

REPUBLIC OF NAURU

MENTALLY-DISORDERED PERSONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2020

SECOND READING SPEECH

Honourable Isabella Dageago MP

3 December 2020

Mr Speaker Sir,

I have the responsibility of introducing to the House today the *Mentally-disordered Persons (Amendment) Bill 2020*.

Mr Speaker, this is a short Bill. It relates to a house keeping matter for my Department.

Sir, the Republic is a party to the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. While 'disability' is not specifically defined under this Convention, Article 2 of the Convention describes persons with disabilities as those who have 'long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments'.

The current Act was inherited by the Republic when it attained independence in 1968. At the time, the Act was referred to as the *Mentally-disordered Persons Ordinance 1963*. The Ordinance was adapted after independence and its title was changed to '*Mentally-disordered Persons Act 1963*' by Section 50 of the *Statute Law Revision Act 2011*. Persons with mental health issues are not 'mentally disordered'. The term 'mentally disordered' reflects negatively on persons with mental health issues. Any mental disability or impairment is a health issue and not the physical condition of a person. Under the Convention and generally as members of the community, we recognise this problem. Calling or describing people with mental health issues as 'mentally disordered persons' is inappropriate and considered discriminatory under the Convention.

The title of this Act is amended to '*Mental Health Act*' which is the common title to similar Acts in many parts of the world. Other countries with similar Acts have changed the title to '*Mental Health Act*'. Nauru is the only country in the region which still uses '*Mentally-disordered Persons Act*'.

This is a minor amendment but is a greater recognition for members of our community who need mental health care or medical attention and not specific to their physical incapacity or disability.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.