

REPUBLIC OF NAURU
NATIONAL DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL
2020

SECOND READING SPEECH

Honourable Lionel Rouwen Aingimea MP

4 June 2020

Mr Speaker Sir,

I have the responsibility of introducing to the House today the *National Disaster Risk Management (Amendment) Bill 2020*.

Mr Speaker, we are all aware at this point in time, Nauru has no cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19). Nauru is one of the 18 countries in the world to be Coronavirus free. This is due to the stringent measures which my Government put in place to manage and minimise the spread of the virus into our community. I acknowledge and appreciate the hard work of all the public servants and other people who have worked tirelessly to make this a success.

Mr Speaker, the current Act came into force in 2016. This was the first occasion when the provisions of the Act were put to the test. This Act provides for disasters which by the very definition is unpredictable in its form or the consequences it leaves behind for us. The uncertainties of such disasters no doubt cannot be legislated in its entirety. Whatever laws are made, need to be reconsidered for the challenges that we as a society may encounter to deal with in the future.

It is with this in mind, the current Act needed to be reviewed. This Bill is a result of the review of our progress, current situation and experience with the pandemic Coronavirus (COVID-19). Experience has taught us that preventing and mitigating the effects of emergencies whether natural or otherwise is far better than responding or reacting to them. We must recognise that good disaster risk management helps to keep us safe and to achieve development goals. We must know our risks and be ready to respond, and we must be well-resourced to manage each aspect of an emergency, from mitigation to preparedness to response to recovery. The fundamental objective of disaster

management is to ensure the safety of our people and the economic foundation of our country.

The amendments in this Bill are necessary. The definition of '*disaster*' is amended as the nature and scope of a disaster is unpredictable. The Republic has to manage a disaster under this Act. Therefore, the cause of a disaster is to be as wide as possible in the event of something unexpectedly occurring, which causes the disruption of the functioning of our society. In addition, the Bill now gives the Minister the discretion to appoint a National Controller other than the Secretary for National Emergency Services. This is important to ensure that for a disaster of a specialised nature, any Emergency Plans are implemented expeditiously, effectively and well-coordinated to ensure the protection of public safety and public health.

Mr Speaker, more offences have been included. There are additional offences of uttering, publishing or posting messages in social or mass media by means of any electronic device. It is also an offence where the publication is likely to mislead or cause fear to the people. In a disaster, public messaging of information by the relevant authorities is important. Within this process there are members of our community who from time to time distort this official information and cause unnecessary fear, chaos or disruption. The Police are given powers to act without a warrant, as disasters may not permit time to request a warrant. This is to ensure urgent action is taken by the Police for public safety.

Mr Speaker, the explanatory memorandum details the provisions of the Bill. Sir, I request that the explanatory memorandum be read and recorded in the Hansard Reports.

I commend the Bill to the House.