

MEDIA RELEASE

September 26, 2025

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS – COUNCIL MEETING HELD 24 SEPTEMBER 2025

VALE ROBIN ADAMS

Council paid tribute to former Mayor and community leader, Robin Adams, acknowledging a life of impressive achievements and accomplishments.

Lead Administrator, Scott Mason noted that Ms Adams many achievements and tireless advocacy for Norfolk Island weren't all related to her professional life but spanned many community groups and activities.

"In a notable public service career on Norfolk Island that began as the first woman to act as Registrar of Lands, Births, Deaths and Marriages, and resulted in her being awarded the Public Service Medal, Robin's advice was sought to inform on matters of local and international interest," Mr Mason said.

"She served as an elected member of the of the Legislative Assembly, Speaker of the House and later Minister for Cultural Heritage and Community Services. On the dissolution of the Norfolk Island Assembly, she led the newly formed Norfolk Island Regional Council as Mayor."

Signs of Robin's love for the natural environment and gardening resulted in the creation of parkland at Captain Quintal Drive and Camelot Gardens, and she instigated community education opportunities by bringing experts to the island to encourage greater knowledge and more sustainable gardening practices.

Members of the public gallery, including Robin's sons Aaron and Mitchell and family friend Simon Bigg, were invited to join the Administrators and staff for a short break in which to reflect on a life well-lived, one dedicated to her community.

RECRUITMENT OF GENERAL MANAGER UNDERWAY

Norfolk Island Regional Council has appointed Local Government Management Services (LGMS) to undertake full recruitment activities for the role of General Manager of NIRC.

LGMS was selected from three recruitment agencies who responded to the request to quote for the recruitment activity. The agency will be responsible for all advertising, police checks and further background checks, and will provide Council with a shortlist of candidates to be considered by a selection advisory panel, which will be comprised of NIRC Administrators and members of the community.

SECOND ESAC MEETING HIGHLIGHTS KEY CONCERNS

The second meeting of the Environment and Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC), held on 9 September 2025, resulted in recommendations to Council in three key areas.

Following discussions around the prioritisation process for the island's waterways and wetlands for environmental protection, the advisory group sought a draft priority list to be presented to a future committee meeting for review. This review would ensure that the development of the draft Norfolk Island Waterway and Wetland Management Strategy 2025-2035 reflected areas of high community value.

The committee also considered the Draft Drought Management Plan, an important document that includes strategies for water conservation, contingency measures and community engagement during periods of drought on the island, recommending that community education on groundwater/bores and the desalination plant would be included.

Following review, each of the draft documents will be placed on public exhibition for 28 days to allow community feedback to be collected and considered.

A further recommendation was put forward for Council to source data from Regional Development Australia (RDA) on socio-economic and environmental effects of cruise ship visits.

All of the advisory committee recommendations were endorsed by Council, with Lead Administrator, Scott Mason, commenting on the excellent work being done by the group.

"I'd like to personally thank and acknowledge the members of the Environment and Sustainability Advisory Committee for their time and expertise, and I look forward to seeing the positive change effected through this community-based advisory group", he said.

"Any work undertaken in the areas raised will also be extremely useful in the upcoming Wastewater Service Review."

TERTIARY EDUCATION GRANTS AWARDED

Ten applications for support through the Norfolk Island Regional Council 2025 Tertiary Education Grant program have been successful, with a total of \$11,000 awarded to Norfolk Islanders pursuing further education.

NIRC has not offered this grant program since 2023, which was established to assist with the cost of travel to Australia and/or study-related studies for students enrolled in accredited tertiary and vocational courses.

Financial Administrator, Gary Mottau, said, “It’s pleasing to note that the current budget has provision for a total of \$72,000 for all of Council’s community grant programs, which includes the Tertiary Education Grants.”

“On behalf of the Lead Administrator and myself, I offer my congratulations to successful applicants,” Mr Mottau said.

Grants of \$1,100 each have been awarded to:

Natalie Williams	Mitchell Randall	Ashley Porter	Ashleigh Christian
Maycee Deszeccsar	Ella Borg	T'Sharn Evans	Cameron Christian
Stephanie Williams	Flynn McCowan		

The study areas that the grant recipients will use their grants for include tertiary course in pharmacy, carpentry, business, visual communications and design, both primary and secondary education, occupational therapy, behavioural science and mechanical technology.

COMMUNITY TO BENEFIT FROM STRATEGIC PLAN GRANT PROGRAM

For the first time since 2023, Council has awarded funding through the Norfolk Island Regional Council Community Strategic Plan Grant Program.

The aims and objectives of this grant program are to support initiatives that directly benefit the community by meeting one of the six key strategic directions contained in the plan:

1. An Environmentally Sustainable community
2. A Proud, Diverse and Inclusive community
3. A Caring community
4. A Successful and Innovative community
5. An Informed and Accountable community
6. A Healthy and Safe community

Projects must be based on Norfolk Island and must provide genuine benefit to the local community, environment or economy. A co-contribution is to be provided from non-Council sources (cash or in-kind) to the equivalent of 25% of the total project budget, and each project is eligible for a grant of up to a maximum of \$5,000.

A total of \$35,163 funding under Council’s Community Strategic Plan 2025 Grant funding program was allocated to the following successful applicants:

APPLICANT	PROJECT	AMOUNT APPROVED
Sarah Robinson	Childbirth Education Program	\$2,208
Orf Side Cow Hide Producers	Purchase of specialised equipment	\$3,500
Cultural Development Association of Norfolk Island (CDANI)	Purchase of a projector to allow outdoor cinema during summer months	\$5,000
Cheryl Tennis Club	Pickleball equipment	\$4,455
Khan Christian and Mandy Gardner	Creation of a bee sanctuary, native habitat corridor and coastal restoration	\$5,000
Norfolk Island Sustainability Hub Inc.	A feasibility study for a community - owned food processing facility	\$5,000
Fenua & Moana Pty Ltd	Support for the Pier to Pine Ocean Swim Festival	\$5,000
Porpieh Jam	Purchase of sound equipment	\$5,000

PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT ON DRAFT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Draft Community Engagement Strategy will be placed on public exhibition for 28 days, following Council endorsement of the document at the September Ordinary Council meeting.

NIRC’s existing Community Engagement Strategy was adopted in February 2018 and was overdue for review to reflect changes in community expectation, methods of communication and NIRC’s obligation to community engagement.

Earlier this year, residents and other key stakeholders were invited to participate in drop-in sessions, targeted group discussions, an online survey and written back on the ways they seek or find information relating to Council services, activities and general news.

Community feedback was received from 50 individuals, through the online survey, visiting the drop-in sessions, those who wrote directly to Council plus a contribution from the school student council.

The draft strategy will be placed on public exhibition for 28 days from 25 September 2025 to 22nd October 2025. After the period of public exhibition, a report will be brought back before Council, recommending any revisions in consideration of feedback received.

Lead Administrator, Scott Mason said, “The input from the community has assisted Council to better understand the ways in which the community seeks information about Council services and projects.”

“I have been advocating a communication reset, particularly in light of the service reviews and upcoming electricity tariff community engagement, and the timing of this draft strategy is perfect for those important activities,” he said.

WATER ASSURANCE FEES AND CHARGES AMENDED FOR CLARITY

Council has amended the 2025-26 Schedule of Fees and Charges to clarify wording around the calculation of Water Assurance charges, relating to connection fees to the sewer network.

All instances of the term “base unit”, which was originally an internal reference, will be removed. This will clarify that the Water Assurance charges for 2025–26 are set as fixed annual amounts per property classification, as adopted by Council, and not calculated using a “base unit” or any other indirect formula.

The amendments were placed on public exhibition for 28 days and no submissions were received in that time. A note will be made in the amended schedule to reflect the change in terminology.

DRAFT DROUGHT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Administrators endorsed the Draft Drought Management Plan 2025-2030, which will be placed on Public Exhibition for 28 days to allow comment and feedback from the community.

On completion of the public exhibition period, all submissions will be collated and considered before a final version is presented to Council for adoption later in the year.

The draft plan has benefited from lessons learned during recent periods of low rainfall and variable weather conditions and includes data and recommendations resulting from past research and reports by experts from CSIRO.

Lead Administrator, Scott Mason, noted the input from specialist external sources.

“Input from the Environment and Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC) and inclusion of CSIRO recommendations, along with reviews of the island water quality and supply, has made this draft management plan an excellent starting point.”

Further studies by CSIRO on groundwater will be considered in future drought management planning, and I look forward to viewing the revised version following consideration of community feedback on this important issue.”

ELECTRICITY TARIFF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The Comms Team, a Queensland-based consultancy, has been awarded the contract to conduct community engagement activities around Norfolk Island’s electricity tariff, with phase 1 of Electricity Tariff Community Engagement now underway. Further information will be made available through Council’s regular communication channels.

SERVICE REVIEWS OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Service Review reports for Norfolk Island's airport, electricity service and Telecom were presented to Council, sparking considerable discussion from the Administrators, who noted a number of items within the reports appeared lacking in detail.

Lead Administrator, Scott Mason, commented that challenges and risks existed in all three areas, and further investigation and reporting was required to ensure an accurate picture was being provided to Council and the community.

"In all service reviews presented today, there are areas in which more detailed information is needed so that Council can press ahead with targeted action for the most beneficial outcome," Mr Mason said.

"While these service reviews highlight challenges and opportunities, there are gaps in accuracy and depth of detail that I would like addressed. As one example, our airport is integral to our social and economic health, and I note that the current state of vital airport infrastructure has not been accurately reported. This is a risk we cannot afford to take."

Both Administrators also identified anomalies in the electricity and Telecom service reviews, while also recognising the opportunities for improvement.

Administrators noted that the current electricity staff are dedicated, skilled and extremely competent, handling the ongoing maintenance and upgrade extremely well. Despite this, succession planning is currently a risk area that needs to be address in the short term.

Lead Administrator, Scott Mason, said, "The current electricity provision revenue does not meet the full cost of service delivery, asset renewal and overheads, and that is a key consideration in how Council can meet not only its obligations but the goals of the community. Compared to mainland Australian councils, he believes NIRC has limited opportunity to seek external funding."

Financial Administrator, Gary Mottau, proposed a public consultation period of 56 days for public review of the Electricity Service Review, and that an Expression of Interest (EOI) be called for interested members of the community to establish a single purpose, sunset committee to support the community consultation process review.

It was also noted that as a result of the 000 outages earlier this year, the Department of Infrastructure, Territories, Regional Development, Communities, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA) has engaged Telstra to provide an independent assessment of Norfolk Telecom's network and infrastructure. Gary Mottaru said this welcome activity would identify the cause of known and potential future risks.

"Such an investigation will allow us to develop strategies to optimise Telecom's service reliability, and to understand the short and long-term solutions to improved telecommunication on Norfolk Island."

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