

GOVERNMENT OF NORFOLK ISLAND - GENERAL ASSEMBLY - INAUGURAL SITTING

RAWSON HALL, NORFOLK ISLAND

SATURDAY, 30 MAY 2026

DRAFT VERBATIM HANSARD

Prepared for review by the Clerk of the House

OPENING OF THE ASSEMBLY

The Assembly met at Rawson Hall, Norfolk Island, at 1.00 pm.

CLERK (Clerk of the House):

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask that everyone be seated now.

I call together the House and the General Assembly of Norfolk Island.

As Clerk of the House, I read the Government of Norfolk Island Gazette Notice dated 21 May 2026 and I hereby record that Gazette into today's sitting of the General Assembly.

Notice is hereby given that the first General Assembly of the Government of Norfolk Island will be convened as follows.

Today, the 30th of May 2026 at 1.00 pm.

Location: Rawson Hall, Norfolk Island.

This Assembly is convened in accordance with the Governance Charter and Operations Manual of the Government of Norfolk Island following the reconstruction of the Government on 1 January 2026.

The General Assembly is the principal forum of direct democracy through which the people of Norfolk Island participate in collective deliberation and the expression of the will of the people.

The business of the Assembly will include consideration of foundational matters necessary to give effect to the Governance Charter, including the establishment of key committees and initial governance processes.

The Notice Paper outlining the agenda and motions for consideration was published on the official government website, govni.org, by Saturday 23 May 2026.

All eligible members of the Norfolk Island community are invited to attend and participate at this General Assembly meeting today.

By order of the Government of Norfolk Island, we hereby open the meeting.

I would like to call on Reverend Laurie Carleton.

PRAYER

REVEREND LAURIE CARLETON:

Almighty God, we humbly beseech Thee to bestow Thy blessings upon this House. Direct and prosper our deliberations that they may be for Thy glory and the true welfare of the people of Norfolk Island.

CLERK:

Amen.

INSTRUMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATE

CLERK:

We now come to the Instrument of Constitutional Mandate.

I table the Instrument of Constitutional Mandate dated 1 January 2026 to be recorded in the Norfolk Island Register.

Signed by the Council of Elders and the soon-to-be Government of Norfolk Island.

Declaration of Jurisdiction.

I hereby give notice of Declaration of Jurisdiction.

This General Assembly affirms the authority exercised by the will of the people on 1 January 2026, grounded in the 1838 Pitcairn Island Constitution and acknowledged through the Crown's 1856 recognition and protection. We proceed today under those provisions as our guiding context.

We now come to the time during this meeting where we have our members of government acknowledge and take the oath this afternoon.

I call on Reverend Laurie Carleton to proceed with that matter.

OATHS OF OFFICE

REVEREND LAURIE CARLETON:

I will now administer the oath of the Chief Magistrate and Councillors.

Place your hand on the Bible to read out the oath and then following that I will ask you to sign.

Chief Magistrate, place your hand on the Bible.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE PETER CHRISTIAN-BAILEY:

I, Peter Christian-Bailey, do solemnly swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles III, his heirs and successors according to law, that I will faithfully serve the people of Norfolk Island as Chief Magistrate, that I will uphold the constitutional continuity and institutions of Norfolk Island, that I will exercise the responsibilities of my office with integrity, transparency and respect for the rule of law, and that I will protect and steward the land, culture, heritage and future of the Norfolk Island people.

So help me God.

REVEREND LAURIE CARLETON:

Councillor, place your hand on the Bible.

COUNCILLOR TIM BROWN:

I, Timothy Brown, do solemnly swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles III, his heirs and successors according to law, and that I will faithfully serve the people of Norfolk Island as Councillor, that I will uphold the constitutional continuity and institutions of Norfolk Island, that I will exercise the responsibilities of my position with integrity, transparency and respect for the rule of law, and that I will protect and steward the land, culture, heritage and future of Norfolk Island's people.

So help me God.

COUNCILLOR REBECCA HAYES:

I, Rebecca Hayes, do solemnly swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles III, his heirs and successors according to law, that I will faithfully serve the people of Norfolk Island as Councillor, that I will uphold the constitutional continuity and institutions of Norfolk Island, that I will exercise the responsibilities of my position with integrity, transparency and respect for the rule of law, and that I will protect and steward the land, culture, heritage and future of Norfolk Island's people.

So help me God.

CLERK:

Thank you Reverend Carleton and also to Peter, Timothy and Rebecca.

The oaths have now been taken.

The House is duly constituted and the members are authorised to participate in the proceedings of the General Assembly.

The Government of Norfolk Island now stands assembled and this inaugural General Assembly is formally convened in continuity with the constitutional traditions and institutions of Norfolk Island.

CULTURAL ADDRESS

CLERK:

It is now time for our cultural address this afternoon.

I would like to invite David Buffett AM, Elder of Norfolk Island, to address the House and the General Assembly.

While it is not prescribed within the General Assembly procedural orders, this is an important inclusion within today's inaugural sitting.

This occasion marks the first convening of the General Assembly and the commencement of a new chapter in the governance of life in Norfolk Island.

Many in our community will know David through his long and enduring service to Norfolk Island and her people.

His wisdom, experience and standing within the community provide an appropriate foundation as we acknowledge our heritage, continuity and collective responsibility before commencing the formal business of the Assembly.

Thank you David.

MR DAVID BUFFETT AM:

Mr Chief Magistrate, your Councillors, Clerk of the House, the people of Norfolk Island.

Our forebears from Pitcairn Island have really demonstrated over a lengthy period of time remarkable resilience and growth.

From their minuscule number of 28 at the point of commencement in 1790 on Pitcairn Island to a not well measured number of thousands in 2026.

I know that most of you will have seen at least one version of that now famous film, Mutiny on the Bounty.

All featured high-profile actors of their day and Mel Gibson and Anthony Hopkins are among the most recent.

The casting of players of that profile clearly indicated there was a spectacular story to be told to the world.

All of those films had casts of thousands.

And they left the audience with the impression that when the film concluded and the mutineers sailed off into the sunset to find a hideaway, eventually found and called Pitcairn Island, that this hideaway group numbered in the hundreds.

You know and I know that that is not true.

The figure was that minute number of 28 I referred to just now.

The next misconception is that they went to live in paradise.

That too is untrue.

In the first ten years that group warred amongst themselves. They fought over the allocation of land, over food and over possessions, and of course they fought over the women.

In that initial ten-year period all the Polynesian men were killed and only two of the nine mutineers survived.

Those of the group who provide the crucial act of continuity were the Polynesian women, our foremothers.

But they did not perish.

They survived as a community because they were resilient.

They were resilient.

Notwithstanding these horrific killings and loss of life there were children born and successively their numbers flourished.

And eventually they were discovered by the outside world.

This led to numerous British vessels subsequently visiting Pitcairn Island and the British fostering of that community which then comprised descendants of the mutineers, with the exception of one survivor, John Adams.

Pitcairn, as most of you will know, is about three times the size of Philip Island, or Kingston here. It is not as large, nor as commodious, as Norfolk Island.

After the fighting and the continuous birth of children, the population grew to the vicinity of 88 and overpopulation was looming.

They calculated quite soon that Pitcairn's meagre land size and resources would not provide them with continuous self-sufficiency, and they turned their minds to migrating to another place.

So we then think they packed up and came to Norfolk Island.

Again, most of you will know that that is not so.

The first migration was to Tahiti, and that migration was a disaster.

On Pitcairn Island, from the commencement in 1790 until the migration to Tahiti, they had lived in an isolation bubble, hidden and protected from the outside world, including protection from the diseases of the outside world.

Tahiti, by comparison, was a cosmopolitan place.

They encountered disease and in the first three months diminished their number by 20 per cent.

They quickly decided this was not for them and they returned to Pitcairn Island.

The point here is that, yes, they lost 20 per cent, but they survived.

They were resilient people.

Whilst the diminution of numbers provided some temporary relief from overpopulation, it did not solve their long-term problem.

The numbers would indeed rise again.

Because, if nothing else, we are very good breeders.

At the 1850s mark, Norfolk Island, as you all know, was about to be disbanded as a penal settlement and Norfolk Island was offered to the Pitcairn Islanders as a new home.

They did not want to come.

However, a series of negotiations and plans finally brought 194 souls from Pitcairn to Norfolk Island, landing at Kingston Pier.

We are going to celebrate that in a week and a bit, 170 years ago.

You will detect from what I have said to you so far the thread of numerical growth in our people throughout what I have said.

Twenty-eight.

Eighty-eight.

One hundred and ninety-four.

And 2,188 at the last census, although this figure includes all of the people who lived on Norfolk Island at that census date.

There is another census, of course, this year in August.

We must also consider the somewhat elusive figure of Norfolk Island people who presently live beyond our island shores and beyond Australian shores and who are therefore missing from the Australian census figures.

But all of those numbers continue to grow.

One factor in this arena which deserves mention is that the Islander figure can be culturally somewhat clouded when you factor in the present lack of ability for Norfolk Island people to be born in our homeland.

With a broad brush may I sweep along and briefly mention that Norfolk Island's economy has grown from an agricultural subsistence economy through sequentially various local primary industries.

Examples include the whaling days, fish exports, palm seed, tung oil, lemon seed, passionfruit, bananas and the bean seed industry.

All of those primary industries, except the palm seed exports, have come and gone.

They have been succeeded by today's principal industry of tourism, with its attendant components including hotels, accommodation houses, tour companies, retail enterprises, food facilities, airline operations and fuel facilities.

This tourism economy, in turn, assists to support our essential infrastructure and services such as electricity, shipping and wharf facilities, roads, the airport and more.

All of these essential factors recognise Norfolk Island's growth from 1856 to this day.

In this journey with you that I am trying to describe, I have dwelt upon and emphasised our Norfolk Island and Pitcairn heritage, its components, its occurrences and the people of that heritage.

I make no apology for that.

It is the very core of our being.

However, that being said, that core has significantly been enriched.

Enrichment originally commenced back on Pitcairn Island when three non-mutineer males joined the community by invitation.

They brought vital skills.

They extended the minute gene pool of that isolated place.

That enrichment continued upon arrival here on Norfolk Island with new arrivals settling in the place.

There was an immigration process that offered protective measures upon their entry into the community.

Those people and their descendants brought invaluable skills.

Some simply lived here for the rest of their lives peacefully amongst us.

Others married into the community.

They and their children are now integral, well-loved and inseparable parts of this place.

They too have enriched the collective gene pool.

We do need to emphasise the profound value of this enrichment.

We sometimes fail to express this welcome well.

Sometimes we fail to express it at all.

But we are deeply enriched by those who have come and fully embraced this place for being what it is.

Today, here on this island, we as a community are wounded.

We suffer a significant democracy deficit.

We have no meaningful say in our governance processes.

There are sheaves of paper on advisory groups and bodies, but no executive decision-making roles of significance.

All of that is done by people from afar.

Colonialism continues in Norfolk Island.

Governance of the day is the issue of this General Assembly this afternoon.

Given this difficult governance climate, in the brief words I have given, I have endeavoured to bring to notice that Norfolk Island people — those of the history I have related and those who have joined us — have travelled a path of diversity and adversity but have proved resilient.

Resilient.

And notwithstanding adversity, we have demonstrated growth, numerical expansion and intellectual growth.

Today at this General Assembly, such demonstrated resilience and growth, I am sure, will stand you in good stead and provide you with strength and progress in the way ahead.

I wish you well in your deliberations.

May the chaplain's prayer for prosperity in deliberations be answered.

Mr Chief Magistrate, thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon.

CLERK:

Thank you very much, David Buffett AM.

We now come to an opportunity during this General Assembly to hear an opening address from our Chief Magistrate.

I hereby welcome the Government of Norfolk Island Chief Magistrate for his opening address.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE PETER CHRISTIAN-BAILEY:

Good afternoon everybody and thank you all for being here.

We gather today at a moment of real significance.

What is taking place here is a major step towards restoring community control over the decisions that shape our lives.

It is, in every sense, a very historic occasion.

It did not arise in isolation.

It follows the work of many who have come before us and the decision to move forward with the reaffirmation of our Constitution and the long-held aspiration to retain control over the decisions that affect us.

We have the right to take this path.

It is important to honour the decision of the Council of Elders to endorse this direction, which was a well-considered, courageous and historic act in its own right.

The decision was carried forward through a professionally conducted electoral process, giving legitimacy to the Government and to the General Assembly.

As it now stands, community initiative, Elder endorsement and a properly conducted election together form the foundations on which this process now rests.

I would also like to acknowledge the For The People campaign and the many individuals who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to bring the election about.

It was a genuine community-driven effort grounded in fairness, transparency and determination.

Without that work, the conversations, the organising and the courage to step forward, we would not be here today.

To all who contributed in ways large and small, thank you.

Your commitment has helped make this moment possible.

I remember waking up on 2 January and thinking, "We have a Constitution, no money, no systems and no framework."

It was a moment of absolute anxiety, I will be honest.

The weight of responsibility was enormous.

Yet we are standing here today seeing what has been built from nothing but commitment, courage and community will.

This is a milestone of extraordinary significance.

We are stronger today than we were then and we will only continue to grow stronger.

We undertake this work in the shadow of the vacuum created by the removal of democracy and after more than a century in which our rights have not been properly recognised.

There comes a point when it is no longer feasible to wait for others to do what is right.

That point is now.

The development of the Charter has been a critical response to that vacuum.

It offers a framework, a discipline and an orderly means of governance — one that is consistent, principled and aligned with our Constitution.

The process has not been easy.

I will not lie.

It has demanded effort.

It has tested relationships.

It has placed real pressure on those involved.

Yet it has held together.

We continue to move forward and that endurance says much about the depth of commitment and the belief in doing what is right for our people.

This is not about turning away from practical needs or essential services.

It is about ensuring that governance and services are shaped in a way that respects our unique history, our identity and our circumstances.

What has been built here is more than a set of documents.

It is the foundation of credibility from which can come decisions that honour those who came before us, reflect our history and culture, serve future generations and prove sustainable and right for Norfolk Island.

The form this Assembly is adopting, grounded in open participation and direct engagement, is genuinely pioneering.

It reflects a model of direct democracy that is locally meaningful, distinctive in its own right and one that may, if carried forward with integrity, stand as an example to others.

Looking ahead, there are a number of practical milestones that may mark progress over an initial term.

These include modernising our Constitution to reflect today's society and values, including all those who have invested their lives in the spirit of our home.

They include establishing and embedding our Governance Charter and procedural frameworks.

Progressing the work of Select Committees.

Strengthening community participation.

Demonstrating that this model can operate in a stable, credible and sustainable way.

Developing a financial framework.

Asserting our jurisdiction and ownership on the basis that this island belongs to those who walk on it today, those who walked on it before us and those who will walk on it in the future.

Developing systems and institutions appropriate to our history, culture and identity.

Strengthening cultural protection so that our language, heritage and customs are preserved and carried forward.

Building diplomatic representation that enables Norfolk to speak with clarity, dignity and confidence in the wider Pacific and international community.

Ultimately, what is achieved will depend upon the will of the people participating in it.

The strength of this model lies precisely there.

It is shaped, sustained and given life by the commitment of the community.

I would like to acknowledge the work that has gone into bringing this Assembly together.

The preparation of papers.

The drafting of motions.

The coordination of proceedings.

Too many people to name.

It has all been undertaken on a voluntary basis.

That effort reflects a commitment not only to participation but to building something orderly and capable of endurance.

In my role as Chief Magistrate under the Charter, my concern is the integrity of the process.

That it remains fair, consistent and aligned with the framework being considered for adoption.

Before I close, I would like to offer a heartfelt thanks to all those who have brought us to this moment.

Every person who stood up, spoke up, encouraged, questioned, supported or simply believed that Norfolk Island could take this step.

This includes those who are no longer with us.

We feel their guidance, their courage and their love continues to shape us.

We walk in their footsteps.

I hope that what we build here today and in the days ahead will make them proud.

Thank you.

CLERK:

Thank you, Chief Magistrate.

This written address is now preserved in the Register of the General Assembly.

Ladies and gentlemen, and boys and girls of the General Assembly, it is now time for the tabling of the Notice Paper.

The Notice Paper has been available in both electronic and hard copy form and has been taken as read.

I hereby table the General Assembly Notice Paper dated 21 May 2026 and published on 22 May 2026 to be recorded in the Norfolk Island Register.

I hereby confirm that a quorum being present, the business of the inaugural General Assembly may proceed.

As a General Assembly there are some orientation and housekeeping matters that I would like to take everyone through this afternoon.

Before proceeding to the business of the Assembly I will briefly outline these arrangements for participation and conduct.

Emergency Procedures and Location of Amenities

In the event of any emergency circumstance, people are asked to assemble outside near the Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society Hall.

Amenities are located either side of the entrance to Rawson Hall.

Recording Arrangements

This General Assembly meeting is being recorded for the purposes of Hansard.

Conduct of Proceedings

The General Assembly is conducted respectfully through collective deliberation.

Community participation is welcome.

Contributions are to relate to the matter under discussion and should not exceed five minutes.

People are asked to address contributions through the Clerk and allow others the opportunity to participate uninterrupted.

Voting Process

Voting in the General Assembly is undertaken through direct democracy.

This is a first.

Any member of the General Assembly may participate in general discussion.

Only persons recorded on the electoral roll may participate in formal voting.

When a vote is called, the Returning Officer will facilitate the process and determine the outcome, which will be recorded by the Clerk.

All people in attendance today who are on the Government of Norfolk Island electoral roll have been marked off and provided with a Government of Norfolk Island registration card.

This card can be retained for subsequent meetings.

Instructions will be provided at the time a vote is called.

When a show of hands is called for, raise your hand with your registration card visible.

The Returning Officer will determine whether the count is substantially in favour of either the affirmative or the negative.

If the count is too close to determine an outcome, the Returning Officer will perform a roaming count of the General Assembly.

Any person not registered on the Government of Norfolk Island electoral roll is unable to vote.

Chief Magistrate, it is now time to proceed through the motions listed on the Notice Paper.

The first motion is the Adoption of Procedural Orders.

I invite Councillor Rebecca Hayes to present Motion No. 1 to the General Assembly.

MOTION NO. 1

ADOPTION OF PROCEDURAL ORDERS

COUNCILLOR REBECCA HAYES:

Thank you, Clerk.

This motion seeks the adoption of the General Assembly Procedural Orders that will guide how our General Assembly operates.

These orders provide the practical framework for respectful participation, orderly deliberation, transparency and direct democratic decision-making.

They set out how meetings are convened, how matters are considered, how the community participates and how decisions are reached.

Whilst the 1838 Constitution provides the foundation of our governance, these orders give modern procedural effect to that foundation and help ensure that the General Assembly operates clearly, fairly and consistently.

Importantly, these orders have also been strengthened through the public review process.

Following feedback, provisions have been included to provide continuity arrangements for the House should an unforeseen vacancy or absence arise.

This helps protect continued community access to direct democracy and orderly governance.

The intention of this motion is simple.

To ensure the General Assembly begins with a clear, transparent and immediately operational framework so that people can participate confidently in the work ahead.

I commend Motion No. 1 to the General Assembly.

CLERK:

Thank you very much, Councillor Hayes.

I now invite contributions from the General Assembly.

Are there any interested contributions from the floor?

[Pause]

Have you got any substantive information you would like to provide, Councillor Hayes?

[Pause]

In relation to Motion No. 1, Adoption of Procedural Orders, I call the General Assembly to vote by a show of hands.

Those of that opinion say "Yes" and raise your hand.

The affirmative has it.

I declare the outcome of the vote and hereby confirm the result in favour of the affirmative.

The General Assembly Procedural Orders are adopted.

Thank you, Councillor Hayes.

MOTION NO. 2

ADOPTION OF GOVERNANCE CHARTER AND OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK 2026

CLERK:

Moving on to Motion No. 2, Adoption of the Governance Charter and Operational Framework 2026.

I call upon Councillor Rebecca Hayes to address the General Assembly.

MOTION NO. 2

ADOPTION OF GOVERNANCE CHARTER AND OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK 2026

COUNCILLOR REBECCA HAYES:

Thank you, Clerk.

This motion seeks the adoption of the Governance Charter and Operational Framework 2026 as the principal governance framework guiding the operation of the Government of Norfolk Island during this transitional term.

The Charter provides the practical framework through which government may operate openly, transparently and consistently while giving modern effect to Norfolk Island's continuing constitutional foundations.

It establishes the structure, principles, participation pathways and accountability mechanisms necessary to support public administration, direct democracy and community decision-making.

Importantly, the Charter extends beyond institutional arrangements alone.

It includes a community vision for Norfolk Island and a practical action plan aligned to the priorities of this term, including constitutional modernisation, community renewal, cultural continuity and future opportunity.

The Charter has also been strengthened through both peer review and public review processes.

Community submissions have contributed directly to refinement across governance procedures, continuity arrangements and participation mechanisms.

These changes are reflected in the version now before the General Assembly.

The intent of this motion is simple.

To provide Norfolk Island with a clear and community-shaped framework through which the work of government may proceed during this period of transition and future development.

I commend Motion No. 2 to the General Assembly.

CLERK:

Thank you, Councillor Hayes.

For the information of the General Assembly, the Charter has been displayed at the Government of Norfolk Island Hub in the Norfolk Mall.

Feel free to visit the Hub and review the document if you wish.

It is a substantial document for those who have not yet seen it.

More importantly, it is available on the Government of Norfolk Island website at govni.org.

The Charter is taken as read.

We do not have sufficient time today to go through every line of the document.

Thank you very much for the introduction of Motion No. 2.

I now ask the General Assembly whether there are any comments or contributions that members would like to make regarding the Charter.

[Pause]

Thank you.

In relation to Motion No. 2, Adoption of the Governance Charter and Operational Framework 2026, I call the General Assembly to vote by a show of hands.

Those of the opinion "Yes", raise your hand.

It is an overwhelming majority in favour.

Thank you.

I declare the outcome of the vote and hereby confirm the result in favour of the affirmative.

The Governance Charter and Operational Framework 2026 is adopted.

MOTION NO. 3

ADOPTION OF OFFICIAL EMBLEMS, SEAL AND INSIGNIA

CLERK:

Moving on to Motion No. 3.

The Adoption of Government of Norfolk Island Official Emblems, Seal and Insignia.

Before I invite the relevant Councillor to speak, I would like to thank all of those people behind the scenes who have contributed immensely to the recreation of the Seal and brought it to this point where we can now move this motion.

I invite Councillor Tim Brown to present the motion to the General Assembly.

COUNCILLOR TIM BROWN:

This motion seeks the formal adoption of the official emblems, seal, insignia, flag and associated visual identifiers of the Government of Norfolk Island.

Symbols carry meaning.

They express identity, continuity and public authority.

They help communities recognise their institutions and provide consistency in how government presents itself, both within Norfolk Island and beyond our shores.

Particular significance attaches to the Norfolk Island Seal associated with the 1856 Royal Warrant following the establishment of Norfolk Island as a distinct and separate settlement.

The historic seal imagery has long formed part of Norfolk Island's civic identity and remains a recognised and valued symbol within our community.

This motion also formally recognises the Norfolk Island Flag for government proceedings, publications, representations and ceremonial functions.

Schedule A accompanying this motion identifies the adopted symbols and references the existing seal usage and visual standards manual to ensure that their use remains consistent and protected.

The intent of this motion is simple.

To provide the Government of Norfolk Island with a clear, consistent and historically grounded civic identity for its work and public representation.

I commend Motion No. 3 to the General Assembly.

CLERK:

Thank you very much, Councillor Brown.

I invite any response to the motion from the General Assembly.

If anyone has commentary, narrative or contribution, please speak now.

[Pause]

Thank you very much everyone.

In relation to Motion No. 3, Adoption of Government of Norfolk Island Official Emblems, Seal and Insignia, I call the General Assembly to vote by a show of hands.

Those of the opinion "Yes", raise your hand.

The affirmative has it.

Thank you very much.

I declare the outcome of the vote and hereby confirm the result in favour of the affirmative.

The Official Emblems, Seal and Insignia are adopted and entered into the Register.

CLERK:

Ladies and gentlemen, Motions 1, 2 and 3 are foundational motions.

They are not necessarily matters that will appear in the same form at future meetings.

They are part of the due process necessary to establish the Government and enable us to proceed with the business of government.

Would you like to make any comments on that, Chief Magistrate?

[No further comment.]

MOTION NO. 4

ESTABLISHMENT OF SELECT COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL MODERNISATION

CLERK:

We now move to Motion No. 4.

Establishment of a Select Committee on Constitutional Modernisation of the 1838 Constitution.

I invite Chief Magistrate Peter Christian-Bailey to present the motion to the General Assembly.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE PETER CHRISTIAN-BAILEY:

Thank you, Clerk.

This motion seeks the establishment of the Select Committee on Constitutional Modernisation.

The purpose of the Committee is to support a structured, community-led process to ensure that Norfolk Island's constitutional foundations remain practical, relevant and capable of serving future generations while preserving the identity and continuity that underpin them.

This work is not new.

It is one of the key priorities identified in the lead-up to the election and remains a priority for the Government of Norfolk Island.

At its heart this is about balance.

It is about balancing the interests of those who have invested in the future of Norfolk Island with the responsibilities to protect and uphold our cultural and constitutional foundations.

This is not about replacing the 1838 Constitution.

It is a proposal to work carefully and deliberately with it.

Constitutional modernisation in this context is not simply a legal review.

It is community-designed.

It is about asking clear and practical questions.

Who will be eligible to stand for office in the future?

Should eligibility be limited by birthplace, residency or descent?

Should a person be island-born or a Pitcairn descendant?

What safeguards are needed to ensure representation remains fair, inclusive and legitimate for all who have invested in Norfolk Island?

What protections and rights should be clearly defined?

How do we ensure governance structures reflect both tradition and the realities of the present day?

These are not questions to be decided today.

They are questions that deserve proper, careful and community-led consideration.

The Committee will undertake this work through consultation, participation and transparency, inviting submissions, engaging with the community and drawing on advisory bodies where appropriate.

In accordance with the motion paper, the Committee will operate to clear milestones.

An interim report within four weeks of establishment.

A Constitutional Modernisation Plan within three months.

And a final report within twelve months for consideration by the General Assembly.

Importantly, the Committee will not make decisions on behalf of the people.

Any recommendations will return to this Assembly for consideration, debate and decision in accordance with the Governance Charter and established processes.

This is intended to be an open and participatory process.

Community members who are interested in contributing can register their interest during this Assembly or speak with members of the Government after the meeting to express their interest in participating.

The intent of the motion is simple.

To begin a structured, responsible and community-driven process of constitutional reflection and future planning.

This is about continuity.

It is about stewardship.

It is about ensuring that the governance we are building today remains clear, workable and legitimate into the future.

I commend Motion No. 4 to the General Assembly.

CLERK:

Thank you, Chief Magistrate.

I invite any comments from the General Assembly on the establishment of a Select Committee for Constitutional Modernisation of the 1838 Constitution.

Would anyone like to make commentary or contribute to the motion?

[Pause]

In relation to Motion No. 4, Establishment of a Select Committee on Constitutional Modernisation of the 1838 Constitution, I call the General Assembly to vote by a show of hands.

Those of the opinion "Yes", raise your hand.

The affirmative has it as a majority.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

I declare the outcome of the vote and hereby confirm the result in favour of the affirmative.

The motion is carried.

As an additional comment, if members of the General Assembly wish to nominate themselves to participate in the Select Committee, please feel at liberty to discuss this with the Chief Magistrate after today's meeting or through the Government of Norfolk Island Hub in the Norfolk Mall.

We do need to form that Select Committee.

If you can help in any way, I encourage you to come forward.

I believe the Charter provides for a presiding member and a maximum of six members of the Committee.

Would you like to comment on that, Chief Magistrate?

CHIEF MAGISTRATE PETER CHRISTIAN-BAILEY:

No, that is correct.

If anybody wishes to put forward an expression of interest, you can either do so in writing, email the Government of Norfolk Island, or come and speak with us directly.

Thank you.

MOTION NO. 5

ESTABLISHMENT OF SELECT COMMITTEE ON NORFOLK ISLAND ASSET AND RESOURCE
BASE

CLERK:

Congratulations.

We now move to Motion No. 5.

The establishment of a Select Committee on the Norfolk Island Asset and Resource Base.

I invite Councillor Tim Brown to present the motion to the General Assembly.

COUNCILLOR TIM BROWN:

Thank you.

This motion seeks the establishment of another Select Committee for the purpose of examining Norfolk Island's asset and resource base.

The purpose of this work is to help all of us better understand our assets, resources, opportunities and long-term economic foundations so that the community can make informed decisions about the future.

Norfolk possesses significant environmental, cultural, land, marine, community and economic assets.

However, many aspects of the island's long-term asset and resource base have never been assessed within a coordinated Norfolk Island-led framework.

This Committee is not simply about economics or revenue.

Once again, it is about stewardship and fairness.

It seeks to ask important questions.

What do we have?

What should we be protecting?

What opportunities exist?

How do we ensure future generations benefit from the decisions that we make today?

The Committee will work through consultation, community participation and open discussion.

It will consider matters including assets, infrastructure, sustainability, economic resilience, community wealth models and future opportunities.

Most importantly, the Committee itself will not make decisions regarding ownership, assets or funding mechanisms.

Any future recommendations remain matters for the people through the General Assembly.

This motion begins the work of understanding and planning Norfolk's future prosperity responsibly and sustainably.

Most importantly, it begins that work together.

And it begins that work in a fiscally responsible way.

I commend Motion No. 5 to the General Assembly.

CLERK:

Thank you very much, Councillor Brown.

Once again I invite the General Assembly, if you have commentary, narrative or contribution regarding the establishment of a Select Committee on the Norfolk Island Asset and Resource Base, please contribute now.

[Pause]

In relation to Motion No. 5, Establishment of a Select Committee on the Norfolk Island Asset and Resource Base, I call the General Assembly to vote by a show of hands.

Those of the opinion "Yes", raise your hand.

The majority has it.

Thank you very much.

I declare the outcome of the vote and hereby confirm the result in favour of the affirmative.

The motion is carried and entered into the Register.

CLERK:

As with the previous Select Committee, if members of the General Assembly, members of the Norfolk Island diaspora, or people known to you wish to nominate themselves for participation, please discuss this with Councillor Brown after today's meeting.

We would be pleased to hear from you.

COUNCILLOR TIM BROWN:

Just following on from that.

If people are interested in the Committees but do not necessarily wish to sit on them, they may still request to make submissions to the Committees.

There is that opportunity as well.

If you do not necessarily wish to be present on the Committee but would still like to make a submission, we would welcome that contribution.

CLERK:

Good point.

Thank you very much, Councillor Brown.

MOTION NO. 6

NORFOLK ISLAND LAND TRUST – CONCEPT PAPER

CLERK:

We now move to Motion No. 6.

This is a concept paper concerning a Norfolk Island Land Trust.

I invite Chief Magistrate Peter Christian-Bailey to present the concept paper to the General Assembly.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE PETER CHRISTIAN-BAILEY:

Thank you, Clerk.

This motion does not seek to establish a Norfolk Island Land Trust.

It seeks permission to begin a conversation.

No decision is being made today.

No proposal is being adopted.

The purpose of this motion is simply to start the conversation and invite the community to consider whether this is something that should be explored.

The concept paper outlines what a land trust is in general terms, how similar models operate in other jurisdictions and contexts, and asks whether a model tailored to our needs, values and circumstances may be worth considering.

At its core, this is about one question.

Should Norfolk Island explore a community-based approach to long-term land stewardship?

Land on Norfolk Island holds particular significance.

It is not simply a question of property or investment.

It is about history, identity, belonging, cultural continuity and connection to place.

It also includes something very practical — agricultural land, food security and the ability of the island to sustain itself into the future.

At the same time, the community is increasingly dealing with pressures relating to access to land, housing affordability, environmental protection and the ability of future generations to remain connected to Norfolk Island.

What is important about this concept paper is that it brings forward something that may, in practice, begin to address a number of concerns being raised within the community today.

The question is not simply whether a land trust is a single solution.

Rather, whether it is a tool that could potentially address a range of concerns including protection of heritage and family land, long-term cultural continuity, access for future generations and ecological stewardship.

It also raises issues relating to agricultural pathways, food security and practical pathways for community participation.

The value in exploring this concept is that it is not limited to one issue.

It may offer a way of thinking about land that brings many of those concerns together in a structured and forward-looking way.

In particular, decisions being made offshore, which were not supported by our community, have contributed to increasing pressure on land availability, access and long-term community connection.

In that context, this concept presents a range of practical and proactive ways for the community to address the impact of external decisions that have negatively affected local people in recent years.

Rather than remaining reactive to changes made elsewhere, this invites the community to consider whether a structured, community-based model could help protect what matters — our land, our connection and our long-term stability.

The concept paper also explores whether a land trust could form part of that response.

For example, one concept is that land may be held in perpetuity for community benefit rather than being progressively lost from local connection.

Other models used elsewhere involve land being held within a trust and accessed through structured lease arrangements.

In a Norfolk Island context this raises important questions.

Should land held for community benefit remain within that framework?

Should access to land under any future model prioritise people connected to the island, for example those on the electoral roll?

Should leasehold interests, if ever created, remain transferable only within that same pool so that land remains in Norfolk Island hands over time?

Could this provide genuine long-term access to land for future generations?

Again, these are not proposals.

They are examples of the kinds of questions that the community may wish to consider.

This concept paper also notes that in other Pacific jurisdictions, trust-based models have combined long-term stewardship of land, community lease arrangements and community access models.

In some cases, commercial components are used to support or subsidise access for local people, including those who may otherwise struggle to enter the land or housing market.

The paper also explores how land may enter such a model if one were ever considered.

This could occur through voluntary pathways such as donation, inheritance, bequest, agreement by existing owners or market-based acquisition.

It may also involve community-based approaches over time, including voluntary contributions or participation from those who wish to support land stewardship being held for long-term community benefit.

The question for Norfolk Island is whether a carefully designed model could help protect culturally significant family land over time and assist with the other objectives that I have outlined.

As I have said before, this motion does not establish a trust.

It does not change land ownership.

It does not alter property rights.

It does not require participation from any person.

If it were ever developed further, participation would be entirely voluntary and no land would enter any trust without the consent of the owner.

No model will proceed unless it returns to the General Assembly as a separate proposal for full consideration.

The purpose of this motion is straightforward.

To invite community input.

To hear perspectives, concerns and ideas.

And to determine whether future work in this area is supported by the community.

If the motion is supported, the concept paper will be released for consultation and the community will be invited to provide feedback over the coming weeks.

Following that process, submissions will be reviewed, further discussion may occur and any future pathway, if any, would return to the General Assembly for separate consideration.

This is therefore the beginning of a conversation, not the end of one.

A conversation about how Norfolk Island wishes to care for its land, protect its heritage, support its people and shape a future grounded in community, culture and place.

I commend Motion No. 6 to the General Assembly.

CLERK:

Thank you, Chief Magistrate Christian-Bailey.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a concept paper.

It is not a decision on whether a Norfolk Island Land Trust is to proceed.

It is a concept paper which will allow dialogue to occur between now and when the matter may be tabled at a future General Assembly.

I ask the General Assembly whether there are any contributions or comments on this motion.

[Pause]

In relation to Motion No. 6, Norfolk Island Land Trust Concept Paper, I call the General Assembly to vote by a show of hands.

Those of the opinion "Yes", raise your hand.

The majority is in favour.

Thank you.

I declare the outcome of the vote and hereby confirm the result in favour of the affirmative.

The motion is carried.

MOTION NO. 7

NORFOLK REFERENDUM LAW – CONCEPT PAPER

CLERK:

Moving on to Motion No. 7, our final motion for the day.

This is a concept paper concerning a Norfolk Referendum Law.

I invite Chief Magistrate Peter Christian-Bailey to present the concept paper to the General Assembly.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE PETER CHRISTIAN-BAILEY:

Thank you, Clerk.

As before, this motion does not seek to establish a referendum law.

It seeks to begin a structured community conversation about whether Norfolk Island should restore a modern referendum law and how that may operate within the Governance Charter framework adopted today.

Norfolk Island previously operated under a Referendum Act which formed part of the island's democratic framework.

It was also one of the early pieces of legislation repealed approximately ten or eleven years ago.

As part of this discussion it is appropriate that the community consider what was lost at that time and what mechanisms may now be needed to ensure that the voice of the people continues to be recognised in matters of major importance.

At its core, this is about principle.

The people of Norfolk Island have always held a strong expectation of participation in major decisions.

There is a clear question as to how that participation is best given effect in the future.

Whether through a restored referendum law or through mechanisms embedded within the Charter itself.

This includes consideration of whether elements of the former referendum framework remain relevant and how they might be refined and adapted for the present day.

It also raises structural questions.

How would such a process align with the Charter?

Would it operate as a stand-alone law or be integrated into the Charter's decision-making framework?

How should Category A decisions requiring community endorsement be given practical effect?

Should referendum outcomes be binding, advisory or structured in another way?

It also raises an important practical question.

If Category A decisions are structured to allow broad participation beyond those physically present at a General Assembly, for example through remote voting mechanisms, does that in effect operate as a referendum?

Or is there a need for a distinct and separate referendum process?

These are not matters being decided today.

They are questions for the community to consider.

The discussion also involves accessibility.

Should participation remain limited to attendance?

Or should additional mechanisms be available?

Any future proposal arising from this consultation process will return to this Assembly for proper consideration and decision.

I commend Motion No. 7 to the General Assembly.

CLERK:

Thank you, Chief Magistrate.

I invite any contribution from the General Assembly.

[Pause]

In relation to Motion No. 7, Norfolk Referendum Law Concept Paper, I call the General Assembly to vote by a show of hands.

Those of the opinion "Yes", raise your hand.

The majority is in favour.

I declare the outcome of the vote and hereby confirm the result in favour of the affirmative.

The motion is carried.

CLERK:

Ladies and gentlemen of the General Assembly, we have now considered the seven motions contained within today's Notice Paper.

The majority view of the Assembly has been in favour of each motion.

I acknowledge that some members may have held differing views.

Should any person wish to provide additional comments or concerns regarding any motion, they are encouraged to speak with the Government members responsible for the relevant motion following today's meeting.

GENERAL BUSINESS

CLERK:

We now come to General Business.

The General Assembly is invited to raise matters of public importance for consideration.

In accordance with the adopted Procedural Orders, speakers will have five minutes to make their contribution.

I remind members that matters raised should be directed through the Clerk and will then be referred to the relevant member of the Government for response.

Are there any matters of General Business?

[Pause]

Yes, we have one matter.

Mr Joel Reeves.

MR JOEL REEVES:

Thank you, Clerk.

Firstly, congratulations to everybody involved in bringing today's meeting together.

My question relates to the long-term sustainability of the Government and its operations.

A great deal of work has clearly been undertaken to get to this point and much of that work appears to have been carried out by volunteers.

My concern is whether this level of activity can realistically continue indefinitely without some form of funding or administrative support.

Has any thought been given to how the Government may sustain itself in the future and whether there may eventually be a requirement for a funding mechanism or some form of community contribution?

CLERK:

Thank you, Mr Reeves.

Chief Magistrate, would you like to respond?

CHIEF MAGISTRATE PETER CHRISTIAN-BAILEY:

Thank you, Joel.

It is a fair question and one that has been discussed internally.

At present, everything that has been achieved has been achieved through voluntary effort.

That includes drafting, administration, policy development, consultation, community engagement and the preparation of today's Assembly.

The reality is that this has required a significant investment of time and energy from a relatively small number of people.

The immediate focus has been on establishing a functioning framework and ensuring that the Government could begin operating in a structured and credible manner.

That work remains ongoing.

Over time, however, it is reasonable to expect that additional administrative capacity may be required.

The scale of that requirement will depend on community expectations and the level of activity undertaken.

At this stage no decision has been made regarding funding arrangements.

No proposal is currently before the Government or the Assembly.

If any proposal were developed in the future it would be brought forward transparently and considered openly by the community.

The important point is that any future funding arrangement would need to be accountable, proportionate and clearly linked to supporting the functions of government.

CLERK:

Thank you, Chief Magistrate.

Councillor Hayes.

COUNCILLOR REBECCA HAYES:

Thank you.

I would simply add that one of the strengths of the model being developed is that it relies heavily on community participation.

The Committees established today are a good example of that.

There are many ways people can contribute without financial contributions being involved.

Ideas, expertise, research, consultation and practical assistance all have value.

As the Government evolves there will be opportunities for people to contribute in different ways.

If at some point there is a need to consider administrative support or funding models, those discussions will occur publicly and through the Assembly.

CLERK:

Thank you.

Councillor Brown.

COUNCILLOR TIM BROWN:

I agree with both comments.

The reality is that there has been an extraordinary amount of volunteer effort.

A lot of people have contributed behind the scenes and continue to contribute.

The challenge is ensuring that effort remains sustainable.

One of the reasons for establishing the Asset and Resource Base Committee is that it allows us to begin thinking more broadly about long-term sustainability and future opportunities.

That does not necessarily mean funding in the traditional sense.

It may involve partnerships, community initiatives, voluntary support or other approaches.

At this point we are still very much in the foundation phase.

Today's Assembly is part of that foundation.

As the Government develops, future options can be explored and discussed openly with the community.

MR JOEL REEVES:

Thank you.

That answers my question.

CLERK:

Thank you, Mr Reeves.

Are there any further matters of General Business?

[Pause]

There being no further matters of General Business, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has attended today's inaugural sitting of the General Assembly.

I thank the Chief Magistrate, Councillors, Reverend Laurie Carleton, David Buffett AM, members of the community and those who have participated in the preparation and conduct of today's proceedings.

Today's meeting represents an important milestone.

The establishment of the General Assembly and the consideration of the motions before us have provided a foundation for the work that now follows.

The adoption of the Governance Charter, the establishment of Select Committees and the commencement of consultation processes mark the beginning of the next stage of development.

The success of that work will depend upon continued participation by the community.

I encourage members of the public to remain involved, contribute to consultations, participate in Committee processes where appropriate and continue engaging with the work of the Government of Norfolk Island.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank everybody for their attendance and contribution.

ADJOURNMENT

CLERK:

There being no further business before the General Assembly, I now declare the inaugural sitting of the General Assembly of the Government of Norfolk Island adjourned.

Thank you and good afternoon.

The Assembly adjourned.

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

The following motions were carried by the General Assembly:

Motion No. 1 – Adoption of Procedural Orders

Motion No. 2 – Adoption of Governance Charter and Operational Framework 2026

Motion No. 3 – Adoption of Official Emblems, Seal and Insignia

Motion No. 4 – Establishment of Select Committee on Constitutional Modernisation

Motion No. 5 – Establishment of Select Committee on Norfolk Island Asset and Resource Base

Motion No. 6 – Norfolk Island Land Trust Concept Paper (Consultation Process)

Motion No. 7 – Norfolk Referendum Law Concept Paper (Consultation Process)

END OF DRAFT VERBATIM HANSARD

Rawson Hall
Norfolk Island
30 May 2026

Prepared from transcript for review by the Clerk of the House prior to certification and publication as the official record of proceedings.