



## UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

### **Meeting of the Community Consultative Committee (CCC) of the Shire of Christmas Island held at the George Fam Centre at 4.15pm Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

#### **1 Declaration of Opening of Meeting / Announcement of Visitors**

- 1.1 Gordon THOMSON declared the meeting opened at 4.25pm
- 1.2 Announcement of visitors, Senator Kristina KENNEALLY and her Deputy Chief of Staff Jesse NORTHFIELD

#### **2 Record of Attendance/Apologies/Leave of Absence/Declarations of Financial, Proximity or Impartiality Interest**

##### **2.1 Record of Attendance**

###### **Community Consultative Committee**

Shire President	Gordon <b>THOMSON</b>
Council Representative	Hafiz <b>MASLI</b>
Malay Association of Christmas Island	Azmi <b>YON</b>
Shire CEO	David <b>PRICE</b>
CI Neighbourhood Centre	Oliver <b>LINES</b>
Islamic Council of Christmas Island	Greg <b>MCINTOSH</b>
Union of Christmas Island Workers	Kelvin <b>LEE</b>
Poon Saan Club	Suzane <b>CHAN</b>
CI Phosphates	Joy <b>WICKENDEN</b>
Chinese Literary Association	Mel <b>HAN</b>
Manager of Policy	Chris <b>SU</b>

###### **Councillors**

Councillor	Phillip <b>WOO</b>
Councillor	FOO Kee Heng

##### **2.2 Apologies**

Councillor Representative	Morgan <b>SOH</b>
---------------------------	-------------------

#### **3. Agenda Business**

##### **3.1 Senator Kenneally Visit to Christmas Island**

Chairperson Gordon THOMSON welcomes Senator KENNEALLY to the meeting and provides background on her visit and the recently postponed Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories inquiry visit.

Senator KENNEALLY had received approval to visit the 'Biloela Family' in detention on Christmas Island in the previous week and had planned to do so around her JSC committee work time. Defence Minister Peter DUTTON had advised the JSC committee on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April that the Special Purpose Aircraft that had been cleared for JSC use to get to the Indian Ocean Territories that weekend had been called in for maintenance and would not be available.

Senator KENNEALLY's office obtained commercial flights from the east coast to CI on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April.

Chairperson Gordon THOMSON presented a gift of a Christmas Island flag and a copy of the Chinese cemetery historical book *Golden Leaves* on behalf of the meeting.

- 3.2 Senator KENNEALLY thanked the members for gift. Recounted her trip and terms of reference of the postponed JSNCET Inquires on Communication and Environment, Social and Economic Sustainability.

Senator KENNEALLY reported that in addition to meeting the Biloela Family, she has met community members who have raised issues under the two inquiries' terms of reference in particular with aged care, disability services on island, insurance challenge and flight logistics.

Met with the Administrator's office previously in the day.

Senator KENNEALLY stated that she thought it was wrong to have children in detention and as a minimum they should be in a community as a matter of human dignity.

Noted that \$50m had been spent to date in the detention of the Biloela Family. Senator KENNEALLY stated that the new Minister for Home Affairs Karen ANDREWS has the power to bring them back to Biloela, Queensland and hopes that she does so soon.

- 3.3 Chairperson Gordon THOMSON opened the floor for questions

Kelvin LEE stated he appreciates the effort the Senator made to come to Christmas Island at such short notice and for visiting the Biloela family. Recalled that a former Immigration Minister Senator Nick BOLKUS in the 1990s had an instance of two children being born in detention during his time. Kelvin LEE thought he could recall a positive outcome for these two children.

Senator KENNEALLY put that there was the question of *the moral duty of time* to be considered when looking at the age of the youngest child Tharnicaa who has been in detention from less than a year old to her present age of three.

Greg MCINTOSH said on behalf of the Islamic Council of Christmas Island that one of the aspects of Islam is to speak out against oppression.

Committee members said that there was an issue of expressing one's opinion on Christmas Island if it is counter to the Federal Government's narrative. Felt that the nature of the relations on island were such that work or professional opportunities could suffer if one expressed opinions counter to Government positions.

Senator KENNEALLY said that this was a vindictive way for Government to behave, and that it was not unique to Christmas Island. Democracy is supposed to have a robust exchange of ideas.

Gordon THOMSON put forward that the politicisation of the Administration has created an atmosphere of such on the Island in recent years that people felt pressured to not share counter positions on matters that affect their lives on Christmas Island to the Government narrative.

Joy WICKENDON raised matters under the JSCNCET Sustainability Inquiry regarding logistics of mail, sea freight, air freight and flights. Put that all have been delayed for six months because of swell and an uptick of passenger movements to the IOTs during the pandemic.

FOO Kee Heng noted that a parcel he sent himself by express post whilst in Perth in October 2020 had only arrived the week earlier.

Gordon THOMSON has said the recent tourism promotions have filled the IOT seats, in conjunction with a domestic economic boom with scaled up detention services.

Gordon THOMSON says that the 2006 JSCNCET Inquiry on Governance put forward as a recommendation that a formal consultation mechanism be established for service delivery matters for CI as a non-self-governing territory. The Indian Ocean Territories Regional Development Organisation (IOTRDO) was established in 2011 as the result of Labor Party policy; the two Shires of CKI and CI had permanent seats on the IOTRDO to represent the elected bodies of the Islands. These permanent seats guaranteed by the founding constitution were removed in 2018 in a constitutional change put forward by the Administrator, who is the perpetual chair of the IOTRDO.

Previous Labor Minister for Territories Simon CREAN had some success in relocating some of the Administration staff responsible for service delivery to the islands to Christmas Island.

Gordon THOMSON felt that the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights which is a convention Australia is signatory to, is being impinged on the Island if residents cannot freely express their views in public.

Put forward that an unelected administrator position is anachronistic with the position needing to be retired.

Gordon THOMSON informed the meeting that the Shire is co-operating with the Commonwealth on the Christmas Island Strategic Assessment process; Shire has a statutory obligation in land planning in WA.

Gordon THOMSON recounted the current proposed Fisheries Management Ordinance and Marine Park proposals for the Island. Senator KENNEALLY recommended that we reach out to the NT Senators to update and seek support from them.

Gordon THOMSON explained the Agriceutical business initiative interest on island at the moment. It is to convert ex-mining lease that has been returned to the Commonwealth into agricultural spaces. The business is also working on CKI to acquire agricultural and research sites there.

3.4 Declaration of the Christmas Island Community Consultative Committee

**CCC Resolution**

**Moved: Kelvin LEE**

**Seconded: Hafiz MASLI**

**Res. No: CCC3/20**

**DECLARATION OF THE CHRISTMAS ISLAND COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

We applaud Senator Kristina Keneally coming to Christmas Island to meet with Priya, Nades, Kopika and Tharnicaa, the Murugappan Family from Biloela, who have been in detention since March 2018, including the period in detention on Christmas Island from August 2019 to the present.

The members of the Christmas Island Community Consultative Committee, representing our significant cultural, political and industrial organisations, demand the immediate release of the Murugappan family, #hometobilo.

**Carried: 11/0**

**5 General Business**

**6 Closure of Meeting**

6.1 Meeting ended at 1720

**7 Date of Next Meeting**

7.1 The date of the next meeting is to be advised.