on Norfolk Island from 1 July 2016 will be a decision made by the health provider. The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development will require the provider of Norfolk Island's Multi-Purpose Service to make its services affordable to Norfolk Island residents and visitors.

### Medicare Safety Net

After 1 July 2016, individuals and families will be eligible for the Medicare Safety Net. Under the Medicare safety net arrangements, patients who meet the threshold for out of pocket expenses will be eligible for additional safety net benefits on top of the standard Medicare benefit for out-of-hospital services for the remainder of the calendar year.

This may mean that visits to your doctor or having tests could cost you less for the rest of that calendar year.

For information about the Medicare safety nets and the qualifying thresholds visit [www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/medicare-safety-net](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/medicare-safety-net)

### What is the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)?

The PBS is an Australian Government program that benefits you and all Australians by subsidising necessary medicines to make them more affordable and reliably accessed.

If you are an Australian Resident on Norfolk Island after 1 July 2016 and you get your Medicare card then you can receive subsidised medicines under the PBS.

The PBS also provides for visitors from other countries where there is a Reciprocal Healthcare Agreement with Australia, such as New Zealand and the UK.





## PBS Safety Net

The PBS Safety Net reduces the cost of medicine for individuals and families once the PBS Safety Net has been reached. When you are close to reaching the PBS Safety Net threshold, ask your pharmacist about a PBS Safety Net card.

With this card your PBS medicine is less expensive, or free, for the rest of the calendar year.

## Audited financial statements

On 11 February 2016, the Minister for Major Projects, Territories and Local Government, Paul Fletcher, tabled the 2014-15 Audited Financial Statements of the Administration of Norfolk Island, the Norfolk Island Government Tourist Bureau, and the Norfolk Island Hospital Enterprise in the House of Representatives following their completion by the Australian National Audit Office.

The Statements have now been tabled in both houses of Parliament.

While overall, the financial position of each entity has improved, the audits have identified findings surrounding governance and management issues which need to be addressed and rectified in 2015-16.

The tabled report is available at [regional.gov.au/territories/publications/norfolk-island-financial-statements/index](http://regional.gov.au/territories/publications/norfolk-island-financial-statements/index)



### Did you know?

#### Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarships

You may recall during his visit last year, the Hon. Bruce Scott MP encouraged Norfolk Islanders to apply for a Nuffield Scholarship during 2016.

The objective of the Nuffield scholarship is to increase practical farming knowledge and management skills and techniques.

The Scholarship provides Australian citizens an opportunity to study farming practices in New Zealand, Europe, Asia, the Americas and other countries.

For more information visit [www.nuffieldscholar.org](http://www.nuffieldscholar.org)



## Community information sessions - Department of Immigration and Border Protection



The Department of Immigration and Border Protection will present two community information sessions for foreign national permit holders, Norfolk Island Residents and Norfolk Island businesses.

**1:30 pm and 6:30pm**

**Wednesday 9th March**

**Conference Room at Governor's Lodge Resort Hotel  
(Queen Elizabeth Avenue)**

All members of the Norfolk Island community are welcome and encouraged to attend. Foreign nationals residing on Norfolk Island are particularly encouraged to attend.

The sessions will provide information on arrangements from 1 July 2016 for:

- transitioning from permits issued under the *Norfolk Island Immigration Act 1980* to appropriate Australian visas;
- pathways to Australian citizenship for foreign nationals; and
- visa options available to employers who engage foreign workers under Australia's migration arrangements.

If you would like to attend, register your interest at the Australian Government Information Centre (Taylor's Road, Burnt Pine).

If you would like to provide comments or feedback, you may submit a feedback form to the Australian Government Information Centre. The form will be available at the information session and at the Centre.

If you would like to further discuss your individual circumstances, you may book an appointment with representatives of the department to discuss visa arrangements for transitioning from permits to an Australian visa, Australian citizenship, and visa options for businesses.



The Australian Government Information Centre will offer extended opening hours during this period.

**Thursday 10 March: 9.00 am - 7.00 pm**

**Friday 11 March: 9.00 am – 7.00 pm**

**Saturday 12 March: 9.00 am – 5.00 pm**

**Monday 14 March: 9.00 am – 7.00 pm**

Please note - the Information Centre is closed from 1.30pm to 2.30pm.

Visit the Australian Government Information Centre or call **23465** to make an appointment.

## Students and specialists learn together

Students from the Norfolk Island Central School were able to work with visiting specialists from the University of New England, to help uncover part of the Kingston Cemetery's history.

Research into the cemetery indicated a gravestone which vanished from the cemetery sometime in the past was lying just below the surface, covered with windblown sand. Previous research by the Cemetery Sexton, Shane Quintal, historic photos and Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) investigations provided strong evidence for the headstone's location.







## Norfolk Island reform update

The visiting archaeologists, Martin Gibbs and Brad Duncan, undertook the excavation to recover the gravestone, and the strong research led to its discovery with the first test pit.



However, like many archaeological finds, the discovery of the gravestone raised more questions than it answered. Located about half a meter down, the stone was found to be broken about 40cm from its base. It would appear this break happened long ago, and there were no indications of the top of the gravestone in the immediately surrounding area.

There were some very faded inscriptions on the bottom which the engineers took images of to see if any of the carvings can be read.

Based on some decorative elements on the base of the stone and its location, the gravestone may date from the 1860-1880 period, however we still have no information on who lies beneath the stone.

During their morning visit, the school students learnt of the cemetery's long history, how it is cared for and managed, how an archaeological dig take place and how objects recovered from such work are cared for.

Students also learnt how Polynomial Texture Mapping (PTM) is used to read faded inscriptions on gravestones by visiting engineers Greg Jackson and Pam Forbes, who are using the technique to reveal detail once thought lost from some of the headstones of Kingston Cemetery.

The fascinating technique is only undertaken at dawn and dusk with a specialised lighting rig. Multiple images of the one inscription are taken and combined as a 3D image to allow for greater resolution.

I would like to thank the visiting specialists for providing their time and expertise, the Commonwealth Heritage Manager, Shane Quintal and the other Administration staff who worked successfully together to make the project possible. I would also like to thank the Norfolk Island Central School and especially the students, whose continuing interest and pride in our shared history is inspiring to us all.





## Passenger movement charges

When passed by the Parliament, a \$55 departure charge for people travelling from Norfolk Island to another country will apply from 1 July 2016.

This charge is consistent with travel from mainland Australia and also applies to departures from the Indian Ocean Territories to another country.

For example, if you are travelling to New Zealand from Norfolk Island, the charge will apply. If you are travelling to Fiji via Sydney, this charge will be added to your ticket.

International departure charges which relate to the *Passenger Movement Charge Act 1978*, together with the *Passenger Movement Charge Collection Act 1978* will not apply to people travelling from Norfolk Island to the mainland or to other Indian Ocean Territories.

Further information about the Passenger Movement Charge can be found at [www.border.gov.au/Trav/Ente/Goin/Departing/Passenger-Movement-Charge-\(PMC\)](http://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Ente/Goin/Departing/Passenger-Movement-Charge-(PMC))

## What will be in the March newsletter?

The next edition of the Norfolk Island Reform Update will include information about:

- Australian Business Numbers and Business Name Registration;
- Regional Council election;
- private health insurance;
- update of health and aged care services;
- the role of the Fair Work Ombudsman and further information for employees and employers;
- further opportunities to meet with Australian Government officers visiting Norfolk Island to explain changes ahead of 1 July 2016 and details about programs and services;
- and much much more!



## Australian Government agency visits to Norfolk Island

| February 2016                                       |                |   |
|---|----------------|---|
| Who?  | When?          | How they can help you?  |
| Australian Border Force                             | From February  | Establishing an ongoing presence on Norfolk Island.   |
| March 2016  |                |   |
| Department of Immigration and Border Protection     | 9 March        | Provide information about Australian citizenship, visas and overseas employees.   |
| Department of Human Services                        | 14 to 18 March | <i>Are you ready? Week</i> – staff will be available to answer questions and help you get ready to lodge a payment claim. |
| April 2016  |                |   |
| Department of Employment<br>Fair Work Ombudsman     | 11 to 15 April | Discuss workplace relations and proposed changes to the <i>Fair Work Act</i> .  |
| Deputy Commissioner,<br>Department Veterans Affairs | 25 to 29 April | ANZAC Dawn Service.   |
| May to July 2016                                    |                |   |
| Australian Taxation Office                          | 9 to 14 May    | Ensure employers are ready for 1 July 2016.   |
| Department of Human Services                        | May to July    | Staff will be available to help you lodge an early payment claim or child support assessment.                             |

Please note this schedule contains the visits known to date as at 24 February 2016, and is subject to change. Visits might be added as agencies confirm arrangements and dates below might change. This schedule will be updated regularly.