

MEDIA RELEASE

5 September 2025

MEDIA BRIEFS – ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING HELD 29 AUGUST 2025

RECRUITMENT OF SUBSTANTIVE GENERAL MANAGER ROLE COMMENCES

Quotes are being currently sought from professional recruitment agencies to recruit for the role of General Manager of Norfolk Island Regional Council.

While the successful recruitment agency will facilitate all aspects of the recruitment process, including chairing the selection advisory committee, the appointment of the successful candidate will be the responsibility of the selection advisory panel. The panel will be comprised of both NIRC Administrators and at least two members from the Norfolk Island community.

With the progression of the recruitment of the substantive General Manager position, a decision was made to retain Mr. Scott Hackney in the Acting General Manager position until such time as a General Manager appointment is made. The process for the appointment of the preferred candidate Mr John Brown has been concluded, and Financial Administrator Gary Mottau thanked Mr Brown for his candidacy and patience in the matter of the recruitment process.

“Staff have already undergone considerable upheaval. Stable and consistent leadership will assist the organisation to move through the upcoming management changes,” Mr Mottau said.

“We therefore advise that the process for the appointment of Mr John Brown to the Interim GM position is now concluded.”

LONG TERM FINANCIAL VIABILITY TO BE INVESTIGATED

Draft minutes of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) meeting held on 14 August 2025 were presented to Council, addressing several issues identified by committee members. Both Administrators attended the meeting as observers.

An estimate of costs to dispose of stockpiled waste was identified as a liability that should be recognised in the income statement for the year ended 30 June 2025, and this was subsequently included in the motion made by Administrators during the Council meeting.

Informed by a discussion with NI Governance Committee, who are preparing documentation regarding future financial viability for the Australian Government, ARIC will be invited to endorse the scope of an assessment of the risks and potential solutions to Norfolk Island Regional Council's long-term financial sustainability.

In discussing the council's current financial status, Financial Administrator Mr Gary Mottau acknowledged the need to avoid the reduction of any service levels to the community.

"We are in deficit territory, the current operational budget is at \$4.1M deficit, which is increasing with the decisions that are being made currently. For that reason, we will be seeking financial support from the Commonwealth to fund an independent consultant to mitigate the need of reducing service levels to fund the assessment.

ARIC be invited to assess the proposals received and assist Council in selecting the most suitable independent consultant.

KEY POSITIONS APPOINTED AT FIRST ESAC MEETING

At the first meeting of the Environmental and Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC) held 9 July 2025, the committee elected Margaret Christian as Chair and Joel Quintal as Deputy Chair.

NIRC staff presented relevant aspects of the 2025-26 Operational Plan, noting the activities that Council's Planning and Environmental department was directly involved with. From this discussion, ESAC members considered which activities the committee would like to put their efforts into over the coming year.

Members of the committee also raised the topic of unauthorised tree removal of non-endemic species that are not protected under the NI Trees Act (1997), but hold cultural, historical or environmental significance to Norfolk Islanders.

Financial Administrator Mr Gary Mottau thanked Margaret Christian and Joel Quintal for accepting their committee roles, and the committee as a whole for their commitment to island environmental matters.

READY FOR NEXT STEP IN ELECTRICITY TARIFF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As part of Council's commitment to the development of a more equitable and self-sustaining electricity tariff for Norfolk Islanders, NIRC will seek quotes from Vendor Panel suppliers for community engagement services.

Vendor Panel is a procurement platform used by corporate and government clients to find high quality specialist service providers.

The Qubist report presented at the July Council meeting recommended commissioning a specialist company or consultant to undertake community engagement activities to gain insight into community experience and perceptions of the current tariff system.

The information gained from in-depth community engagement will support the development of an electricity tariff that is fair and equitable to consumers, and that generates sufficient funds for maintenance and improvements to assets and equipment. An emphasis on the recommended time of use tariff structure will be at the centre of the engagement activities.

Financial Administrator Garry Mottau recognised that the current arrangements with Vendor Panel refreshed on 31 August 2025 making it an ideal time to call for quotes for the electricity community engagement, and communications more broadly.

Acting General Manager, Mr Scott Hackney, will assess the quotes and provide a report to the next Ordinary Council meeting.

ELECTRICITY SERVICE REVIEW ACTIONS

Recommendations from the Electricity Service Review have resulted in potential changes to the Operational Plan 2025-2026 to address urgent infrastructure and asset deficiencies.

Norfolk Island Regional Council supplies electricity to about 1,663 customers through a stand-alone diesel-based power system supported by customer-owned solar generation and limited battery storage. The service faces financial and operational pressures, with an ageing asset base and an estimated annual funding gap of about \$2 million when capital and operational costs are included.

Administrators endorsed a plan to make the changes in two areas, one being consideration of the purchase of a second generator storage battery, and the second to investigate the replacement of Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) software following management changes and a review of the tariff.

It's estimated that a budgetary requirement of \$20,000 will be needed for the upgrades, and Administrators requested a further report to Council at the September Ordinary Meeting to present a detailed business case for the second battery storage, and the SCADA software replacement.

AIRPORT SERVICE REVIEW RECOMMENDS PHASE 1 ACTION

The Airport Service Review has assessed the efficiency, cost profile and sustainability of Norfolk Island Airport.

The review included an examination of operational performance, compliance, asset condition and improvement options, and strategic alignment.

The review proposed further investigation, and a phased approach to implementing actions to ensure continuation of this critical infrastructure. The first phase recommends three initiatives over the next 12 months, including a review of the cost recovery fee for airport operators; upgrading the perimeter fence, and an estimated cost of \$100,000; and conducting a technical survey of the runway and aprons better understand Council's maintenance obligations

The administrators called for the completed Airport Service Review to be attached to the September Council meeting report.

Lead Administrator, Mr Scott Mason comment on his recent tour of the airport and surrounds

"Mr Mottau and I undertook an airside inspection tour, an eye-opening experience, to see firsthand the operational and asset management issues that are likely to impact our future. These assessments will provide clear evidence of the scope of work that will be need considerable financial support to maintain this vital facility for the island," Mr Mason said.

PLAN FOR PFAS TESTING OF FIRE FIGHTERS

Council will allocate up to \$40,000 for the provision of Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) testing and support to NIRC's existing and former fire fighters, auxiliaries and fire fighting vehicle technicians.

Discussions are currently underway with the University of Queensland to conduct a PFAS Exposure Study similar to that offered to Airservices Australia personnel, to be funded by Norfolk Island Regional Council.

This action follows remediation measures that NIRC initiated at the fire station, including PFAS blood testing for existing fire fighters and current employees who were auxiliaries. At that time, testing was not available for former employees.

Lead Administrator, Mr Scott Mason commended Mr Hackney on taking action that demonstrates NIRC's moral obligation to staff, both current and past. He further encouraged the community to seek information about PFAS, which is found in a vast number of products, from reputable sources.

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