

Republic of Nauru – 20th Parliament

Private Security Bill 2012

SECOND READING SPEECH

HE Sprent Dabwido, MP

10 October 2012

Mr Deputy Speaker,

It gives me pleasure to introduce to the House today a Bill for an Act to regulate private security services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, until last year, the vast majority of security services provided to Government were provided by the Protection and Guarding Unit, or PGU, managed by the Nauru Police Force. In an effort to improve the quality of security services provided to Government, Cabinet established a task force to study the provision of security services and the feasibility of outsourcing some of those services to private operators. Outsourcing was trialled at two sites, the Nauru Public Health Centre and RON Hospital, with excellent results. As a consequence, Cabinet decided to roll out this initiative to other locations.

The result is that a substantial portion of security services provided to Government are now provided by private security firms. The PGU has been reduced in size, and officers of the unit have been trained and appointed as reserve officers of the NPF. The new PGU will continue to guard key sites such as the Government offices and Parliament.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the regulation of the private security industry is overdue, and is now especially important. It is likely that the outsourcing of Government security services will substantially increase the number of private security operators in Nauru. It is essential to ensure that the important Government assets that are guarded by private operators are in good hands. Furthermore, it is important that all users of private security services, not only Government, can entrust their security needs to operators who ensure minimum standards of training and service.

The Private Security Bill provides a system for licensing participants in the security industry. It requires all persons in the private sector who conduct security activities to be licensed. This includes security firms, security officers, bodyguards and crowd controllers. The operator of a security firm that provides security officers will need to ensure that not only the firm is licensed, but that the security officers are licensed too. Cabinet will appoint a Licensing Authority, who will be responsible for issuing licences and monitoring licensees.

The Bill provides a broad framework for licensing security activities and makes provision for the regulations to specify the detailed requirements for the issue of each type of licence. Obviously, the requirements for the issue of a licence to a security firm will be different to those for a security officer. For example, security officers will be required to hold an appropriate prescribed qualification. Cabinet is currently considering which qualifications are suitable and can be obtained easily and affordably in Nauru. In addition to prescribed requirements about qualifications and experience, the applicant for a licence must be a suitable person to hold the licence. The Bill provides a suitability test that includes, among other things, the character of the applicant.

The Bill specifies that complaints about licensees can be made to the Licensing Authority. This allows the Licensing Authority to ensure that licensees are meeting licence conditions and operating appropriately. If a licensee breaches a licence condition or is no longer a suitable person to hold the licence, the Licensing Authority can cancel the licence. A licensee whose licence is cancelled will be able to apply to the Minister for review of the decision.

The Bill includes offences for conducting a security activity without a licence, employing an unlicensed person to conduct a security activity in a security firm and for failing to comply with a licence condition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, current operators in the security industry need not be alarmed by this initiative. A transitional provision will allow them to continue operating without a licence for 3 months after commencement of the Act. Further, it is likely that the introduction of qualification requirements for security officers will be staggered to ensure all security

officers have time to become qualified. Eventually, however, all participants in the security industry will meet the minimum standards imposed by the new system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, improving the quality of security services in Nauru is in everyone's interests. It will improve the skills and qualifications of security officers and provide greater peace of mind to clients of security firms.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.