

COMMUNIQUÉ

NORFOLK ISLAND GOVERNANCE HEADING FOR CALAMITY

Norfolk Island, 10 March 2026

The Australian Commonwealth Government is currently rewriting the laws under which Norfolk Island in the South Pacific is governed, attempting to permanently impose on it the status of an Australian local government. These moves will emasculate Island democracy and centralise control in Canberra, and are vehemently opposed by the large majority of the Norfolk Island people.

Norfolk Island is not part of the Commonwealth of Australia: it is an External Territory under the authority of Australia: it is a small, isolated island in the South Pacific Ocean some 1,500km east of Brisbane and some 900 km south of New Caledonia. Norfolk Island is deemed to be a Non-Self-Governing Territory within the meaning of Article 73 of the Charter of the United Nations (Ward & Lowe, 2016) and, as Norfolk Islanders claim, they have explicit rights in determining their own future.

Claimed powers include a legislative ability, capacity to control immigration and island biosecurity, and formal acknowledgement of their Pacific island origin and culture.

In 1979 Commonwealth Home Affairs Minister Bob Ellicott QC steered the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* through the Australian parliament, and which provided for a small legislative assembly and a modicum of self-government for the Island. This was repudiated by Prime Minister Abbott in 2015, with governance replaced with a NSW local government format. The island has been in turmoil since that time.

In 2023 the Commonwealth Government established an inquiry into a future governance model for the Island, and has subsequently undertaken moves towards legislating a bespoke version of an Australian local government model. Alternative proposals from the Norfolk Island community representatives have been scrupulously ignored.

The accompanying paper entitled "The Australian Government and Norfolk Island Governance: Chicanery, Folly" considers the 2023 inquiry and its aftermath. It claims that on the evidence, the conduct of the Australian Government has been both deceptive and deficient in its responsibilities to the Norfolk Island people, and that the good faith of the Norfolk Island community in its consultations and deliberations with the Australian Government have not been reciprocated. This is deemed to be a prescription for continued antagonism and strife on the Island.

The paper concludes with an appeal submitted to the Australian Prime Minister Hon. Anthony Albanese MP.

Norfolk Island is a small island in the South Pacific Ocean, 1,500km east from Brisbane, area 35sq km, with a population of around 2,200 persons. Many are the Polynesian and English descendants of the *HM Bounty* mutiny (1789), transferred by the British Government from Pitcairn Island to Norfolk Island in 1856, to occupy the vacated British penal colony.

Reference: Ward, Dr C, SC & Lowe, Professor V., KC, 2016. "In the Matter of the Status of Norfolk Island as a Non-Self-Governing Territory: Joint Opinion", 6 May. See: https://www.nipeoplefordemocracy.com/files/ugd/1e4e3f_000d94e841334f18aac8ae2772bbba22.pdf

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