



Australian Government

**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Cities and Regional Development**

Traffic Laws in Norfolk Island

December 2019

Report from the second consultation round in October 2019



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Summary of discussions with stakeholders around ute tray riding

1.1 Introduction

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development (DITCRD) coordinated a second consultation round with the Office of the Administrator of Norfolk Island about proposed changes to the traffic laws. Targeted meetings were held with invited stakeholders on 22, 23 and 24 October 2019. In addition, a drop-in event was arranged for community members on 23 October 2019.

This report contains a summary of comments from community members attending the targeted meetings, drop-in event and other separate meetings. There was an overlap of views and opinions raised at some meetings, which have been grouped together in this report. The comments do not reflect Australian Government views nor are the comments necessarily an accurate interpretation of current Norfolk Island laws.

DITCRD acknowledges views expressed at the meetings about the fatal accident that led to the Coroner's inquest in 2018. These personal views are variously represented in the already published submissions and will therefore not be repeated in this report. Submissions authorised for publication are here:

www.regional.gov.au/territories/norfolk_island/traffic-laws-public-submissions.aspx

Comments not directly related to ute tray riding have been excluded from this report in order to focus on the purpose of the second consultation round.

Thank you to those who shared personal views with us and worked constructively to contextualise the practice of ute tray riding in Norfolk Island.

1.2 Methodology

All targeted meetings were facilitated by Mr Eric Hutchison, the Administrator of Norfolk Island, and attended by a DITCRD staff member as scribe.

Questions were used by the facilitator to guide the discussions with a view to seeking further information to better understand the practice of ute tray riding.

The questions focused on the significance of ute tray riding in Norfolk Island, when and where this practice usually occurs, hazards on the road and driver behaviour, as well as seeking suggestions from attendees on what would make ute tray riding safer.

The drop-in event held two concurrent sessions, both staffed by DITCRD. The questions used to start the discussions were similar to those asked in targeted meetings. Nineteen (19) people either attended the drop-in event, or arranged a different meeting time.

Taken together, 58 people participated in this second round of consultation, including nine school students.

1.3 Summary

The dot points provide a summary of input from community members and the ‘post-its’ reflect participants’ views and sentiments.

1.3.1 Community significance of ute tray riding

- Most participants commented that ute tray riding is a long standing tradition in Norfolk Island, evolving from the horse and buggy days. Historically, the back of trucks became an early form of public transport. It also assisted with agricultural activities essential to on-island life, such as cattle muster and farming.
- Participants noted that, for Norfolk Islanders, giving someone a lift in the back of a ute or truck, whether a resident or visitor, is part of island culture and part of how people grow up in Norfolk Island. It was said to be unique to Norfolk Island, and one person said it is part of Norfolk Island’s identity.
- Adults and young people alike commented that this form of transport creates community spirit, as it allows people to catch up while travelling together for recreational, agricultural or sporting activities.
- For children, being able to ride in the back of a ute is viewed as a ‘rite of passage’ and every child looks forward to being five years of age when it is legal to ride in the back – this was a point made by the school students.

Figure 1.1 ‘Post-its’



1.3.2 When, and where, does ute tray riding usually occur

- From comments made at the meetings, it appears that the origin of ute tray riding has become entwined with the practicalities of living on a small island with limited roads and no highways, low speed limit and an agricultural life style.
- Participants variously described ute tray riding as fun, practical, fuel-efficient, environmentally friendly and conducive to reducing road congestion.
- It was said that the utes are an efficient form of transport and serve multiple purposes. Examples provided include:
 - Community events: Bounty Day, Halloween trick or treating, Christmas Pageant and viewing Christmas light displays.
 - Family activities: school drop-off and pick-up, going to the beach and BBQ (easy to accommodate people, equipment and food in one vehicle and avoids getting sand in the car), waste removal (noting that there is no rubbish collection and many families live on an acreage).
 - Recreational activities and sporting events: fishing, paddling including Norfolk Ocean Challenge (NOC), and the Norfolk Island Around Island Relay.
 - Agricultural and commercial purposes: cattle muster, transport of produce, unloading the ship, removalists, carrying baggage from the airport.
 - Tourism: helps with picking up large numbers of visitors disembarking from cruise ships and driving them around the island, antique vehicle used for sightseeing purposes.
- In the meetings, ute tray riding was often compared to a local form of public transport.

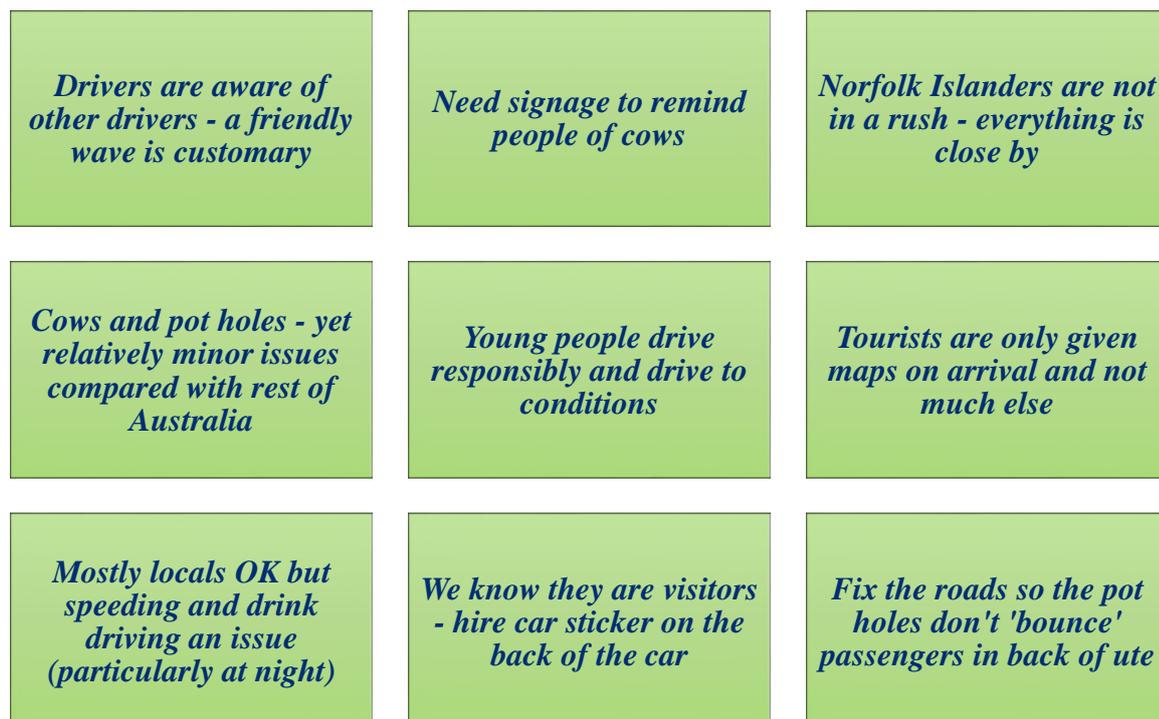
Figure 1.2 'Post-its'



1.3.3 Road hazards and driver behaviour

- In the main, community members raised the condition of the roads as a hazard, including pot holes, bad road conditions in wet weather, narrow roads and winding corners, steep gradients. Some commented that the unsatisfactory road conditions led people to drive slower.
- Other hazards mentioned include:
 - Cows because they have right of way and at night can be difficult to see (even though cows should now be equipped with reflective tags on their ears).
 - There are limited pathways and limited street lighting.
 - Signage could be improved and this would help visitors understand local road rules.
- A few participants commented on the driving behaviour of visitors, saying that visitors are not necessarily familiar with local driving rules, drive too slow, and stop in the middle of the road to take photos of cows.
- Drunk drivers were raised as a potential hazard. A hypothetical scenario was discussed: what could happen if a drunk driver collided with a ute with children in the back and where the driver of the ute is abiding by the road rules? In one meeting it was acknowledged that the proposed changes to the traffic laws regarding drink/drug driving would mitigate risk on the road.
- With regards to local drivers, the participants expressed the view that Norfolk Islanders are responsible on the road, drive to conditions and within the law. Many advised that parents drove more carefully with children in the back of utes, and some preferred an adult in the back with the children for extra safe-keeping.

Figure 1.3 'Post-its'



1.3.4 Suggestions to improve the safety of ute tray riding

- Participants were asked what they thought would improve the safety of ute tray riding and most provided one or more suggestions, as reflected below in the ‘post-its’. It is noted that not everyone agreed with all the suggestions.
- Some community members felt that the changes to the Traffic Act in 2010 had enhanced safety, and pointed out that the overall speed limit in Norfolk Island is 50 km/h and distances are small.
- Someone raised the point that all the other proposed changes in the traffic laws discussion paper would improve road safety in Norfolk Island.
- At the targeted meetings, all were aware of the rules around having passengers in a ute tray, particularly when children are in the back. Parents and school children shared their ‘home’ rules, such as children sit up against the cabin, children under seven years of age need an adult to be with them, no ‘playing corners’ or lying down, no leaning on the side tray, hands and feet inside the tray at all times.

Figure 1.4 ‘Post-its’





1.4 Next steps

DITCRD will brief the Assistant Minister on the outcomes the consultation. The briefing will include background information such as the findings and comments in the Coroner's report of December 2018.

Future updates will be provided via the *Norfolk Islander*, Norfolk Online News and DITCRD's website.