

The Norfolk Island: A Brighter Future



A Parliament Street Briefing Paper

By

Ben Brickley (Head of Membership, Parliament Street)

PARLIAMENT STREET

partnership in policy

This week I had the great pleasure of meeting with Andre Nobbs the Former Chief Minister for the Norfolk Islands and his delegation to talk about the recent proceedings between the island and Australia. For those of you that do not know, the Norfolk Island is a small island located between Australia and New Zealand, the island has shared a long history with United Kingdom due to the fact that after the Island was first settled by East Polynesians it was eventually also settled by the United Kingdom as part of its settlement of Australia from 1788. permanent civilian residence on the island began when it was settled from the Pitcairn Islands a British Overseas Territory and in 1914 the UK handed Norfolk Island over to Australia to administer as an external territory.

The recent issues that have transpired in the last few years have come from the current Australian administration. In 2016, the Australian government took over the previously self-governed Norfolk Islands and dismantled the government which ensured that all democratic powers the island had previously had were stripped away. This takeover has been referred to by many islanders that I have spoken to a “bloodless genocide” due to the fact that the Australian government had attempted to strip the islanders of their cultural identity and force them to become Australians which they protested. For the Norfolk Islanders like Andre and his delegation who came to London this week, they did not want this to be their future and have been fighting for the self-determination of the Norfolk Islands in the United Nations Court of Human Rights for the past two years. In our meeting, we discussed the new future for the Norfolk Island and its people. The Islanders want to become an overseas territory of New Zealand. The delegation said the reason for this was because New Zealand had fair and productive relationships with its overseas territories, which include Niue and the Cook Islands in the South Pacific and have free-association agreements with Wellington, meaning they govern their own territories but are entitled to New Zealand citizenship, are expected to share common values and receive ongoing economic aid from New Zealand. Geographically Norfolk is closer to Auckland than Sydney, and research has recently discovered that New Zealand and Norfolk Island were even once part of the same continent.

It is important however to ensure that this case does not define the Norfolk Island. Over the last few years I have had the pleasure of seeing and understanding the unique and

beautiful culture of the Island. The culture is a mixture of two cultures which brings together the Tahitian and English history of the Island. They have their own language called “Norf’k” which is officially recognised language and they also celebrate Bounty Day which is celebration that happens every 8th June, to mark the arrival of the 194 Pitcairn Islanders on Norfolk Island when their leader, George Hunn Nobbs, was at last successful in engaging the support of the London Missionary Society who petitioned Queen Victoria on the Pitcairners behalf. As you can see the Norfolk Island has a rich history and because of its ties to the Pitcairn Islands a lot of its current residents have British ancestry, the people of the Norfolk Island should not be ignored by the United Kingdom with Brexit negotiations on going we should be looking towards a new image for Britain and show the international community that Brexit is not just a one trick pony and that we will stand up for the self-determination of others just like we have done for ourselves. The case for self-determination is currently being discussed by the UN and there is hope for the people of the Norfolk Island, hope that they can keep their cultural identity, hope that they can negotiate a deal with New Zealand and hope that they can once again form a government to lead the islands towards a brighter future. Myself and the rest of Parliament Street will be working tirelessly to support and promote the Norfolk Islands in order to make this future possible.