**MEDIA RELEASE**

|  |
| --- |
| **External Audit Findings Implementation Program – Preliminary Interim Evaluation Report** Monday, 11 September 2023 **A review has been carried out of NIRC’s progress towards implementing necessary improvements identified in 2020 by Grassroots Connections’ Independent Governance and Financial Audit (External Audit Findings) and the subsequent Public Inquiry’s conclusions about NIRC.** The review was conducted by Grassroots Connections in August 2023 with the following objectives in mind:* To evaluate the progress to date of the Council’s External Audit Findings Implementation Program; and
* To report on whether the actions taken by NIRC are resulting in improvements to the key challenges as outlined in both the External Audit Report and Public Enquiry conclusions, and further will contribute over the longer term to achieving Council’s vision: *Norfolk Island - the Best Small Island in the World.*

At the time the 2020 External Audit Findings were published, NIRC was in a precarious financial and operational position. As a result, the recommendations focused on:* Rebuilding the relationships between NIRC, the community, and the relevant department and interagency bodies.
* Developing a long-term financial plan to include all capital projects and changes in operational practices to address the planning, regulatory, services, and systems failures.
* Identifying increased revenue raising and funding options and cost-saving opportunities, and
* Addressing the environmental challenges involving wastewater treatment and solid waste disposal.

The Grassroots preliminary evaluation finds that “NIRC is to be commended for its actions to upgrade the aging infrastructure it inherited when established in 2016 and the programs now underway, in particular the introduction of renewable energy infrastructure i.e., solar and battery technology to limit and potentially replace the Council’s on-grid demand and contribute to net zero emission outcomes.” Importantly, NIRC’s financial position is improving with increased own source revenues from property rates and charges, and from commercial activities including the airport and liquor bond.The preliminary evaluation concludes that significant progress and tangible impacts have been achieved in the development and operation of an effective Council that continues to improve its capability and capacity to deliver essential services that benefit the Norfolk Island Community. The full review report is available on NIRC’s website at:[a8124f2ea9.pdf (windows.net)](https://civicclerkau.blob.core.windows.net/stream/NORFOLK/a8124f2ea9.pdf?sv=2015-12-11&sr=b&sig=8D0LO6%2FBYlvVrPSrBjcZF4Jqb%2BEJAL9TphX2K%2B3lMcs%3D&st=2023-09-11T02%3A43%3A39Z&se=2024-09-11T02%3A48%3A39Z&sp=r&rscc=no-cache&rsct=application%2Fpdf)Workshops will be held at the Council Chambers over two days on Monday 2 October (2:00 p.m.) and Tuesday 3 October (9:00 a.m.) where NIRC’s managers will explain the status of all EAFs to the NIRC Administrator. The community is invited to attend and observe these sessions which will also be live-streamed and recorded on NIRC’s website.11 September 2023 Andrew Roach**GENERAL MANAGER**  |
|  |