



GOVERNMENT OF NORFOLK ISLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

OUR WATERS. OUR FUTURE. HAVE YOUR SAY.

Norfolk Island community invited to help shape GNI's response to the proposed expansion of Norfolk Marine Park



WHAT IS PROPOSED?

430,792 km² expanded marine park

94% proposed Category II National Park Zone

6% proposed Special Purpose Zone surrounding Norfolk Island

GENERAL ASSEMBLY • SATURDAY, 22 AUGUST • 1.00 PM • RAWSON HALL

Norfolk Island's surrounding seas are part of our environment, culture, food security, economy and inheritance. Decisions now being proposed could shape how those waters are protected, accessed and governed for generations.

On Saturday, 22 August 2026, the Norfolk Island community will have an important opportunity to come together through the General Assembly, ask questions and help shape GNI's response to the proposed expansion of Norfolk Marine Park.

The current proposal would expand the park to approximately 430,792 square kilometres. Approximately 94 per cent would become an IUCN Category II National Park Zone, while approximately 6 per cent surrounding Norfolk Island would be designated as a Category VI Special Purpose Zone. The existing Category IV Habitat Protection Zone would be removed, and the park area surrounding Cascade Pier would be revoked.

Parks Australia has been invited to attend with

an appropriate marine planning representative to explain the proposal and respond directly to community questions.

To support informed participation, GNI has prepared a comprehensive General Assembly Preparation Paper. It brings together the principal questions requiring answers about conservation evidence, fishing, zoning, enforcement, Cascade Pier, economic impacts, local rights and the future governance of Norfolk Island's surrounding waters.

The Preparation Paper does not predetermine Norfolk Island's final position and is not opposition to responsible marine conservation. It reflects a simple principle: decisions of this scale should proceed only on clear evidence, with meaningful local participation and with binding safeguards for Norfolk Island's interests.

• BINDING COMMITMENTS MATTER •

KAVHA demonstrates the difference between being consulted and retaining enduring authority. What governance, local benefits and protections will remain after the marine park designation is secured?

Government of Norfolk Island

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Norfolk Island's experience with the governance of KAVHA provides an important local precedent. Following KAVHA's World Heritage inscription in 2010, the representative KAVHA Management Board was replaced in 2016 by an Advisory Committee that has no executive powers, cannot enter contracts or authorise expenditure.

This experience does not challenge the value of World Heritage protection. It demonstrates that assurances about participation, governance and economic benefits made or understood at the time of a major designation may not provide enduring protection unless they are legally secured, measurable and protected against unilateral change.

The Assembly is therefore asked to consider not only the present marine park proposal, but the governance arrangements following a proclamation. This includes whether Norfolk Island will have genuine decision-making authority or merely an advisory role; whether local participation can later be reduced without community agreement; and whether promised economic, employment, research, infrastructure and conservation benefits will be funded, independently measured and delivered on Norfolk Island.

The proposal must also be examined in the context of Australia's commitment to protect 30 per cent of its marine environment by 2030. The Assembly is entitled to ask what proportion of that national objective would be met through waters surrounding Norfolk Island, what conservation outcomes the proposed zoning would achieve, and whether the associated restrictions and opportunity costs would fall disproportionately upon Norfolk Island while the national, reputational or strategic benefits accrue principally to the Commonwealth.

Assembly participants are encouraged to:

- seek clear and evidenced answers to the questions contained in the Preparation Paper;
- identify any additional matters requiring investigation;
- contribute local, cultural, practical and intergenerational knowledge;
- identify present and prospective uses of Norfolk Island's surrounding waters;
- propose safeguards and binding commitments that should be sought; and
- assist in shaping the Government of Norfolk Island submission before consultation closes on 30 September 2026.

Participation in the Commonwealth consultation process, the General Assembly or preparation of a GNI submission must not be interpreted as acceptance of the proposal, acquiescence in Commonwealth authority, or abandonment or limitation of any constitutional, cultural, legal, economic or maritime rights and interests maintained by Norfolk Island and its people.

The Assembly is invited to approach this matter respectfully, carefully and with confidence. Norfolk Island can support the protection of its marine environment while also insisting upon evidence, transparency, genuine local authority and a fair share of the benefits associated with decisions made over its surrounding seas.

The objective is not simply to respond to a Commonwealth proposal. It is to ensure that Norfolk Island's knowledge, rights, responsibilities and future aspirations are present wherever decisions about our marine environment are made.

Norfolk Island should not carry the restrictions, opportunity costs and future limitations while the principal benefits accrue elsewhere.

Your knowledge. Your questions. Your future.

Every Norfolk Islander has something valuable to contribute—whether through cultural and intergenerational knowledge, experience on the water, understanding of local business and infrastructure, scientific evidence, or concern for future generations.

Read the Preparation Paper. Bring your questions. Attend the General Assembly. Help ensure that Norfolk Island speaks with knowledge, confidence and purpose.

**Saturday, 22 August 2026
1.00 pm, Rawson Hall**

Written questions, evidence and comments may also be provided to GNI for consideration in Norfolk Island's submission before the Commonwealth consultation closes at 5.00 pm Norfolk Island time on 30 September 2026.

Further information and access to the Preparation Paper:
www.govni.org

Hard copies available at the Hub, Foodland Mall.

10 August 2026