

MEDIA RELEASE

January 31, 2025

MEDIA BRIEFS FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD 29 JANUARY 2025

Two Council Advisory Committees to be Established

Expressions of interest will shortly be issued for members of two new advisory committees, being established to provide a conduit between the community and Norfolk Island Regional Council, and ultimately to benefit the Norfolk Island Assembly.

While the previous advisory committees have come to an end, the new committees are expected to play an active role in Council's future policy and direction. Residents, particularly those with specialist knowledge or interest, will be invited to submit EOIs for the Environment and Sustainability Advisory Committee, and the Tourism and Economic Development Advisory Committee.

The EOI will be issued in coming weeks and details will be shared on NIRC's Tenders and EOIs webpage, Facebook and through local media.

Council Adopts Draft Wastewater Strategy

Norfolk Island Regional Council supported the Draft Wastewater Management Strategy to be placed on exhibition at its January 2025 meeting and will be seeking community and stakeholder feedback through public exhibition of the plan and other engagement activities.

The draft strategy details current operations of the wastewater network, otherwise referred to as the Water Assurance Zone, and provides a framework for future extensions, with an overarching theme of protecting the health of both the community and the environment. Additionally, there is a proposal for formalising an improved standard to onsite wastewater management systems. The strategy can essentially be considered as a two-part document; the background report and the action plan.

Past studies that have input into the draft Wastewater Management Strategy include the Water Quality Assessment by CSIRO, which identified the greatest risks to coral reefs at Emily and Slaughter Bays. Their study confirmed that surface water and groundwater discharge are both pathways into lagoon, creating a major risk to the marine park.

Nitrogen and phosphorus have both been identified as the main contaminants, and the most likely sources of these elements are cattle and wastewater systems on the island.

An assessment of critical areas of wastewater management operations was carried out, looking at the wastewater systems used, performance issues and operational risks, asset management, cost and compliance issues, and community expectation.

The strategy document is comprised of a background report and an action plan, that together aim to address contamination of waters of the Norfolk Island marine park, the health of people and environment, and improvements to the health of our surrounding waters.

If adopted after the public exhibition period, the strategy will have cost implications for Council, the Commonwealth, and landholders for infrastructure upgrades.

NIRC's intention is to give the community and stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback on the strategy through the public exhibition process, while also sharing information on Council's online platforms, through printed information and the chance for landholders who may be affected by implementation of the plan, to arrange ad hoc, face-to-face consultations.

Tender Awarded for Bulk Fuel on NI

A tender for the supply of diesel and unleaded petrol to Norfolk Island Regional Council has been awarded to Toll Remote Logistics Pty Ltd for a period of three years with an option for a three-year extension, and a potential contract cost of \$8M over the term of the tender.

The accepted tender price is at parity with the price that Council and the island current pays for wholesale fuel, while there is an allowance for fluctuation in price due to influences such as freight costs or weather delays.

In moving the motion to accept the tender, Lead Administrator, Scott Mason noted that the option for a three-year extension was solely at Council's discretion, and encouraged exploration of other potential tenderers when the contract came up for extension in 2028.

Increased focus on Workplace Health and Safety

A Commonwealth Government Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) Audit on Norfolk Island Regional Council has resulted in multiple non-conformance issues, and development of a NIRC Corrective Action Plan to address the findings.

NIRC welcomed the opportunity to address the gaps identified across the organisation, and acknowledged that knowledge, understanding and compliance were among the key issues to be addressed by following the Corrective Action Plan.

A Workplace Health and Safety Committee and a set of new processes will be developed, while staff training will be a key activity to raise understanding of WHS and its relevance to daily work and home life. Mental health and wellbeing will also be included in the strategy to improve NIRC's WHS standards in every area across Council, with frontline staff – our Customer Care team, in particular – receiving training, support and advice relevant to their roles.

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