Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (12:40): I certainly welcome this opportunity to speak on this important legislation surrounding the changes for Norfolk Island, the Norfolk Island Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I had the great fortune to visit Norfolk Island in 1979 as part of a school excursion when I was in year 10—so a long time ago—and I can look upon what my recollections were of what was going on on Norfolk Island then and compare it to the several trips that I have made since I have been a member of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories. Unfortunately, the changes have not been good. Still, Norfolk Island has always been a beautiful place and will always be a beautiful part of Australia.

When you consider that the island has a population of probably fewer people than the smallest suburb in the electorate of Cowan and we have asked since 1979 for that island to look after federal, state and local government services, it is no great surprise that the island has not prospered under that model. I am very pleased, as the chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories, to have been involved with members opposite, in a completely bipartisan manner, in the presentation of a report which has led government to this legislation. I completely endorse the legislation. I would say to all those present, or who might read the transcript of this debate later, that this is an opportunity that the government has taken up and that we as a joint standing committee are very happy to see implemented.

Our report, *Same country: different world*, really did reflect on what was in the best interests of the people of Norfolk Island: the Australians and other residents who live on Norfolk Island. Last year on one of the visits that we made as the standing committee I said at the administrator's residence, when I got the chance to address a number of the locals, that really what we wanted were the same opportunities and the same support for Australians on Norfolk Island as there are on the mainland. Norfolk Island has been part of Australia, and has been incredibly entwined in the history of this nation, since 1788. A lot of people do not know that it was shortly after the First Fleet established the presence in Sydney Cove that a ship was sent out to Norfolk Island and, since that time, Norfolk has effectively been part of the colonies and then Australia—and that is good.

As I said before, since 1979 self-government has required a range of different services to be looked after by the Norfolk Island government. It is true, and there is no doubt, that so many people on Norfolk welcome the changes that this legislation will provide because they have seen that it has not been possible to achieve the delivery of service to the required standard. As the member for Lingiari said, through his wide experience in these matters with regards to the territories, it has been a very difficult time. There have been many inquiries into the arrangements for Norfolk Island. When you consider that Medicare does not apply, the tax system does not apply and the welfare system does not currently apply it really has made it very difficult for Australians living on Norfolk Island. So again I welcome this legislation. I welcome the excellent bipartisan support from both members of the committee and I think the whole parliament. It will see a better future for Norfolk Islanders.

Before going through some of the reforms that this legislation will deliver I would like to formally thank all the members of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories who participated. They used their experience with regard to Norfolk Island and the territories and their broader experience to great effect in the creation of the report *Same country: different world*. I would also like to thank Sara Edson from the committee secretariat for her great support to the committee and Alison Clegg, the committee secretary. I thank the minister for doing what needed to be done in the ministerial processes. I also thank Minister Briggs for his excellent work.

Former administrator Neil Pope was extremely helpful to enable us to fully understand the challenges of Norfolk Island. His forthright and frank testimony before the committee was extremely useful to us. I also thank everyone who made a submission to the committee and those who appeared before the committee. It was all very useful evidence and support for us. In relation to the challenges in recent months and in the future, the current administrator, Mr Gary Hardgrave, our former colleague in this place, is doing excellent work in helping to steer...
the reform process on Norfolk Island and helping local people with the delivery of the results that are going to come.

I will go through the key elements that will come out of this legislation. There will be transitional arrangements to establish a five-member advisory council to support and steer the implementation of the full reforms. Like the member for Lingiari, I would say that anyone who feels they can make a good contribution to that should certainly put their name forward. There will also be the preservation of the existing administrative structures, such as the Norfolk Island Public Service, during the transition period. There will be the establishment of a locally elected regional council from 1 July 2016 and the community will be consulted on the details of that model.

There will also be the extension of all Australian taxes, with the exception of course of the goods and services tax and customs duty. The Norfolk Island GST will be removed and the Australian GST, as I said before, will not be extended, as a measure to assist the economy in transition. The extension of the superannuation guarantee will take place over a phased period. There will also be social security payments, including income support payments—such as age and disability support pensions, sickness allowance, carers payment, Newstart allowance, youth allowance and special benefits—family assistance payments for family tax benefit, parental leave pay, dad and partner pay, parenting payment and childcare assistance, and supplementary payments, such as rent assistance and carer allowance, and concessions, such as the health concession cards. Medicare, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and related healthcare programs will be instituted as will Commonwealth immigration, biosecurity and services. Obviously, the whole range of services will be of great benefit to the social welfare of local people across the island.

I understand that modelling by the Centre for International Economics in 2014 projected that the combined impact of these measures will actually see an increase in economic activity for the island of 14 per cent and a larger increase in household consumption of around 38 per cent. That is certainly good news. I know as well that the cost of these measures across the next four years will be $136 million.

I will not go much further into this. This is what the majority of people on Norfolk Island have wanted to see for a long time. Many committees, ministers and members of this House and the other place have wanted to see a better future for Norfolk Island but there have been people and interests that have gotten in the way of that and have stymied real reform for a better future. I think we have got to the point now where there is genuine strong support in a bipartisan manner because we see that the best interests of every man, woman and child on Norfolk Island will be better served by the sorts of reforms the minister has put forward in this legislation and that I think we all support.

Our duty as members of parliament, members of the Senate and members of the executive is to make sure that the best interests of Australians are served as much as possible. Through legislation such as this there is a better future for Norfolk Island coming. We have had plenty of consultation as a committee, with interactions with people on Norfolk Island, through the processes the minister has put in place and through what the administrator has been doing. Whilst there are some people who desperately want to hold onto self-government, what we have seen since 1979 is that it has not worked and that failure has come at the cost to individuals on the island and the opportunities for people on the island.

Because it is part of Australia the people on the island deserve the best future we can possibly deliver. I look forward to this bill passing and the transition of Norfolk Island to the regional council model. With the full implementation of the measures provided for under this legislation, a better future for Norfolk Islanders and Australians is coming and it is coming quickly. I thank everybody who was involved with the report *Same country: different world* and all those involved with the legislation in the best interests of Norfolk Island.