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28 AUG 2002

Secretary: *J. Luthra*

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORT AND  
REGIONAL SERVICES

15 August, 2002

BY MAIL

Mr Paul Neville MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services  
Parliament House  
Canberra

Dear Sir,

**Submission to the Inquiry into Commercial Regional Aviation Services in Australia and Transport Links to Major Populated Islands**

The Terms of Reference for the Standing Committee include the consideration of the adequacy of commercial air services to major populated islands and the adequacy of alternative sea services.

The adequacy of both air and sea services to Norfolk Island is compromised by the lack of suitable harbor facilities. Currently the Norfolk Island Government is considering improvements to the islands existing two landing jetties by the construction of a third jetty at Ball Bay. In this submission I would like the Standing Committee to consider the potential for Commonwealth assisted funding of this third jetty on the island. My interest in the project is one of a long-time island resident and importer who has had to bear the costs and waste associated with the current system and fears for our ability to help should any sea-based air disaster occur around our island. I have no other financial or business interest in the project.

The construction of a landing jetty at Ball Bay has the potential to improve both the reliability of sea services to the island and safety aspects of air transport to the island.

Currently the island has only two jetties. Convicts initially constructed both with Cascade located on the northern coastline and Kingston located on the southern coastline. At both locations the ships have to stand off-shore and discharged into lighters for cargo to be ferried ashore. Frequently when the winds are in the East or West sea conditions make it impossible to launch boats and therefore unload the ships. This inefficient, unreliable and expensive method of sea cargo discharge means that many goods, that would normally travel by sea, have to be air-freighted to the island.

Ball Bay is a steep-sided bay protected from three sides and is exposed only to the South-East. The construction of a jetty at this location will allow the launching of boats for both lighterage and other purposes when the other two locations are unsuitable. This will reduce the lost-time that ships have to lie off the coast awaiting favorable sea conditions for discharge<sup>1</sup>. A further significant advantage will occur if a third jetty is constructed at this location in that should a sea-based air disaster occur near the island it would be possible to launch boats in order to undertake rescue or recovery activities or provide provisioning for other vessels involved in such a disaster.

At both Cascade and Kingston the structures are showing signs of failure due to the increased loads being subjected to them, which are beyond their convict-built strength. Currently the public is being warned about the safety of the two jetties and repairs are being planned which will make one or the other inoperative for considerable periods during the repairs. Should poor sea conditions prevail at the other operative jetty, the island will be without the ability to discharge sea freight.

The third jetty will be extremely desirable both in the short-term to overcome this problem and in the longer term. It will mean that when ships call and the conditions are unsuitable at both Kingston and

<sup>1</sup> A ship this month had to wait a week off the coast before taking three days to then discharge its cargo.

Cascade (due to Westerly winds) it will still be possible to work at Ball Bay. Due to the topography of the bay a relatively simple jetty will provide better boat-launching shelter and depth than is currently available at either Kingston or Cascade. Even without shipping operations this will greatly increase the safety and ability to put boats to sea in the event of a catastrophe requiring sea rescue from the island.

The proposal being considered for Ball Bay is incremental in its design allowing us to gradually construct the jetty and extend it as necessary and funds allow<sup>2</sup>. The design has been undertaken by engineers familiar with marine construction and will be able to withstand the high loads which occur with cargo coming to the island.

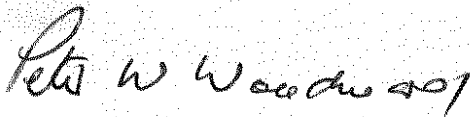
With the islands very tight budget the capital cost of the first phase of the project is modest but beyond the Norfolk Island Government's budget<sup>3</sup>. The Commonwealth Government has acknowledged in the 1997 Grants Commission report that at the time of obtaining self government the harbor infrastructure for the island was inadequate for its needs and that there is some justification for the Commonwealth to make a contribution to overcome safety and infrastructure problems<sup>4</sup>.

This current project for an incremental construction of a new jetty at Ball Bay will provide the Commonwealth the opportunity to work with the Norfolk Island Government to overcome these pressing safety and infrastructure problems that affect both air and sea transport to the island. Furthermore this proposal is at a fraction of the cost to alternatives that have been proposed in the past. There is little doubt that Norfolk Island, as one of Australia's major populated islands is at a disadvantage in the provision of appropriate sea-freight services and therefore falls within the area of your committee's consideration.

I would humbly request that your inquiry acknowledge this, and seek that a priority recommendation be made to the Parliament, in your findings, for the Commonwealth to aid the Norfolk Island Government through technical assistance and grant funding of construction assistance of the Ball Bay jetty.

If your Committee would like any further information on the proposal I would be very pleased to provide it.

Sincerely,



Peter W. Woodward

<sup>2</sup> Construction design and plans are available through the Norfolk Island Government.

<sup>3</sup> In the current-year budget all capital expenditure has been placed on-hold.

<sup>4</sup> P.179. *Report on Norfolk Island*, Commonwealth Grants Commission, 1997