



Norfolk Island



Background Polynesians lived on Norfolk Island between 1200 and 1500, but the remote island was uninhabited by the time British explorer James COOK landed on the island in 1774. Two British attempts at establishing the island as a penal colony (1788-1814 and 1825-55) were ultimately abandoned.

In 1856, almost 200 Pitcairn Islanders -- descendants of the Bounty mutineers and their Tahitian companions -- were relocated to Norfolk Island because of overcrowding on the Pitcairn Islands. Some returned to the Pitcairn Islands over the next few years, but most settled permanently on Norfolk Island and recreated their previous land tenure and governance structures. Norfolk Island retained a great degree of local control until 1897, when it became a dependency of New South Wales. During World War II, Norfolk Island was an airbase and an important refueling stop in the South Pacific. In 1976, an Australian judge recommended Norfolk Island be incorporated fully into Australia, which Norfolk Islanders rejected. After an appeal to the UN, Australia granted limited self-government to Norfolk Island in 1979.

With growing financial troubles during the 2000s, Australia abolished the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly in 2015, reduced Norfolk Island's autonomy in 2016, and suspended the local council in 2020. Most services are provided by a mix of the Australian Capital Territory and the states of New South Wales and Queensland. These moves were unpopular on Norfolk Island, which has sought to have its self-government restored and as of 2024, the Australian Government was working with Norfolk Island to establish a new local governing body.

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| Capital | name: Kingston |
| Government type | administered as an overseas territory of Australia |
| Area | total : 36 sq km land: 36 sq km water: 0 sq km |
| Climate | subtropical; mild, little seasonal temperature variation |
| Natural resources | fish |
| Population | total: 1,739 (2021) |
| Population growth rate | 0.01% (2014 est.) |
| Ethnic groups | Australian 22.8%, English 22.4%, Pitcairn Islander 20%, Scottish 6%, Irish 5.2% (2011 est.) |

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| Religions | Protestant 46.8% (Anglican 29.2%, Uniting Church in Australia 9.8%, Presbyterian 2.9%, Seventh Day Adventist 2.7%, other 2.2%), Roman Catholic 12.6%, other Christian 2.9%, other 1.4%, none 26.7%, unspecified 9.5% (2016 est.) |
| Languages | English (official) 44.9%, Norfolk (official, a mixture of 18th century English and ancient Tahitian) 40.3%, Fijian 1.8%, other 6.8%, unspecified 6.2% (2016 est.) |
| Executive branch | chief of state: King CHARLES III (since 8 September 2022); represented by Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia General Sam MOSTYN (since 1 July 2024) head of government: Administrator George PLANT (since 1 June 2023) |
| Legislative branch | legislature name: Norfolk Island Regional Council |
| Diplomatic representation from the US | embassy: none (territory of Australia) |
| Economic overview | high-income Australian territorial economy; key tourism and re-exportation industries; small labor force and declining participation creating more part-time jobs; former tax haven; increasing medical cannabis exporter; little transportation infrastructure |
| Exports - partners | USA 31%, Belgium 9%, Philippines 7%, Israel 6%, Singapore 6% (2023) |
| Exports - commodities | pine seeds, lumber, cars and vehicle parts, soybeans, lactose syrup (2021) |
| Imports - partners | Australia 52%, Fiji 13%, NZ 12%, Saudi Arabia 12%, Malaysia 5% (2023) |
| Imports - commodities | refined petroleum, plastics, electrical lighting/signalling equipment, cars, machinery (2023) |