

KEY FACTS

Official name: Norfolk Island

Head of State: Queen Elizabeth II of Australia; represented by Administrator (appointed by Governor General of Australia) Owen Edward John Walsh (from Oct 2008)

Head of government: Chief Minister André Nobbs (from Mar 2007)

Ruling party: None, legislative assembly members sit as independents

Area: 35 square km

Population: 2,196 (July 2013)* (2011; census figure)

Capital: Kingston

Official language: English

Currency: Australian dollar (A\$) = 100 cents

Exchange rate: A\$1.10 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

Visitor numbers: 40,000 (annually)

* estimated figure

Norfolk Island

Picturesque Norfolk Island went bust in 2012. Despite A\$37 million (US\$38.6 million) in emergency funding from the Australian government the islanders were warned in early 2012 that the only way to save their island was through the sale of government-owned enterprises coupled with a raft of reforms including joining the Australian tax system and paying income and land tax.

The islanders' difficulties came about after a dramatic fall away in tourism revenue. Many homes, hotels and businesses went up for sale, islanders who were not eligible for Australian unemployment benefits struggled to make ends meet and the island airline, Norfolk Air, was grounded.

An article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 25 March 2012 reported on an investigation carried out by *The Sun-Herald* which said that a five-year reform agreement had been signed in 2011 by the Minister for Regional Australia, Simon Crean, and the Norfolk Island Chief Minister, David Buffett.

Mr Buffett said the reforms were 'a huge and extremely difficult step for the island community'.

He said the islanders were proud people who wanted to work and to make their own way and did not want to take handouts.

The newspaper also said that the federal government's Norfolk Island Economic Development Report, released in March, had provided a snapshot of life on the island. There had been a number of bank foreclosures on family homes and more could eventuate. It said the most significant factors limiting development were the 'dominant role of the government', protectionist legislation and a lack of investment in infrastructure.

A review of the island's public service is scathing and warned that it does not have the capacity to deliver basic services and there was 'little evidence of a clear vision or sustainable long-term plan'.

'The most significant issue uncovered is that most of the issues identified in this review have been identified in earlier reviews, sometimes multiple times and

some as many as 14 years ago,' the report said.

A spokesman for Mr Crean's department said the development report was 'advice to the Australian government and is not binding on either of the governments' and would be used to discuss with the island's community the 'pathway to economic diversification'.

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1774 First European sighting of Norfolk Island by Captain James Cook. He named the island in honour of the Ninth Duchess of Norfolk.

1788 Norfolk Island was occupied by the British.

1790 A settlement was established to supply the New South Wales penal colony.

1814 The settlement was abandoned.

1825 The island was re-settled as a penal colony.

1856 The British authorities moved the 193 descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers from Pitcairn Island to Norfolk Island.

1858 16 Pitcairners returned to Pitcairn Island after a dispute with the British about land ownership. Other Pitcairners followed.

1897 Norfolk Island became a dependency of New South Wales.

1914 Norfolk Island became a Territory under the authority of the Commonwealth of Australia.

1979 The Norfolk Island Act conferred a measure of self-government.

1992 Norfolk Islanders became entitled to vote in elections for the Australian parliament.

2000 Norfolk Islanders signed a deal with genetic researchers to study the population for genes that predispose people to high blood pressure or migraines.

2001 A census recorded a total population of 2,601 including 564 tourists and visitors.

2002 The killing of an Australian tourist, Janelle Patton, was the first murder to take place on the island since the 1850s.

2004 Deputy Chief Minister Ivens Buffett was shot dead; his son was later acquitted of his murder.

2006 A census recorded a total population of 2,523 including 660 tourists and visitors. The Australian government

published its Commonwealth Grants Commission report on the financial capacity of Norfolk Island.

2007 A branch of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) was established to work to reform the political system. A New Zealander, Glenn McNeill was convicted of the murder of Janelle Patton. In legislative assembly elections André Nobbs won most votes and was elected chief minister. 2010 Island council elections were held in which the nine candidates (out of 28 in total) that won most votes were elected. David Buffett became chief minister. The Australian national parliament imposed more accountability and rules of good governance on Norfolk Island public spending. Norfolk Island was chosen to be the first country worldwide to pilot a personal carbon-trading programme. The inhabitants were encouraged to sign up for the scheme whereby they receive carbon credits to be exchanged for energy or petrol, when they take actions against obesity and climate change.

2011 In March the Australian government published the *Norfolk Island Road Map*, outlining its plans for changes to its funding for the territory. It identified the need for change to the status of the island as a semi-autonomous, self-governing territory to one under more direct control from Canberra. The Australian Regional Development and Local government body undertook a 'community survey' of the population and economic conditions of Norfolk Island to determine the long-term needs of both. The Australian government agreed to provide A\$14.1 million (US\$14,778 million) in emergency financial assistance in September, through a funding agreement for 2011/12.

2012 On 2 March, Air New Zealand won an open tender to provide regular services between Norfolk Island and Australia. In March it was confirmed that Norfolk Island was insolvent, largely due to the collapse of the tourist industry; the island's own air service, Norfolk Air had been grounded through lack of funds. The Department of Regional Australia showed that the Commonwealth emergency funding had pumped over A\$37 million (US\$39 million) into the economy to maintain services. The federal government warned islanders that the situation was critical and that reforms should be initiated, assets sold and the tax system fully integrated into the Australian system.

2013 Norfolk Islanders were quite excited when Kevin Rudd became Prime Minister of Australia in June – he was, after all, reckoned to be a descendant of a Norfolk Island convict, and surely he would do something special for them. However, his premiership didn't last too long and he lost the election called for 7 September.

That left the Islanders with a failing tourism industry (26,000 visitors in 2012, down from 100,000) and an Australia reluctant to bail them out yet again.

Political structure

Constitution

The Norfolk Island Act of 1979 provides for an administrator (appointed by the Governor General of Australia and responsible to the Australian government), a Legislative Assembly and Executive Council. The Act provides that proposed laws passed by the legislative assembly must be presented to the administrator for assent. Both the legislative assembly and Executive Council are presided over by the president of the legislative assembly. Since 1992, Norfolk Islanders are entitled to vote in elections for the Australian parliament.

Form of state

Self-governing Territory of Australia

The executive

The Executive Council is made up of five members of the legislative assembly; each member holds the position of minister, with one or more portfolios. The Executive Council passes laws and devises governmental policy, which is agreed or not by the administrator.

National legislature

The unicameral, Norfolk Legislative Assembly has nine members, elected from a list of candidates, to serve for a three-year term.

Legal system

The judicial system consists of a Supreme Court and a Court of Petty Sessions.

Last elections

21 March 2007 (parliamentary)

Results: Parliamentary: nine non-partisan candidates were elected; André Nobbs received most votes. Turnout was 91.2 per cent.

Next elections

2013 (parliamentary)

Political parties

There are no political parties in the legislative assembly; all members sit as independents.

Ruling party

None, legislative assembly members sit as independents

Political situation

The Norfolk Islanders are an independent people who consider their state to predate that of the Commonwealth of Australia, the country to which they were tied by a British administration in 1897.

The Australian government published its *Norfolk Island Road Map* on 2 March 2011, outlining its plans for change to its funding for the territory. It identified three pillars that were fundamental in underpinning the changes: providing economic diversity for sustained growth; providing

social cohesion; and resilience and protecting the island's unique heritage and environment. Visitor numbers have been declining since 2000 and the economy has become unsustainable in its current form, so much so that the island's government is unable to operate without cash injections from the commonwealth government. The Road Map said that reforms in governance and economic development must be undertaken or the prospects for Norfolk Island will remain unchanged and that the infrastructure had declined and there is little prospect of improvement without change. Seven, specific proposals were submitted for discussion, the most controversial of which for the islanders were the imposition of Australian management, which would include paying all national and state taxes in operation in Australia, an opening up the economy to foreign investment and allowing immigration from the mainland. The Road Map was quick to unite any negative proposal with its corresponding benefit and emphasised that the changes would be undertaken in partnership with the people's wishes. Nevertheless, the opening remarks that the status quo could not be maintained requires the population to find accommodation for these changes in some way, before any implicit threat or sanctions were used to force the issue.

Population

2,196 (July 2013)* (2011; census figure)

Last census: 8 August 2011: 2,302 (of which 22 per cent were visitors).

Population density: 50.2 inhabitants per sq km.

Annual growth rate: -1.8 per cent (2006–11)

Ethnic make-up

Approximately 37 per cent of the permanent population were born on Norfolk Island (of which 47 per cent are of Pitcairn descent), 31 per cent were born on the Australian mainland and 23 per cent were born in New Zealand.

Religions

Anglicans (34 per cent), Roman Catholics (12 per cent), Uniting Church of Australia (13 per cent) and Seventh-Day Adventist (3 per cent).

Education

Infant, primary and secondary schooling is provided by the Norfolk Island Government. Education is free until the age of 15.

Compulsory years: six to 15

Main cities

Burnt Pine, Kingston (estimated population 910 in 2012).

Languages spoken

English is spoken in business circles. Norfolk, a dialect derived from the language evolved by the *Bounty* mutineers and their Tahitian wives (a mixture of mainly English and Tahitian) and brought by settlers from Pitcairn Island in the nineteenth century, is also in use.

Official language/s

English

Media

Press

There are two local weekly newspapers *The Norfolk Islander* and the *Norfolk Window*. National newspapers from Australia and New Zealand are available.

Broadcasting

Radio: The Norfolk Island Government Broadcasting Services operates the radio station. Radio Norfolk broadcasts on AM and FM for 10 hours per day during the week and for six to seven hours during the weekend.

Television: The privately owned TVN station broadcasts local material. Satellite services relay TV programmes from Australian.

Other news agencies: Norfolk Online: www.norfolkonline.nlk.nf

Economy

Norfolk Island's economy is based largely on its tourist industry, catering mainly to visitors from Australia (around 80 per cent of total) and New Zealand. It receives indirect funding from Australia through Australian federal agencies (of between A\$3–4 million (US\$3.8–5 million) per year) and grants provided to offshore Australian communities; Australia has also restored a number of historic buildings and provides certain technical services for public works on the island.

In addition to importing most of its requirements, Norfolk Island has developed a re-export industry geared to its tourist industry.

Sales of Norfolk Island postage stamps contribute to the island's revenue. Australian income tax and other federal taxes, such as goods and services tax (GST), property tax or stamp duty, do not apply in Norfolk Island, although locally raised taxes do.

The Australian government agreed to provide A\$14.1 million (US\$14,778 million) in emergency financial assistance in September 2011, through a funding agreement for 2011/12.

External trade

As a self-governing territory of Australia, Norfolk Island maintains strong links with the mainland but not an open market; taxes are levied on imports to provide government revenue. Exports to Australia

are duty free, subject to the country of origin restrictions.

Imports

Main imports are petroleum, food, consumer goods, alcohol, building materials, footwear and clothing.

Main sources: Australia, New Zealand, neighbouring Pacific islands, Asia and EU

Exports

Main commodity exports are seeds from the Norfolk Island pine, gerbera and kentia palm, avocados and small quantities of timber, ceramics and local crafts and postage stamps.

Main destinations: Australia, neighbouring Pacific islands, New Zealand and the European Union.

Agriculture

Only 12 per cent of land is cultivatable so production is constrained by poor terrain, porous soil, a low water table and fragmented holdings. Many farms are run on a part-time basis. Crops tend to be seasonal, and provide cereals, vegetables and fruit. There is a successful commercial hydroponic vegetable garden. Live-stock is limited to cattle and poultry and the island is self-sufficient in beef, poultry and eggs.

The lack of a harbour restricts fisheries development, and catches serve local consumption only.

The Norfolk Island pine and kentia palm seeds are an important export and some hardwood afforestation is being undertaken.

Industry and manufacturing

The island produces its own handicrafts, chocolates, beers, liqueurs (including an 'aromatised whiskey' called *Convict's Curse*) and arabica coffee. Grapes are being planted for a wine industry.

Tourism

Since the mid-1960s, tourism has been the mainstay of the island's economy. The Norfolk Island Government Tourist Bureau promotes Norfolk Island in Australia and New Zealand, the island's primary markets. Approximately 30,000 tourists visit Norfolk Island each year.

It is a sub-tropical island with world-class scuba diving and fishing. There are areas of sub-tropical rainforest, much of it protected in national parks, with a network of tracks which is ideal for walking, birdwatching, cycling or horse riding. Norfolk Island is included on Unesco's World Heritage List (under Australian Convict Sites), as part of Britain's legacy of penal colonies in Australia.

Hydrocarbons

There are unexploited offshore oil and gas fields. All petroleum products are imported from Singapore refineries via New Caledonia and Fiji, around 33 per cent of

the price of oil is transport, handling and insurance costs.

Energy

The Norfolk Island Administration operates six 1MW 16-cylinder diesel engines, producing 7 million kilowatt hours per annum. Anywhere between 10–20 per cent of total energy generated is used in refrigeration plants. A past study has determined that any move to use renewable energy will likely be a wind/diesel combination system.

Banking and insurance

There are branches of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (which has an ATM) and Westpac Banking Corporation on the island.

Time

GMT plus eleven and a half hours.

Geography

Norfolk Island lies off the eastern coast of Australia about 1,400km east of Brisbane, to the south of New Caledonia and 640km north of New Zealand. Norfolk Island is hilly and fertile, with a coastline of cliffs. It is about 8km long and 4.8km wide. The territory also includes uninhabited Phillip Island 7km south of the main island.

Hemisphere

Southern

Climate

The island has a sub-tropical climate. Temperatures can range from 11–27 degrees Celsius, with an average rainfall of 1,346mm per year. November tends to be the driest month and the wetter months are May to August. Most rain falls at night. Average morning humidity is around 80 per cent.

Dress codes

Clothing should be comfortable and casual to suit the subtropical climate. A sweater is advisable on winter nights. A hat and sunscreen are necessary in summer.

Entry requirements

Passports

Required for all.

Visa

Required by all, except Australian and New Zealand citizens.

Any visitor who is in possession of an Australian visa may stay for up to 30 days, with travel insurance and confirmed accommodation obtained prior to arrival. Most citizens of EU and North America can apply for an Australian Electronic Travel Authority (ETA), issued by a travel agent or airline, or online. See www.eta.immi.gov.au for details of those eligible, and follow links to the application site. ETA-eligible business visitors may

stay for up to three months without additional documentation.

Those not eligible for an ETA must apply using form 456, through the nearest embassy or mission. Business visas will require a letter of invitation from a local company or organisation, a business letter from an employer stating purpose of trip and details of employee's function, proof of sufficient funds, and a full itinerary. Further details and application form can be obtained at www.immi.gov.au/allforms.

Currency advice/regulations

There are no restrictions on import and export of local and foreign currency.

Customs

Some medications may be restricted and visitors should declare all prescription drugs.

Prohibited imports

Illicit drugs, dangerous weapons, fruit, vegetables, flowers and seeds; pork and poultry from New Zealand are also prohibited. Firearms require a permit.

Health (for visitors)

Mandatory precautions

Vaccination certificates required for yellow fever if travelling from an infected area.

Advisable precautions

Vaccination for diphtheria, TB, hepatitis A and B, polio, tetanus, typhoid. Rabies is a risk.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 26 Jan (Australia Day), 6 Mar (Foundation Day), 25 Apr (Anzac Day), 8 Jun (Bounty Day), 25–26 Dec (Christmas).

If Christmas Day or New Year's Day falls on a Saturday, the next Monday is given as a holiday.

Variable dates

Good Friday and Easter Monday (Mar/Apr), Queen's Official Birthday (second Mon in Jun), Show Day, Thanksgiving Day (last Wed in Nov).

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Thu: 0930–1600; Fri: 0930–1700.

Business

Mon, Tue and Thu, Fri: 0900–1700; Wed and Sat: 0900–1200.

Government

Mon–Fri: 0800–1630.

Shops

Mon–Tues, Thu–Fri: 0900–1700; Wed/Sat: 0900–1230. Some shops open on Sun.
Supermarket, Mon–Sat: 0800–1800; Sun: 0900–1800.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

In 2002, the Norfolk Island residents voted against allowing a mobile phone service on the Island.

Electricity supply

Diesel generated 240V 50 cycles.

Social customs/useful tips

Tipping is not expected. It is customary to shake hands on meeting and taking leave. Punctuality on social occasions is appreciated.

Getting there

Air

The only air connections are provided by OzJet and Air New Zealand which fly from the east coast of Australia and New Zealand.

International airport/s: Norfolk (NLK).

Airport tax: A\$30 for international departures, payable at the airport when leaving or at the Visitor Information Centre prior to departure.

Surface

Water: Ships anchor offshore.

Getting about

National transport

Road: The entire road network amounts to 200km.

Buses: There is no public transport system on the island, but tour buses are available for tourists.

City transport

Taxis: There is a limited taxi service.

Car hire

Arrangements may be made locally for hiring cars, motorcycles and bicycles.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially

to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international direct dialling (IDD) code for Norfolk Island is +672, followed by area code 3 and subscriber's number.

Useful telephone numbers

Police: 922
Fire: 955
Ambulance: 911
Telephone exchange: 22-244

Banking

Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Burnt Pine (tel: 22-144).

Westpac Banking Corporation, Burnt Pine (tel: 22-120).

Travel information

Norfolk Island Airport, P.O.Box 149, Norfolk Island (tel: 22-445; fax: 23-201; email (manager): grobinson@airport.gov.nf).

The Travel Centre, PO Box 172, Norfolk Island (tel: 22-502; fax: 23-205; email: travel@travelcentre.nf).

National tourist organisation offices

Norfolk Island Government Tourist Bureau, PO Box 211, Norfolk Island (tel: 22-147; fax: 23-109; email: info@norfolkisland.com.au).

Other useful addresses

Postal services for Norfolk Island have an Australian postal code – NSW 2899, Australia – to be added to the end of an address.

Customs House, Taylors Road, Norfolk Island (tel: 22-899; fax: 23-260; email: customs@admin.gov.nf; internet: www.customs.gov.nf).

Legislative Assembly, Old Military Barracks, Quality Row, Kingston, Norfolk Island (tel:22-003; fax: 22-624; email: clerk@assembly.gov.nf).

Other news agencies: Norfolk Online: www.norfolkonline.nlk.nf

Internet sites

Australian Government (see territories of Australia): www.ag.gov.au

Norfolk Island website: www.norfolk.gov.nf